

PRAYING THE PEOPLE'S PRAYERS

EXPLORING your call

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About

This course is designed to be used in parishes for those who lead public intercessions or might like to do so in the future, although it's also useful for helping people to write their own prayers for personal use. It should take about an hour and half, depending on how long you take for discussions and exercises. It includes teaching the Collect form as one model for writing prayers.

What do you need:

- PowerPoint and these notes
- Flipchart for summarising responses to discussions
- Handout 1: at least two copies per small group, plus additional copies for each person to take away
- Handout 2: one per person
- Copies of a recent local newspaper
- A copy of each of the *Book of Common Prayer*, *Common Worship: Main Volume*, *Daily Prayer*, and *Times and Seasons*, and *New Patterns for Worship*

Teach

Slide 1: Welcome

Teach

Slide 2

The course has four components:

1. What are we doing when we lead prayers in worship?
2. How to write prayers
3. Praying with the news
4. Resources for intercessions

Discuss

Slide 3: What are we doing when we lead prayers in worship?

Discuss.

Teach

Slide 4: What are we doing when we lead intercessions?

Praying on behalf of the community:

- gathering up their prayers and speaking them to God (when you click, an arrow will travel from the individual around the group of people to the symbol for God (the Celtic Trinity)).
- these are not your private prayers: you are leading others in prayer, so:
 - the language of your intercessions should broadly match the style and vocabulary normally used in your church's worship;
 - the intercessions are not a 'shopping list' of concerns, nor are they a news report or an opportunity to express a personal

opinion which might not be shared by others; they are appeals to God who already knows the prayers on our hearts

Teach

Slide 5: What are we doing when we lead prayers in worship?

Who do we pray to?

Depending on how long you have, you may ask people to look up the following references in the bible and feed back their answers to the question of who we are praying to.

Who are we praying to:

“Through [Jesus we] have access in one Spirit to the Father.’ *Eph 2:18*

To the Father,	<i>Matthew 6:9 – The Lord’s Prayer</i>
through the Son,	<i>John 14:13-14; 2 Cor. 1:20; 1 Timothy 2:5</i>
by the power of the Holy Spirit.	<i>Romans 8:15-16; Galatians 4:6;</i> <i>Ephesians 6:8; Jude 1:20</i>

(Note that when you click the captions will appear on the symbol.)

Discuss

Slide 6: What are we doing when we lead prayers in worship?

What do we pray for? Discuss.

Discuss

Slide 7: What are we doing when we lead prayers in worship?

A common pattern used in intercessions in *Common Worship* includes the following five areas:

[When you click, each area will be highlighted in order as follows:]

The Church

The world

Ourselves and our community

People in need

Those who have died

Watch

Slide 8: What are we doing when we lead prayers in worship?

Video talking about the five areas (link: <https://youtu.be/CHUerz4vGsY>; length:1.04 min)

Teach

Slide 9: What are we doing when we lead prayers in worship?

Recap: use your five fingers to remember the areas to pray for

Teach

Slide 10: How to write prayers

There are many resources which provide prepared intercessions. These include *Common Worship* and the *Book of Common Prayer*, as well as collections of intercessions. But writing your own prayers enables you to

pray prayers related to your particular context – your church, your people, your community, and what is currently happening in the world.

Why write down your prayers? The discipline of writing prayers helps you to be clear who you are praying to and what you are praying for. The Holy Spirit is just as much at work when you prepare prayers beforehand as when you pray extemporaneously. And it helps you avoid invertedly disclosing private information in your enthusiasm for praying for people in particular situations.

There are many ways to pray. The Lord's Prayer is one model; another is the Collect. Collects are a distinctively Anglican form of prayer which builds on the nature and acts of God as the basis for our petitions. We find this form of prayer not only in the weekly Collects, but in many other prayers in our liturgies. Using this form can help us to write theologically rich, specific, and meaningful prayers.

Teach

Slide 11: How to write prayers

A common form in the Anglican tradition is the Collect. There are five elements:

1. The address to God: who we are talking to
2. What God has done: where we have seen God at work, which is why we trust that God will listen and respond to our prayers.
3. The request: what precisely we plead with God to do.
4. The outcome: what we imagine it will look like when God answers our prayer
5. The conclusion: a reminder of how we access God, usually in Trinitarian form

Teach

Slide 12: How to write prayers

The Collect Form: An example [as you click, it will show each element in the Prayer of Preparation.]

- | | |
|-----------------------|---|
| 1. The address to God | <i>Almighty God,</i> |
| 2. What God has done | <i>to whom all hearts are open,
all desires known,
and from whom no secrets are hidden:</i> |
| 3. The request | <i>cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the
inspiration of your Holy Spirit,</i> |
| 4. The outcome | <i>that we may perfectly love you, and worthily
magnify your holy name;</i> |
| 5. The conclusion | <i>through Christ our Lord. Amen.</i> |

Discuss

Slides 13 and 14: How to write prayers

Ask people to identify the elements in these collects. Once they have decided, click to reveal marks showing the end of each element.

