



# Training Guide



**Leading a prayer and reflection  
space session**

## Welcome

Thank you so much for giving your time to enable a prayer and reflection space to happen. It would not be possible without volunteers like you. This training guide will give you information on what your role as a leader will be in the space and how you can lead this session well. Hopefully it will address many of the questions you have around leading the introduction and conclusion, supporting the small group volunteers and running an engaging prayer and reflection space session. We hope you find it a helpful guide as you look forward to leading in the prayer and reflection space.

## Who we are

BeSpace is a Christian charity that aims to support churches to create spaces for prayer and reflection in the community. Our vision is to see every child, young person and adult connect with God in their daily lives. Our core values are:

- Hospitality- we aim to always have a culture where people feel valued, safe and welcome.
- Unity- we encourage churches from different traditions to work together to accomplish our mission.
- Creativity- we seek to inspire creativity and innovation as we continually work toward our vision
- Respect- we show love to people of all beliefs and backgrounds

## Become, Belong, Beyond

These 3 key words help to describe some of what we hope will be the impact of experiencing prayer and reflection spaces. We hope that people will **become** more of the person they were created to be, will know that they **belong** in a supportive community and have a purpose and that people will look **beyond** themselves.

## **Leading a prayer and reflection space session**

Typically, half a class of students (16 students) will visit the prayer and reflection space for 45 minutes at a time (For a Secondary session it will usually be a whole class of 30 students for around an hour). Here is what you need to do to lead the session.



### **Introduction: 10 minutes**

Welcome the students and invite them to come into the room and sit where you are sitting on the floor. Introduce yourself and the other volunteers in the room. Then ask the students some of the following questions. For each of the questions ask the students for their ideas and then sum up and add anything extra that is important:

#### **What is prayer and reflection?**

*"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 you're expecting, 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 that you want to! 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."*

You do not have to ask and answer these questions in this way- feel free to adapt the introduction questions to your own style and examples. Ensure you use the language of "Many Christians believe" or "As a Christian I believe" when talking about matters of faith and ensure a balance of prayer and reflection in the introduction so the space is inclusive for all.



Once you have asked these questions explain the activities in the room and link this to the theme that is being explored in the prayer space. Reiterate that these are practical ways of reflecting or praying and not with hands together and eyes closed. Then take a few moments to summarise the activities in the room and what the students will be doing at each activity station.

After explaining the activities, you need to explain that the prayer and reflection space is for the students to use as they feel comfortable. They may like to write a prayer or use the space to pray but equally they may just like to write a thought and simply think about the different activities as they do them. It is optional how the students respond.

Finally outline the behaviour expectations you have for how the students will use the space- using quiet voices, being respectful of others, staying in the group they have been put into until they are asked to move to the next activity (Primary prayer and reflection spaces), moving of their own choice in small groups not large groups (Secondary prayer and reflection spaces) etc. Then place the students into groups and direct them where to go or in a secondary space invite them to quietly explore the prayer and reflection space.

## **Adapting the introduction for KS1 children:**

For younger children (Nursery/ Reception/ Year 1) you will want a much shorter introduction and the overall session may end up being a little shorter. A good place to start is asking them if they have ever heard of the word “prayer” and can they tell you something about it or show you how people pray or think.

It can also be helpful to relate prayer to friendship. Ask them what they do with their friends and then explain that Christians believe God is their friend and Christians spend time talking and listening to him.

Then explain that they will get to do some fun activities to find out what Christians talk to God about and how many Christians pray. Don't explain all the activities in the room for younger children as this is better left for when they get to an activity station.

Finally, some younger children (particularly Nursery) are not used to working in groups and a free-flow approach may be better for them. Check with the class teacher how they would like to manage the session before you start.



## Exploring the space: Primary (Approx. 25 mins)

In Primary prayer and reflection spaces as children go into their small groups your role becomes one of timekeeper and keeping a watchful eye. You will need to move the groups on after 5 minutes and give a 1-minute warning before you do so that groups are ready to move. As you keep a watch on the time float around the different groups and subtly overhear the different conversations to check that appropriate language is being used and the groups are getting started with their activity and not taking too long to get to know the children. A volunteer may ask you for help if they have a tricky question they are not sure how best to answer or they may need your support in settling a boisterous group and reminding students of behaviour expectations.

As you give the 1-minute warning to groups check that students are still engaged and give support/ suggestions to groups that have finished an activity already (e.g. write another post it note, sit down quietly on the cushions and think about the prayer/ thought you have written etc).

Once the 5 minutes is up direct the groups onto the next activity reminding students to walk and wait quietly outside the next activity until the previous group moves on.



## **Exploring the space: Secondary (Approx. 35 mins)**

In Secondary prayer and reflection spaces, you will act as timekeeper for the whole session but also engage with students as they feel comfortable around an activity and remind students of behaviour expectations as you need to. You could suggest an activity to try when students are looking a bit lost and not quiet engaging with the space.

