



Resource sheet 1: *Praying Together*

This material includes practical ideas about how to pray in a variety of styles

The following material is based on a presentation by Bishop John Pritchard and on ideas shared by members of a number of teams.

Perhaps the most important and distinctive thing about any Christian group is that it should be rooted in God. Its life as a team depends on the life-giving Holy Spirit so a key 'task' of an LMDT is to develop a spiritually sustaining habit of prayer. A common pressure for teams is the feeling that they must be able to show that they have achieved something. Team meetings can then become full of business and prayer just a 'nod to God'. The team that lets busy-ness push prayer aside is *like a football without much air in it: it collapses under pressure.*

A team that prays does more than just sustain itself: it also acts as a model to others. We all pray and we all can develop our prayer lives. We can also offer that experience to others in leading the prayers of the whole group. By learning to pray in this group, you will also be equipped to help other groups to pray. So please don't let it ever become only one person's job to lead the team's prayers, particularly if that person is the Vicar or the Reader. Even if it seems a frightening task to start with, give it a try. You are among supportive and encouraging friends!

Be prepared to make space for prayer. Give it pride of place in team meetings: perhaps half an hour set aside at the start; perhaps as a day away as a team, for no other purpose than to be together, have fun, share a meal and give quality time to God. You could make it a pilgrimage to one of the many holy sites in our diocese. Pray for the other members of the team in your own private prayers too – perhaps write a special team prayer and set a time each day to pray it, wherever you happen to be.

Use your imagination to pray in ways that inspire others and stop you falling into a rut. Remember that, as well as words, you can use music, pictures, symbols and silence. We have different 'spiritual styles' and you might want to learn what your preferences are.

(see www.rootsontheweb.com/support/spiritual_styles21 to find out more about this)

Different people find different things helpful, so variety will help to unite the team.

Here are some ideas you might like to try:

- Light a candle at the start of your team meeting, praying that the Holy Spirit will direct your thoughts. Leave the candle burning throughout the meeting as a reminder of God's presence.
- Say the Office of Compline (Common Worship Daily Prayer) together at the end of the meeting
- Spend quality time at the start of a team meeting listening carefully to how life is for each member of the team. Then pray in response to what you have shared.
- Play a piece of music to help you centre on God (e.g. Taizé, Iona, modern instrumental worship music, classical pieces etc.)
- The Benedictine pattern of worship and work: one group uses a set liturgy at the start of the meeting that acknowledges the 'business' of the meeting as flowing from the prayers and concluded by prayers at the end.
- Use photos of people in the church, your community or from the news or different pictures of Jesus as a focus for silent prayer (see the Methodist Church resource *The Christ We Share*).



- Create something beautiful as you offer praise and thanks to God – for example, put out a vase and place a new flower in it as each prayer is said
- Bring some stones and a cross to your meeting. With each burdensome issue that you pray about, place a stone at the foot of the cross and release the burden into God’s care.
- When you are praying for the parish, lay out a map of the area and light a large candle. As each prayer is made, light a night light. Build up a ring of night lights around the edge of the map as you pray for God’s presence to encircle the parish.
- Do not be afraid to pause a meeting in the middle to acknowledge God’s presence in silence for a few minutes.

Reading the Bible together:

Learning together is a key part of being an LMDT (see resource sheet 2) Reading the Bible as a team is an important part of this. A Bible reading is a helpful part of any team prayers and you may decide to study a passage or book of the Bible in more depth as part of your meetings.

Here are two ideas about reading the Bible together:

- Lectio Divina – one voice reads a short passage of scripture with some silence afterward. A second voice reads the same passage and each group member is asked to share a word or phrase that strikes them from the passage. A third voice reads the same passage for a final time and the group, in turn, share their reflections on the passage as they heard it. (The Pilgrim Course uses this method of Bible reading)
- Look together at the gospel reading set for the following Sunday. Share some reflections about how it touches your lives and the lives of those who will gather for worship and hear the reading. Turn those thoughts into prayer.

There are many books and resources for prayer from the Iona Community, Taize, Northumbria Community etc. Similarly for Bible study, you might like to look at the Interpretation Bible Studies series, Tom Wright’s Bible for Everyone series and Pilgrim.

Remember - the team can also play an important part in encouraging others to pray.

Here are some ideas:

- Plan a Lent / Advent course or sermon series on prayer
- Plan a creative approach to a special season (e.g. Lent or Advent). For example: recommend a simple daily office; recommend a book with a prayer-related theme; set up a quiet room/chapel equipped with aids to prayer
- Set up a prayer noticeboard or prayer tree in church, on which anyone can place a prayer request (for example using a post-it note or tie-on label). Use requests as the basis for intercession together as a team
- Organise a prayer walk
- Start a “Christ in Quiet” group, exploring the use of silence and imagination in prayer
- Issue prayer ideas in your weekly pew sheet
- Help people to form “prayer chains” in which prayer requests are passed from home to home
- Find out about a Retreat in Daily Life

For more help with prayer as a church or as an individual do contact the Advisor for Spirituality and Spiritual Direction, the Revd Lesley Chapman via the diocesan website - www.newcastle.anglican.org/spiritual-direction.

