

# Praying with Children



 Presbyterian Church  
of Aotearoa New Zealand

## INTRODUCTION

Prayer is crucial to spiritual growth and faith. It is a way we engage and talk to our spirit. There are many different ways to pray. This resource aims to assist you by giving you practical ideas for praying with children and encouraging you to include prayer as an integral part of your ministry to children.

Here are some key points to keep in mind:

- Include prayer in every session of your Sunday children's program (you will be inspired by what comes out!).
- Be creative. Pray in different ways every time you teach.
- Teach and encourage your children how to pray.
- Create opportunities for children to share their prayers out loud.
- Remind them Jesus is our friend and we need to talk to our friends often
- Allow them to pass on praying out loud if they are shy. Soon they will want to do it after seeing how others do it.

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# 1. PRAYING WITH CHILDREN

## PRAYER TIME

Make prayer integral to your Sunday children's program.

### EXPLAIN

When we pray we talk to God.



This can be done in our minds or out loud.



This can happen at home, at church, at school, anywhere.



Prayer is for saying thanks, asking for help, thinking of others, saying we're sorry.



Jesus (God) is our friend who never leaves us.

### ROLE MODEL



Share your own prayers.



Pray for children when they are feeling scared or vulnerable and teach them to do this for themselves.

### ENCOURAGE



Pray together.



Pray before morning tea by singing a grace



Teach them the Lord's Prayer (see action Lord's Prayer and also Lord's prayer and peace prayer for saying together)

## 2. WELL KNOWN PRAYERS

### THE PEACE PRAYER

*Dear God*

*As I live every day,  
Help me to be a channel for peace.  
May I bring love where there is hatred  
and healing where there is hurt;  
joy where there is sadness  
and hope where there is fear.  
I pray that I may always try  
to understand and comfort other people as well as seeking comfort and  
understanding from them.  
Wherever possible  
may I choose to be  
a light in the darkness  
a help in times of need  
and a caring, honest friend.  
And may justice, kindness, and peace  
flow through my heart forever.*

**Amen.**

### THE LORD'S PRAYER



Our Father in heaven  
Hallowed be your name  
(holy is your name)  
Your Kingdom come  
Your will be done  
On earth as it is in heaven  
Give us this day our daily bread  
And forgive us our sins  
As we forgive those who sin against us  
And lead us not into temptation  
But deliver us from evil  
For yours is the kingdom  
The power and the glory  
Forever and ever

**Amen.**

## **ACTING OUT THE LORD'S PRAYER** (adapted from Messy church version)

This version of the Lord's Prayer enables children especially to connect it with their everyday lives. These simple set of actions could become a regular feature with saying this prayer. The actions help the words to stick as well as open up clues as to what the prayer means.

No particular preparation is needed except to learn the actions.  
It works well with children teaching adults

Ask the congregation or children to stand in a circle and hold hands

### **Actions:**

Our Father ***hands joined***

In heaven ***hands joined and raised high***

Hallowed be your name ***heads bowed***

Your kingdom come ***release hands and make a gesture of invitation***

Your will be done ***a salute***

On earth as it is in heaven ***all stamp feet for 'earth' and then clap high above heads for 'heaven'***

Give us today our daily bread ***hands out ready to receive***

Forgive us our sins, ***hands clasped together in front of the body***  
as we forgive those who sin against us; ***turn and shake hands with the people either side***

Save us from the time of trial ; ***Arms crossed over chest***  
and deliver us from evil ***then both hands pushing out in a stop sign***

For the kingdom, ***one hand pointing up high***

the power ***the other hand raised in a clenched fist;***

and the glory are yours; ***finally, both hands raised above the head high, with fingers spread***

Now ***point downwards***

And forever ***draw a complete large circle in front of yourself with one hand***

Amen - ***'wind-up' Amen... with a long drawn-out 'A', accompanied by the imaginary cranking of a handle, getting louder and followed by the word 'men' being shouted loud along with a big clap of the hands above the head***



### 3. OTHER PRAYER IDEAS

#### THE 5 FINGER PRAYER

Put your hands together like this:

*You can help others when you pray for them.  
Keep your eyes open and use your fingers to help you know  
to pray for.*



who

- **Thumb:** Those closest to you (family)
- **Index finger:** Those that POINT you in the right direction (your teachers at school and church)
- **Tallest finger:** Leaders (of our town, city and country)
- **Ring finger:** is the weakest finger. Pray for sick and sad people who need help.
- **Smallest finger:** Yourself last, after you have prayed for others

#### PRAYER BALL IDEAS

The Prayer ball has various topics on it and you throw it to a child and where their right thumb lands that is the topic that they pray for. (Sometimes there is something different to share.)

