

Ways to Pray if you can't get to Church

**Prayer Resources for when you can't get to church or for use at home
The North Wakefield Benefice - The Revd Dr Jo Kershaw**

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Perhaps you find it hard to pray at home?
You aren't alone in this, but we hope this booklet will help.

Being stuck at home can be boring, frustrating, or lonely, even if there are other people in the house with you! And if you are very unwell, or worried you might become so, it can be frightening, too. God is with us in these situations, whether we are conscious of his presence or not. Remembering this, and relying on him in prayer, can help you to keep going.

In normal circumstances, we are pleased to arrange for sick or housebound people to have communion at home, but where quarantine/ self-isolation rules are in place, this won't be possible. But Common Worship reminds us in its liturgy for the sick that "Believers who cannot physically receive the sacrament are to be assured that they are partakers by faith of the body and blood of Christ and of the benefits he conveys to us by them." Illness – or self-isolation – can't separate us from Jesus' love.

We hope this booklet will give you some ideas about how to maintain and deepen your faith and your prayers. God wants us to turn to him in all our troubles and perplexities, even if we can't always find the "right words". And remember - the rest of the church is praying for you!

The North Wakefield Benefice Ministry Team.

Simple Forms of Prayer

- Lighting a candle before you pray can help you to focus and listen.
- Jesus taught us the Lord's Prayer so that we would always have words to say. Use it!
- The "Examen". Don't let the name put you off! This is a very simple way to prayerfully review your day with God in five steps:
 1. Become aware of God's presence, or ask God to help you remember he's there with you.
 2. Review the day with gratitude (as best you can!)
 3. Pay attention to how you're feeling about it.
 4. Choose one feature of the day and pray about it.
 5. Look toward tomorrow. What do you expect the day to hold? Ask God to help you remember he's with you.
- Lectio Divina: again, if this is new to you, don't let the name put you off. Lectio helps you to read the Bible in a prayerful way. Pick a short passage of Scripture (it can be anything you like, but if you're stuck, parables of Jesus or the shorter Psalms are a good choice). Read it through, slowly, two or three times. Notice what jumps out at you, and ask yourself, what is God saying to me here? Reflect on this for a few minutes. Then, read the passage again. Now ask yourself, what do I want to say to God? - then say it. Lastly, sit quietly and know that God is with you.

Some Collects and Other Prayers To Say

Sovereign God,
the defence of those who trust in you
and the strength of those who suffer:
look with mercy on our affliction
and deliver us through our mighty Saviour Jesus Christ.
Amen.

O God, our sovereign and our shepherd,
who brought again your Son Jesus Christ from the valley of death,
comfort us with your protecting presence
and your angels of goodness and love,
that we also may come home
and dwell with him in your house for ever. Amen.

Lord God, whose Son, Jesus Christ,
understood people's fear and pain
before they spoke of them,
we pray for those in hospital or sick at home;
surround the frightened with your tenderness;
give strength to those in pain;
hold the weak in your arms of love,
and give hope and patience
to those who are recovering;
we ask this through the same Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

Almighty God,
you see that we have no power of ourselves to help ourselves:
keep us both outwardly in our bodies,
and inwardly in our souls;
that we may be defended from all adversities
which may happen to the body,
and from all evil thoughts which may assault and hurt the soul;
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen

A prayer of confession:
Father eternal, giver of light and grace,
we have sinned against you and against our neighbour,
in what we have thought,
in what we have said and done,
through ignorance, through weakness,
through our own deliberate fault.
We have wounded your love
and marred your image in us.
We are sorry and ashamed
and repent of all our sins.
For the sake of your Son Jesus Christ,
who died for us,
forgive us all that is past
and lead us out from darkness
to walk as children of light. Amen

The collect for purity/ prayer of preparation:

Almighty God,
to whom all hearts are open,
all desires known,
and from whom no secrets are hidden:
cleanse the thoughts of our hearts
by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit,
that we may perfectly love you,
and worthily magnify your holy name;
through Christ our Lord. Amen.

God be in my head, and in my understanding;
God be in my eyes, and in my looking;
God be in my mouth, and in my speaking;
God be in my heart, and in my thinking;
God be at mine end, and at my departing. Amen

Prayers before sleeping:
Be present, O merciful God,
and protect us through the silent hours of this night,
so that we who are wearied
by the changes and chances of this fleeting world,
may rest upon your eternal changelessness;
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Abide with us, Lord, for it is evening,
and day is drawing to a close.
Abide with us and with your whole Church,
in the evening of the day,
in the evening of life,
in the evening of the world;
abide with us and with all your faithful ones, O Lord,
in time and in eternity. Amen.

Lord Jesus Christ, Son of the living God,
who at this evening hour lay in the tomb
and so hallowed the grave
to be a bed of hope for all who put their trust in you:
give us such sorrow for our sins,
which were the cause of your passion,
that when our bodies lie in the dust,
our souls may live with you forever. Amen.

(Source: Common Worship/ The Church of England Liturgical Commission)

Sometimes sitting in silence can be a powerful way to pray. Ask the Holy Spirit to lead you.