Practice

Slide 15: How to write prayers

Ask people to work in pairs or threes. Ask each to choose one of the five areas represented on the hand and write a collect focussed on it, using Handout 1.

When they have finished writing, encourage them to read their collects aloud. You may wish to give feedback. Areas to note are:

- You may find that people have a very limited range of language for God. You may wish to point people to *Common Worship* to find examples of who God is and what God has done.
- Encourage people to be specific in what they ask, and in what they hope will happen as a result.

Watch

Slide 16: How to write prayers

Video of a Reader talking about his own practice of writing prayers (link: <https://youtu.be/VXUhf3gMOKY>; length: 9:50)

Teach

Slide 17: How to write prayers

Things to think about in preparation:

- Read the readings for the service: almanac.oremus.org
- Is there a theme in the service?
- What specific things need prayer?
 - News (breadth)
 - Local issues and events
 - Special events : baptisms, weddings, funerals, major birthdays
- People (but be aware of confidentiality)
 - Note: this is not the time for announcements, especially about events! If you want to include someone who has recently died in the prayers, and you are not sure if people in the congregation already know, it is better to announce it prior to the prayers and pray immediately, so that it doesn't come as a shock to people in the middle of the prayers
 - if you are praying publicly for people who are sick or in other need, make sure you have their permission, and don't give too many details. We don't need to know about Aunt Hattie's piles. Because anyone could be in the congregation (including employers), it's better not to use surnames.
- Use of silence

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Slide 18: Praying with the news

Sometimes things happen in the community which need careful attention in the prayers. Here the collect form can again be helpful.

Note that while in cases of local tragedy a very specific prayer is required; in other cases, the article might raise more general concerns. Some examples, from the News and Star in October 2025, are as follows:

Headline: Cumbrian tourism businesses to explore ways to extend visitor season

Pray for: People whose livelihoods rely on tourism; people whose lives are impacted by tourism; those who struggle to find housing because there are so many second homes and AirBnBs

Headline: Former Workington priest jailed for sex offences dies in HMP Swaleside

Pray for: People affected by abuse – victims, families, friends; those who commit abuse; safeguarding in our churches and communities

Headline: Cumberland Council to consider Carlisle's green areas

Pray for: Preservation/our valuing of creation, those who care for creation, those who don't have access to green spaces for recreation and play

Headline: Damage caused to restriction bars in Kirkby Stephen car park (text of article says that it's likely from children swinging on the chains)

Pray for: Children in the local area, especially those who are bored or inadequately supervised; provision of places for children to rest and play; parents and others in the community who care for our children

Practice

Slide 19: Praying with the news

For this practice exercise, bring a newspaper, ideally local, and ask people in pairs or threes to choose an article from it and write a prayer about the issues it raises, using Handout 1.

Optional

Slide 20: Praying when the prayer book doesn't cover it

Sometimes when there is a crisis in the world or the local community, a carefully chosen psalm may express what the community needs to say to God.

The recent escalation of war in the Middle East has left many of us wondering how to pray. Psalm 46's description of nations in uproar and kingdoms shaken and its declaration of trust in God seem particularly appropriate for our times; its reference to earth moving, mountains trembling and waters raging mean that it would also be useful in times of natural disaster. This psalm could be read at the beginning of the intercessions, and the first verse used as a response:

Leader: God is our refuge and strength,
All: **a very present help in trouble.**

Many other psalms give us models for prayer when life is difficult: these are known as psalms of lament. They typically express grief, pain, or distress, and reach out to God in hope and trust, based on how God has acted in the past. Selected verses might be used to shape the intercessions, with a response drawn from one verse.

Leader: Turn again, O Lord, and deliver my soul;
All: **save me for your loving mercy's sake.** (Psalm 6)

Leader: Show us your mercy, O Lord,
All: **and grant us your salvation.** (Psalm 85)

Leader: O Lord, I call to you;
All: **hear my voice when I cry to you.** (Psalm 142)



Slide 21: Resources for intercessions

You may find it helpful for people to have copies of the *Book of Common Prayer*, *Common Worship: Main Volume*, *Daily Prayer*, and *Times and Seasons*, and *New Patterns for Worship*, and instead of presenting this as a teaching session, have them explore the resources for each type of service. It's up to you how much detail you include, which will, to some extent, depend on the services in which they are likely to be leading intercessions.

This material is also summarised on Handout 2. You may want to simply discuss the handout and then jump to slide 26.