Some of the questions and ideas are:

- What scares you? Ask God to help you when you feel afraid
- Thank God for someone who is older than you.
- Thank God for your favourite teacher
- Some children don't have clean water. Ask God to help them.
- Pray for someone who lives where there are palm trees
- Thank God for the new friends you have made
- Pray for your favourite singer or band
- Ask God to provide food for a hungry child
- Tell about a fun day you've had Thank God for that day
- Pray for someone who is having a birthday
- What makes you angry – tell God about it
- Tell about a fun day you've had Thank God for that day
- Make a sound like an elephant Pray for a child who lives in a place where you might find an elephant
- Who can you help this week ask God to show you how
- Pray for kids who don't have any shoes
- With a friend what is your favourite thing about God tell him
- Pray for kids who can't go to school
- Fly around the room and sing your favourite praise song
- Pop up and say one thing to praise God for.
- Pretend to swim like a dolphin – pray for people who live near water
- What is your favourite song to praise God – sing it if you want
- If you could email God what would you say?
- Announce it out loud – what is your favourite time to pray



## PRAYER ACRONYMS

Quite often children don't know what to pray about and may think prayer is just telling God about the things they need or want. Children may hear lots of prayers if they go to church (or very few if they don't). They may not realize that there are different kinds of prayer. God delights in our **praise (adoration)**. He wants us to be honest and humble before Him, admitting our wrongdoing and asking for His forgiveness. (**Confession**) He calls us to care for others and pray for our world (**Intercession**) He wants us to **thank** Him for specific things He has done and in faith thank Him for the things He will do (**supplication**). Some of these different prayers can be taught and remembered by using acronyms.



**ACTS** has been around for a while.

A= Adoration  
C= Confession  
T= Thanksgiving  
S= Supplication



When you pray, you will have **JOY** if you remember:  
**J**esus   **O**thers   **Y**ourself

What about **STOP** and pray = **S**orry, **T**hank you, **O**thers, **P**lease.  
Use a stop sign symbol as a reminder.



Continuing the traffic signs theme, a traffic light can help children understand **how God answers prayer**. Sometimes when we pray we ask for things that may not be best for us, or we can't see the bigger picture. God loves us and in wisdom may answer:

RED= stop, NO; ORANGE= wait, not yet; GREEN= go, YES.

**a tsp** can be a short prayer with a little of everything or used to teach 4 kinds of prayer heard most Sundays in our churches. Cheryl did this recently over 4 Sundays, introducing one each week, and using a teaspoon as a prop. (In cookbooks teaspoon gets abbreviated to 'tsp') Everyone could be given a teaspoon on the last week to remind them to pray. Write the 4 words on the spoon. (one on each side of handle and one on each side of dish part.)

**a= adore:** God we praise you for who you ARE and what you DO (these words are found in 'adore'.)

**t= thanks:** the offering prayer is when we bring our gifts and our

lives to God in thanks.

**s= sorry:** this is usually the second part of the opening prayer (adoration

and confession).

**p= please:** this is when we make our requests to God for others and ourselves, also called intercessions.



Just **tsp** (with the same meanings) is also used in visual and craft prayers- e.g. the 3 sides of a pyramid, the 3 leaves of a shamrock or trefoil.

Different prayers can be added to each side or leaf.



Or **PUSH= Pray Until Something Happens!**

And don't forget....

**WWJD = What Would Jesus Do?**

How did He pray? What did He teach about prayer?

"The Lord's Prayer"- the best model

And **FROG= Fully Reliant On God.**

There are many resources around this theme. Examples of Bible people who prayed and demonstrated their reliance on God.



## PRAYER STARTER

Do you know what the children in your group think about prayer?

