

Leading a session in a Primary School Prayer Space *Crib Sheet*

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

Welcome

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

Introduction (Approx. 1 - 2 minutes)

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

Explanation (Approx. 5 - 6 minutes)

- Ask the children if they know what the room is called for this week and what they have been told by their teachers about it.
- Explain the prayer and reflection space is a place where they can have the opportunity to learn about Christian prayer and have the opportunity to pray or reflect **if** they would like to, using the activities to do so **if** they wish.
- **It is important that no-one feels forced to pray against their will.**

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.

What is prayer and reflection? (You may or may not feel it is appropriate to include the section in [])

*"Prayer is talking to God. But not only is it talking to God - what are all of you doing as I'm talking? That's right, listening. In the same way, often when people pray to God, they do some talking and then they spend time listening to what they think God might be saying to them. [Sometimes, God might not answer a prayer in the way that people expect, sometimes it is a surprise. If you asked God for the latest PS4 or Xbox game, or for a new phone, God might not suddenly give you a new game! Many Christians believe that God answers prayers in lots of ways, providing them with what they need...they probably don't really need a new game!]
What about reflection? Yes, it can help us to be calm, to spend time thinking about our day and what went well or what we would like to make better tomorrow. Reflecting might help us think about how to solve a problem, or think about what is important to us, such as special people or goals we want to achieve."*

Where do people pray or reflect?

"Where do people go to pray? That's right, Christians might pray in churches and yes, people from other religions might go to other buildings to pray. Do you know what? Christians believe that you can actually pray anywhere! As a Christian, I believe that God's always listening to what I have to say, so when I'm on holiday I might pray on the beach, or maybe I might pray when I go for a walk. We can also reflect in different places too, often people find places that help them think, where might you go to pray or reflect?"

When do people pray or reflect?

"In the same way that I believe you can pray wherever, I also believe you can pray or reflect whenever you like! Over the next half an hour or so, you will all have the opportunity to pray or reflect if you would like to. It's good to remember, though, that being in a Prayer Space isn't the only time when you can pray or reflect, but that you can do it whenever you want!"

How do people pray or reflect?

"If I asked you to draw a picture of someone praying, how would they look? Yeah, they might be kneeling, with the hands together and eyes closed. Now, that can be a really useful way to pray as it means people won't get distracted by what's going on around them. But do you know what? There are loads of ways we can communicate with God! It doesn't just have to be talking. It might be by drawing, or writing, or even making something! This is the same for reflecting, some people like to do something as they are reflecting, other people like to be still and calm as they reflect."

Explanation for Nursery/Reception and extending Year 6

- Use a shorter explanation for younger children, just a minute or two. You might like to ask them if they have heard the word 'prayer' before and if they can tell you something about it, or show you how people pray or think.
- You may find it helpful to relate friendship to prayer. Ask them what they like to do with their friends, taking a suggestion or two, then explain that many Christians believe that they can be friends with God and they like to spend time with Him, by talking with and listening to Him. You could then ask where they like to go with their friends, take a couple of suggestions, then explain that many Christians believe that they can talk to God in church, at school, at home, in fact anywhere! Then mention that they will have a go at some fun activities to help them pray or think. There's no need to explain all the activities. It's better for each volunteer to briefly explain their activity in their area, rather than when all the children are sat together.
- Before the activities begin, check with their teacher whether the children are used to working in groups or whether using the prayer stations with a 'free-flow' approach would be more appropriate for their time in the prayer space.
- At the end, the children might find it helpful to sit in a circle and share what they liked best about the prayer space.
- For Year 6's, you could go deeper with your questioning, asking 'Why?' when they have answered a question, or what they think about that, as well as building on their responses and helping them to consider what difference prayer or reflection makes to peoples' lives. You also may be able to draw out some themes from their responses e.g. finding safe places to pray or reflect can help, rather than typically quiet places.

Explain the Activities (Approx. 2 - 3 minutes)

- Next explain each of the activities in the room, the type of prayer or opportunities to reflect (e.g. When many Christians pray they say please, they ask God to help them with things etc.), and what the activity involves doing, (e.g. In this area you can think about anything you would like help with, if there is something, you can write or draw it as a prayer or reflective thought and stick it to the bubble tube).
- Explain if they forget anything there is an adult in each area to help them.
- **Remember to use language that states the children have the opportunity to respond as a reflective thought or as a prayer. It is up to the children how they respond to each activity.**

Setting behaviour Expectations (Approx. 1 - 2 minutes)

- Nine times out of ten we have found behaviour is not an issue at all.
- However, it is good to set expectations, one way that this can be done is by explaining just before you send them off to the prayer and reflective activities that sometime prayer can be really loud and noisy as Christians may be praying out loud all at once in prayer meetings, or it can be totally silent as people may be talking to God quietly by themselves, or that sometimes Christians pray together in small groups and so use quiet voices. This should also affect how we move around the space, so therefore we all need to walk between the prayer and reflection areas, not running, so that we are respecting one another in the space.
- Explain that this prayer and reflection space is a place where we are using whispering voices, quiet voices so that everyone has a chance to pray or reflect if they wish to.

Groups (Approx. 25 minutes)

- The children will then need to be split into groups of three or four and sent to different activities where the 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.

Conclusion (Approx. 5 minutes)

Once each group has been to each station, and you have given the last minutes warning, the children 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 and Reflection Space and why.
- Older children can write down their thoughts anonymously on post it notes, whilst younger children 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 that you can use for this.
- Finish off by reminding the children 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 works for them.
- Before the children leave, the Prayer Space Leader should, if applicable, invite everyone to the Prayer and Reflection 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 children go to ensure that even as they leave, they feel welcome in the space.