Authorised worship resources of the Church of England contain many forms of intercession. The authorised worship resources are:

• <i>The Book of Common Prayer</i> 1662	Traditional form of prayer
• <i>Common Worship: Main Volume</i>	Standard prayers, with space to insert specific details
• <i>Common Worship: Daily Prayer</i>	More standard prayers, with some seasonal variations
• <i>Common Worship: Times and Seasons</i>	Prayers to use at particular times in the Church's year
• <i>New Patterns for Worship</i>	More ideas for creative prayer

Slide 22: Resources for intercessions

Morning or Evening Prayer or Service of the Word

Book of Common Prayer 1662

- You **must** use the collects and State Prayers as prescribed, **except**
 - you can use the Litany in place of the prayers for the King's Majesty, the Royal Family, and the Clergy and People
 - on weekdays you can omit the prayers for the King's Majesty, the Royal Family, and the Clergy and People
- it is common practice to add additional prayers before the State Prayers. These should be in keeping with the style of the Book of Common Prayer. See, for example, *Parish Prayers* by Frank Colquhoun (<http://assets.newscriptorium.com/collects-and-prayers/parishprs.htm>)
- Additional topical prayers can be found following Morning and Evening Prayer
- Note that if you use BCP Morning or Evening Prayer as printed in *Common Worship*, you may use other prayers as well as or in place of the State Prayers.

Common Worship

- Intercessions follow the Creed
- There are no required prayers other than the Collect and Lord's Prayer
- In the Service of the Word, intercessions must include thanksgivings
- Resources in *Common Worship: Main Book*
 - 101 Prayers for various occasions
 - 110 The Litany
 - 281 Forms of intercession (from Holy Communion)
- Resources in *Common Worship: Daily Prayer*
 - 360 Biddings
 - 361 Responses
 - 362 Cycle of intercession (so you focus on different things each day of the week)
 - 366 Forms of intercession
 - 397 Litanies
 - 404 Other prayers
- Resources in *Common Worship: Times and Seasons*
 - Section H for each season/occasion
- Resources in *New Patterns for Worship*
 - 170 Introduction
 - 178 Responses
 - 181 Endings
 - 183 Introductions to the Lord's Prayer
 - 185 Responsive forms and litanies
- Resources from the Church of England website

- Topical prayers: <https://www.churchofengland.org/prayer-and-worship/topical-prayers>

Slide 23: Resources for intercessions

Holy Communion

Book of Common Prayer 1662

- The prayers must be read as written
- it is common practice to add additional prayers before the State Prayers. These should be in keeping with the style of the Book of Common Prayer. See, for example, *Parish Prayers* by Frank Colquhoun (<http://assets.newscriptorium.com/collects-and-prayers/parishprs.htm>)

Common Worship: Order One (mostly the same as for Morning and Evening Prayer)

- Resources in *Common Worship: Main Book*
 - 281 Forms of intercession
- Resources in *Common Worship: Times and Seasons*
 - Section H for each season/occasion
- Resources in *New Patterns for Worship*
 - 170 Introduction
 - 178 Responses
 - 181 Endings
 - 183 Introductions to the Lord's Prayer
 - 185 Responsive forms and litanies
- Resources from the Church of England website
 - Topical prayers: <https://www.churchofengland.org/prayer-and-worship/topical-prayers>

Common Worship: Order Two

- For the service in traditional language, the prayers must be read as written. Brief biddings may be added beforehand, inviting the congregation to pray for specific things which will be picked up more generally in the written prayer. Each bidding should be short and is followed by a brief silence. For example:
 - Let us pray for places at war, including...
 - Let us pray for the sick, especially...
- For the service in contemporary language, prayers should follow the pattern for Order One.

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Slide 24: Resources for intercessions

Collect of the Day

Book of Common Prayer 1662

- Precedes Holy Communion

Common Worship

- *Common Worship: Main Book*
 - 375 Collects and Post Communions
 - 448 Collects and Post Communions in Traditional Language
- *Common Worship: Daily Prayer*
 - 411 Collects and Suggested Canticles and Refrains

Or find them on almanac.oremus.org

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Slide 25: Resources for intercessions

Prayers for particular occasions

Book of Common Prayer 1662

- After the litany

Common Worship

- *Common Worship: Main Book*
 - 101 Prayers for various occasions
- *Common Worship: Daily Prayer*
 - 404 Other prayers
- *Common Worship: Times and Seasons*
 - 593 The Agricultural Year
 - 635 Embertide
- Resources in *New Patterns for Worship*
 - 408 Special Days and Occasions
- Resources from the Church of England website
 - Topical prayers: <https://www.churchofengland.org/prayer-and-worship/topical-prayers>

Discuss

Slide 26: Conclusion: What have you learned in this session?

Teach

Slides 27-30: Recommended Resources (or use Handout 2)