This idea, along with 100 others, is from

'*New ideas for Creative Prayer – 101 ideas for praying with 3-11 year olds*' by Judith Merrell, Scripture Union. Borrow it from the Kids Friendly library or buy your own copy. You will never be stuck for an idea to involve children or adults in prayer again!

Type out the following 10 statements on individual pieces of card and fix them around the room. (or change the statements/have less statements)

***Prayers are so boring because they go on and on***

***Most people pray using too many big words***

***I never know what to pray about***

***Talking to God is like talking to a friend***

***Sometimes I forget to pray***

***It's good to pray every day***

***I talk to God about everything***

***I always pray when I am scared or worried about something***

***At church is the best place to pray***

***I only talk to God about the really important big things***

Give each child 3 paper clips and ask them to walk around reading the cards then fix their paper clips on the 3 statements that they agree with most strongly. Bring the children back together and 'count the votes.' Use this as a starter for talking about and teaching about prayer. Even the disciples found it hard to pray. Jesus wants us to talk to Him regularly like we talk to our friends. We don't have to use special language and our prayers don't have to be long or even spoken out loud. Prayer is amazing. It is our special way of keeping in touch with Jesus. He loves us and wants to be part of all of our life, not just Sunday or hard times. Remember... Anyone can pray about Anything. Anytime. Anywhere!

Finish with a prayer asking God to help each child to make a time to pray each day in the coming week. Even better, use a prayer idea from the book that encourages children to say their own simple prayers - aloud or silent, spoken or drawn, asking God to help them to pray.

<p><b>Prayers are so boring because they go on and on</b></p>	<p><b>Most people pray using too many big words</b></p>
<p><b>I never know what to pray about</b></p>	<p><b>Talking to God is like talking to a friend</b></p>
<p><b>Sometimes I forget to pray</b></p>	<p><b>It's good to pray every day</b></p>
<p><b>I talk to God about everything</b></p>	<p><b>I always pray when I am scared or worried about something</b></p>
<p><b>At church is the best place to pray</b></p>	<p><b>I only talk to God about the really important big things</b></p>

## MUSICAL PRAYERS

Have cards/coloured paper with types of prayers on them (as above) and place them all over the floor. Play music and get kids to march around the room singing with the CD. When the music stops, kids jump onto nearest card, close eyes for 5 seconds and say a silent prayer as per the card.

## CANDLELIGHT PRAYER

You'll need matches, a big candle, and small individual candles (can use tea lights @ 8 for \$2).

Place the big candle on a table in the centre of a preferably darkened room. As you light the candle, invite kids to gather in a circle around the table. Invite a child to light the candle saying: "We light the Christ candle" Get all other kids to respond: "Christ is the light of the world"

Stand by the candle and say: Today we're going to offer prayers of praise (or thanks). Pick up a small candle, light it from the big candle, and complete this sentence prayer: God, I praise (thank) you for \_\_\_\_\_. Invite kids to take candles and follow your example.

Have everyone carefully extinguish the candles, close their eyes and sit in silence for half a minute. You may want to allow kids to take their candles home to use during personal quiet times with God. If you do, encourage children to get their parents' permission to light it.

A variation: Light a small candle from the big candle and then give it to a child saying: "May God's light shine through you \_\_\_\_\_" Invite that child to light a small tee light from the main "Christ" candle and present to another child saying the same words and so on.

## INTRODUCING PRAYER – THE PRAYING MANTIS

*"This little bug looks a little like a grasshopper, but do you know what it is? That's right a praying mantis. The name comes from their front legs. Their front legs are folded like praying hands. But the bug isn't praying. God made this bug with the front legs folded to look the way it does. Sometimes boys and girls fold their hands in*



*church. They look like the praying mantis, but like the praying mantis, they aren't really praying. They just look like they are. Prayer is more than folding your hands or positioning yourself on your knees. Prayer is talking to God. You can talk to God when you're riding your bike. You can talk to him as you walk to the store. Prayer isn't about a location. You don't have to be in church or on your knees. It isn't about folded hands, it's about conversation. God wants you to talk to Him, just like you would your best friend. You are so precious to Him and He wants you to know Him. He wants you to talk to Him every single day."*

## GRACES

Teach children graces to share before morning tea and to take home to share with their families

