

Leading a Session in a Prayer Space

Lesson Plan Outline: *Easter*

The following is an example of how a session within the themed prayer space may look. Throughout the session always use the language of 'Christians believe' or 'as a Christian I believe' when talking to students.

Welcome

- Meet and welcome the students as they arrive with their class teacher/teaching assistant to the session.
- Guide students to sit down with you somewhere suitable within the prayer space.

Introduction (Approx. 1 - 2 minutes)

- Introduce yourself, and perhaps what church you attend.
- Ask the other volunteers to introduce themselves and the church they attend.

Explanation (Approx. 5 - 6 minutes)

- Ask the students if they have attended a prayer space before and what activities they took part in.
- Explain that it is a Christian Prayer Space but they can use the space in a way they feel comfortable with. Explain that this is a place where they can have the opportunity to learn about Christian Prayer and have the opportunity to pray **if** they would like to or that they can just have time to reflect on the different activities instead.
- Explain that this time, there is a theme, to link the ideas together, which is a story. *"Actually, stories are all around us. **What's your favourite story? Where might we find a story?** Yes, that's right, in the news, on the radio, in a book or a magazine, on the internet...there are lots of places to find fictional and real stories. All stories tell us about events and how these affect the people within them. So, we are going to focus on a set of events that Christians believe actually happened."*

We would suggest that the introduction will touch on some, if not all, of the following points. As you can see, following each suggestion there is an example of something the Prayer Space Leader *might* say. These, however, are only suggestions. *(If this prayer space is happening in a community school, you may need to focus more on the key aspects of prayer, explained in the '1st Prayer Space' lesson plan, or at least recap these)*

What is Easter?

Find out what the students know about the story or celebrations linked to Easter. For younger students, you might like to use simpler questions about things people see or do during Easter today. For older students, you could probe deeper, asking how the events of Easter affected Jesus or the disciples. ***"When I say the word 'Easter', what words or pictures does this make you think of? Who celebrates Easter? Can you name some of the people in the Easter story? What happens to them? Can you think of a time when they prayed?"***

Why did Jesus/his friends pray at Easter?

*"Easter commemorates/remembers the death and resurrection of Jesus and the hope that this brings to Christians today. During 'holy week', lots of different events happened involving Jesus and his disciples; some were wonderful, like Jesus' entrance to Jerusalem as he was welcomed by the happy crowd or the special time Jesus spent with his disciples, eating together and remembering. Others were difficult, such as when Jesus was arrested and was mocked or teased by people around him, without his friends' support. **What do you do when you feel worried or really happy? Is there something you can do or a place you can go to or a person you can speak to?** Jesus often turned to God in prayer because he needed help to get through the hard times, as well as calling out to God to say thank you for things in the happy times. **Where/how do you think Jesus prayed?** Yes, he prayed in lots of different places, at different times. Today's activities will help us think about our responses to these feelings through praying or thinking."*

Explain the themed activities (Approx. 2 - 3 minutes)

- Explain each of the activities in the room, the type of prayer (e.g. When Christians pray they say please and ask God to help them forgive others) and what the activity involves (e.g. In this area you can think about something you could ask forgiveness for, or to ask for help to forgive someone else and write this on the mega-sketcher).
- Explain that if they forget anything there is an adult in each area to help them (for Primary) or adults around the room (Secondary) that they can talk to.
- **Remember to use language that states the students have the opportunity to respond as a reflective thought or as a prayer. It is up to the students how they respond to each activity.**

Setting behaviour expectations (Approx. 1 - 2 minutes)

- Most of the time we have found that behaviour is not a problem at all. However, it is good to set expectations. One way this can be done is by explaining just before you send them off to the prayer activities is by asking them what sort of voices they think we should be using in the prayer space and why. Explain that Christians respond with prayer in different ways; some shout and sing (this can help Christians to express their feelings freely), others pray with friends or are really quiet or silent, praying in their heads (this can help Christians to concentrate and be respectful).
- Emphasise that we will use quiet, whispering voices, to allow everyone in the space to pray or reflect if they wish too, and to respect one another. This should also affect how we move around the space, so therefore we all need to walk between the prayer areas, not running, so that we are respecting one another in the space.
- You might also like to guide the students about which activity to go to first, so that there is the right number of children at each one and this also controls the movement from the big group to the smaller groups.

Groups

Primary Prayer Space (Approx. 25 minutes)

- The students will then need to be split into groups of three or four by yourself and sent to different activities where the Prayer Space zone volunteers will greet them and, if necessary, again explain the activity.
- Each group will spend about five minutes at each activity.
- As you approach the fourth minute of the activity, go around to each group and give a minute warning, this will help them get ready to move onto the next activity.
- Just before 5 minutes is up, go back to each group and ask them to quietly move onto the next activity.

Secondary Prayer Space (Approx. 40 minutes)

- The students will be able to choose which activity they visit first and throughout their time in the prayer space.
- You might find it useful to send the students off a few at a time, to help smooth the transition from the large group to the activities.
- The students are allowed to choose how long they spend on each activity, though do remind them about being sensitive to other people around them. They may need to move on to another activity if other people are waiting, especially if only two people can be in one area at a time (such as Forgiveness Stones, using the mp3 players). Explain that there should only be up to 4 or 5 students per area at one time.
- As a leader, it would be helpful for you to walk between the different activities, interacting with the students as appropriate whilst keeping an eye on the calm flow of activities. It may be useful to station volunteers if some would benefit from adult support, otherwise ask them to float between the activities also.
- A couple of minutes before their time is up in the prayer space, walk around the different activities to let the students know they will soon be coming back altogether.

Conclusion (Approx. 5 minutes)

Once each group has been to each station, and you have given the last minutes warning, the students should be brought back together quietly, perhaps a group at a time.

- The whole group should then be given a chance to consider what they did or didn't like or how they felt about the Prayer Space and why.
- Older students can write down their thoughts anonymously on post it notes, whilst younger students might prefer to discuss their thoughts. If possible, it is good to type up the comments and a selection of post it notes from some of the zones to give to the school, as this will provide evidence of spiritual development for OFSTED and SIAMS (an inspection for church schools). We have a report template which you could use for this.
- Finish off by reminding the students that they can pray or reflect anywhere and at any time and in lots of different ways; there is no right or wrong way, it is about finding the best way for them.
- You could challenge them to find some time each day to reflect on or pray about things in a way that would work for them.
- Before the students then leave, the Prayer Space Leader should, if applicable, invite everyone to the Prayer Space during lunch time and/or after school.
- Finally, as the group leave, the adults in the room should make sure that they say goodbye as the students go to ensure that even as they leave, they feel welcome in the space.