Try and give a 5-minute warning in secondary schools that you will be pulling the group back together for the conclusion and once it is time you can either ask groups of students to come and sit back on the floor again or announce it to the whole room to bring the group together again.



### **Conclusion: 5 minutes:**

As you draw the students back together thank them for using the prayer and reflection space well and say how much you enjoyed having the class in the space. Then ask them for their feedback on the space.

**KS1:** Ask them verbally what activity they liked best and why and then how it made them feel to be in the prayer and reflection space (you might like to ask a volunteer to scribe these responses so there is a record for the school). If time is pressing just ask a few children.

**KS2 and above:** ask the students to write their thoughts on a post it note- something they want to share about the space- maybe an activity they really liked and why or how it made them feel or even their suggestions for improvements in the prayer and reflection space. Hand out pens and post it notes and give the students a few minutes to complete this.

As the students leave say goodbye and wish them a good day.

Then it's time to tidy up the different areas ready for the next group and check written responses for any safeguarding issues (ask the volunteer in the post it note areas to put a dot on responses checked so that you know which notes are fine- they should hand any notes of concern to you to raise with the class teacher and also take down any responses that are very personal or even possibly unkind).



### **Addressing issues with volunteers**

If you overhear a volunteer not using the language of “many Christians believe...” then please chat to them after the session and ask them to use this language and explain why we use those specific phrases in a school context.

Similarly, if you see volunteers praying with students remind them after a session why this is not appropriate. It may be helpful to reference the introduction and the point of the activities being to show how accessible prayer is and how it doesn't have to be in traditional ways and it's up to the children whether they pray or not.

Mostly it is fine to address issues after a session with a volunteer and remind them of the expectations while working in a school environment. Should you see anything unsafe or inappropriate, however, you may need to intervene in that moment and say something or sit with that group and support the volunteer.

It can be helpful at the start of each session to remind everyone of their role and the language used in the prayer and reflection space before all praying together and deciding who will do which activities.



### **Safeguarding**

Any safeguarding concerns should be shared with the staff member in the room privately or shared with a staff member responsible for safeguarding within the school.

Ensure that you are aware of the safeguarding guidelines and have received this documentation from the person organising the space (it is good to keep this document along with other important documents (timetables etc) in a folder in the prayer and reflection space). Ensure that the volunteers on the day you are leading are sure of what they need to do and anything they need to fill out.

Make sure that volunteers in areas where there are written responses check these responses at the end of each session by marking every note that is not a safeguarding concern with a small dot. That way if something is written in a session that is a concern you will know for sure which class the student was from and they can be traced by their handwriting. You may need to remind volunteers at the end of sessions to do this.



### **Before the prayer and reflection space session**

- Ensure that you have copies of all relevant documents from the organiser (class and volunteer timetables, risk assessment, safeguarding guidelines, activity instructions etc.) and keep these in a file in the prayer and reflection space.
- Arrive at least 15 minutes before the start of the first session so you can check the room is ready, turn on lights, replenish post it notes and meet with the session volunteers.
- Consider a short brief for the volunteers before starting to cover safeguarding, appropriate language, decide who will do which activities etc.
- Pray with the team before starting the session
- Check timings for each class so you know how long the students will have for the activities and can work out your session timings accurately.
- If a class doesn't arrive within 5 minutes or so of the start time for their session ask a member of school staff/ office

staff to remind the class about the prayer and reflection space and see if they are getting ready to arrive.

- Check that you know all the arrangements for volunteers from the prayer and reflection space organiser- which toilets will volunteers use? (must only be staff toilets), where will they make or store refreshments? do you need to meet them at reception? do they need to be escorted around the school? etc.

### **After the prayer and reflection space session**

- Ensure all responses have been checked for safeguarding concerns.
- Address any volunteer issues privately and discreetly.
- Ensure each area is tidy and ready for the next day/ next session.
- Pray with your team of volunteers- encourage each other with stories and comments from the prayer space.
- Hand over any issues/ concerns to the prayer space organiser or next prayer space leader so they are prepared and aware of any issues there may have been.
- Make sure you/ a member of staff (depending on school guidelines) escort all volunteers off site and don't leave a volunteer alone in the prayer and reflection space.
- Share stories and encourage your church with all that has happened in the space- this may build a bigger team for next time!
- Give feedback to the organiser about the activities- what worked/ what was a challenge etc so they can handover to the next leader well and consider the activities for other schools they may be organising spaces for.

If you have any questions on anything shared in this guide or related to the upcoming prayer space please talk to your prayer space organiser. They will direct questions onto BeSpace if they cannot answer them.



For any further information please visit [www.bespace.be](http://www.bespace.be) or email [info@bespace.be](mailto:info@bespace.be)



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