### **Superman Grace**

Thank you Lord for giving us food (one arm up)  
Thank you Lord for giving us food (other arm up)  
Thank you Lord, Thank you Lord (wave arms)  
For giving us food (circle arms around and take off)

### **The Adams Family**

Diddle dee dum (click, click), Diddle dee dum (click, click)  
Diddle dee dum, Diddle dee dum, Diddle dee dum (click, click)

We're hungry and we're thirsty,  
We're rumbly in our tummy  
We know the food is yummy  
And so we thank you Lord (Repeat chorus)

### **Thank you for the world so sweet** (hum hum)

Thank you for the world so sweet (hum hum)  
Thank you for the food we eat (yum yum)  
Thank you for the birds that singalingaling  
Thank you God for everything.

**Row Row Row the Boat**

We thank you Lord for happy hearts  
For rain and sunny weather  
We thank you Lord for this our food  
And that we are together.

**Oh the Lord's been good to me**

Oh the Lord's been good to me  
And so I thank you Lord  
For giving me the things I need  
The sun and the rain and the apple seed  
Thank you thank you Lord.

**We will we will thank you (tune: We will rock you – Queen)**

God you are a good God  
Please accept this grace  
As we sit and feed our face  
We've got food on our plates  
We think that's great  
And pretty soon we'll be putting on weight  
Singing we will we will thank you (clap clap)  
We will we will thank you (clap clap)

## PRAYER SPEECH BUBBLES IDEAS

### Preparation

I photocopied these into 4 different coloured papers (green=thanks, red=please, blue=sorry and yellow=prayer 'any...') For me anyway these particular colours say something (without needing to even be explained) about the kind of statement on the card- green= growth and importance of giving thanks; red= through Jesus we come with our requests; blue= sad and 'blue' also when we say sorry God forgives us, washes us clean; yellow= bright and sunny, positive and true!

### Introducing the speech bubbles

I would always start teaching on prayer with a new group with the 'any' statements- explaining that there is no special position, place or time to pray. God loves us to talk and listen to Him anywhere, anytime about anything. Thanks prayers next and lots of practice with this before introducing please and sorry prayers.

CEC, CEP and other curriculums have a clear progression of teaching on prayer for different ages –especially in the school classroom- and will have other ideas that these visuals can be used with.

### Ideas

Put the posters up on the wall (in a Sunday school or church school classroom)

Display on prayer mat or table.

Pass around the circle at prayer time to give children the words to start their prayer with. (the hardest part)

Put on the white board or large paper and brainstorm things to say Thank you (please or sorry about.)

Children could draw their prayers, model in clay, shape with pipe-cleaners, collage of newspaper pictures or headlines

Bring to table or mat or display on wall to 'gather' prayers together.

Remind children often about different ways and how to of prayer using these visual starters.

### What a privilege to help teach children that they can pray DIRECTLY to God anywhere, anytime about anything.

*"In the holidays, I was at the top of the hydro-slide and I was really scared of going down by myself. But I prayed and asked God to help me. Then it was like Jesus was right there with me and I wasn't scared anymore! It was fun!"*  
(7 year old girl after a prayer activity introducing 'Please prayers' July 2011)



## INTERACTIVE PRAYER STATIONS

### M&M Prayers

This prayer method uses the different colours of M&Ms to pray about different things.

#### Preparation:

A large bowl of M&Ms and printed chart (see below).

#### Execution:

1. Choose an M&M from the bowl.
2. Match the colour to the chart, and pray about the corresponding prayer point.
3. Eat your M&M!
4. Repeat as many times as desired!

This is a good way to get young people praying a variety of types of prayers: e.g. praise and thanks, supplication, intercession, confession etc.

*[Adapted from: "Worshipping Unplugged, Volume One: A Beginning" by Rob Hanks, UCA NSW Synod Youth Unit, Pumphouse Publishing, 2006, p35]*

	(Red)	Something you're concerned about
	(Yellow)	Something about God
	(Green)	Something you are thankful for
	(Brown)	Something you are sorry for
	(Orange)	A prayer for others
	(Blue)	Something you'd like to change

## Prayer Stones

The use of prayer stones is a great way to allow young people the space for meaningful confession of things they've done and letting go of things that have happened to them.

### Preparation:

- A basket or tray of stones. (If you want to make your stones personal to the church, you can have your church/youth group collect these from places they have been and build up your collection over time.)
- A large bowl of water for washing the stones.

### Execution:

1. Take a stone
2. As you hold the stone, think about the things that you have done this week that you wish you hadn't done. Think about the things you didn't do but wish you had. Think about the things that other people have done or that have happened that have hurt you.
3. Give all of these things to God. Let go of them from your heart and place them onto your stone. Ask God for forgiveness and healing.
4. Now place your stone into the bowl of water as a sign that God forgives you and makes you clean and whole. Let your fingers feel the cleansing water.

Prayer stones can be used in a whole-church setting as well as in a smaller group.

## Play Dough Prayers

This prayer method allows for kinaesthetic contemplation.

### Preparation:

- Play dough
- A plate or tray for display

### Execution:

1. Take a piece of play dough
2. Use the dough to model something that is on your heart. As you are modelling pray for/about that situation/person/thing.
3. Place your prayer creation on display (young people can take them home)

## Thanks and Praise Cards

This prayer method makes a colourful display of thanks and praise. It could be used for a whole-church situation.

### Preparation:

- Pieces of paper/card (about index card sized)
- Felt tip pens (You can supplement the felt tip pens with other craft items such as glitter, glue feathers etc. as desired)
- Mini-sized clothes pegs
- A "Washing line" of string ready for hanging up the creations!

### Execution:

1. Take a piece of card
2. Write or draw something that you are thankful for or want to praise God for.
3. Peg up your prayer on the washing line!

## Incense Prayers

This prayer method reminds us that our prayers are like sweet smelling incense to God. It is good to teach our young people to take the time to intercede for others.

"May my prayer be counted as incense before You..." Ps 141:2a

"...each one holding a harp and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints." Rev 5:8b

### Preparation:

- An aroma-therapy oil burner – emitting pleasant fragrance (or incense sticks)
- A large candle – lit in the centre
- A bowl of unlit tea-light – candles on the left
- A tray to put the lit candles on – on the right.

### Execution:

1. Light a candle and pray for someone in need.
2. As you smell the fragrance from the burner imagine your prayer travelling to God as sweet incense.

## 4. OTHER RESOURCES

**'New ideas for Creative Prayer – 101 ideas for praying with 3-11 year olds'** by Judith Merrell, Scripture Union. Borrow from the Kids Friendly library (contact [http://admin@kidsfriendly.org.nz](mailto:admin@kidsfriendly.org.nz))

### Prayer Ball

The kids love to use this. Remind them if they catch the ball they will be leading us in prayer. If that scares them, encourage them by saying they only have to read what is under their right thumb. Encourage all the other children to say "Amen" which means "We agree". Ask them what "Amen" means – many of them know. (See ideas for using the prayer ball)

### Prayer Wheel

Another popular prayer activity, that involves children spinning the arrow and offering a prayer according to where the arrow lands. Again, if they are nervous, tell them you will help them come up with a prayer idea. Once they see how easy it is for others, they lose their shyness.

### How to make a Prayer Wheel

Buy a round plastic tray from the \$2 shop, one metal or wooden ruler and a 20mm x 5mm bolt with wing nut and 4 washers. Mark the centre of the tray and drill a hole slightly bigger than the bolt size. Cut the ruler to  $\frac{3}{4}$  of the diameter of the tray. Drill a hole in the ruler (about  $\frac{1}{3}$ <sup>rd</sup> along). Cut a point on the  $\frac{2}{3}$ <sup>rd</sup> side. Fix the ruler to the tray with two washers

between the ruler and the tray and two washers between the ruler and the top of the bolt. Add ideas for prayers on the outer rim of the tray.



*This document is intended as a resource for the Church. The information it contains is not prescriptive. The Book of Order and its subordinate standards contain the Church's official rules and directions. Any perceived conflict between the information contained in this resource and the Church's Book of Order and subordinate standards is entirely unintentional.*

## **ORGANIC RESOURCES**

All our Kids Friendly resources are ever-evolving "works in progress". So if you have ideas, websites, resources and stories to share or add please let us know. And if you notice any mistakes in this resources please alert us!

**To contact a Kids Friendly Coach or Advisor check our website:**

**<http://www.kidsfriendly.org.nz/about/contact-us/>**

**or email us:**

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