A Form of Prayer During the Day

This is a form of prayer, sometimes called an 'office', which you can use on its own, or use to expand your daily 'quiet time' with the Bible. If you are doing the latter, then replace the suggested readings with the ones your Bible notes/ plan suggest. You might also choose to use the "Daily Eucharistic Lectionary" readings, or the readings for Morning or Evening Prayer, which are available online (<http://almanac.oremus.org>). You should always say a Psalm, but you could use a different scheme. The simplest is to work through the Book of Psalms using a Psalm a day (perhaps splitting some of them).

When saying this office alone, say both the parts in plain and in bold.

O God, make speed to save us.

O Lord, make haste to help us.

My heart tells of your word, 'Seek my face.'

Your face, Lord, will I seek.

Praise - you could sing a hymn, listen to music, or say

We praise you, O God,
we acclaim you as the Lord;
all creation worships you,
the Father everlasting.

To you all angels, all the powers of heaven,
the cherubim and seraphim, sing in endless praise:
Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might,
heaven and earth are full of your glory.

Read a Psalm (see table)

End the Psalm with:

**Glory to the Father and to the Son
and to the Holy Spirit;
as it was in the beginning is now
and shall be for ever. Amen.**

Bible Reading, eg

Sunday: Revelation 21.1-4, Monday: Isaiah 49.1b-4, Tuesday: Deuteronomy 28.1-6, Wednesday: Matthew 9.35-end, Thursday: John 17.18-23, Friday: Luke 9.22-25, Saturday: John 11.17-26a.

Intercessions: pray for the Church, the world, and for individuals.

This, or another collect is said:

O Lord our God,
grant us grace to desire you with our whole heart;
that so desiring, we may seek and find you;
and so finding, may love you;
and so loving, may hate those sins from which you have delivered us;
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

The Lord's Prayer is said.

May God who made both heaven and earth bless us. **Amen.**

Appendix - a fortnight's cycle of Psalms

Sunday	119.1-32
Monday	119.33-56
Tuesday	119.57-80
Wednesday	119.81-104
Thursday	119.105-128
Friday	119.129-152
Saturday	119.153-end
Sunday	121, 122
Monday	123, 124
Tuesday	125, 126
Wednesday	127
Thursday	128
Friday	129, 130
Saturday	131, 133

Common Worship: Daily Prayer - Prayer During the Day (adapted).

Some More Bible Passages To Read

Psalm 23
 Psalm 27
 Isaiah 43.1-21
 Matthew 6.25-34
 John 14.1-7
 Romans 8.18-38
 Philippians 4.1-13

Jeremiah 29.11-13
 Psalm 139
 Habbakuk 3.17-19
 Matthew 11.25-29
 John 17:1-26
 Colossians 3.12-17
 1 Corinthians 13

A Prayer for Assurance of Christ's Presence ("An Act of Spiritual Communion").

Begin with the Collect for Purity (p 7), and then read the Gospel for Sunday, or another appropriate passage of Scripture (e.g. John 14: 1-7).

Examine your heart and confess your sins to God, using your own words or the prayer of confession on p 6, and then say

The Almighty and merciful Lord, grant me pardon and absolution of all my sins. Amen.

Then say

In union, O Lord with the faithful at every altar of your Church, where the Holy Eucharist is celebrated, I desire to offer you praise and thanksgiving. I present to you my soul and body with the earnest wish that I may always be united to you. And since I cannot now receive you sacramentally, I ask you to come spiritually into my heart. I unite myself to you, and embrace you with all the affections of my soul. Let nothing ever separate you from me. May I live and die in your love. Amen.

You might like to sit in silence for a while. Finish your time of prayer by saying the Lord's Prayer.

("The Armed Forces Prayerbook" (The Episcopal Church USA), 1951, adapted).

Creative Ways of Praying

- You might find it helpful to listen to favourite hymns or worship songs, or other pieces of music that have a special meaning for you.
- Pictures can help prompt our prayers - for instance photos of loved ones, maps or pictures of our community or the wider world
- If the news is getting you down, try praying for the people and situations that are mentioned.
- Why not try doodling, painting, or drawing as you pray?

Online Resources

- You can find services of Morning, Midday, Evening, and Night Prayer from the Church of England online at <https://www.churchofengland.org/prayer-and-worship/join-us-daily-prayer>, arranged for you with the readings of the day. There is also an app you can download to your smartphone or tablet (follow the link on the web page or search for "daily prayer" in your app store and look for the blue and white logo). Choose whether to pray in modern language, or to use the Book of Common Prayer.
"Prayer During the Day" is the shortest and simplest of the services, morning and evening prayer have the longest portions of Scripture.
- An Ordinary Office: <http://anordinaryoffice.org.uk/>. "An Ordinary Office" is designed to be very accessible (you can follow it through text, symbol, audio, or video). Easy to pray if you're unwell or very tired. Morning, midday, and evening prayer, plus "nocturnes" for those who can't sleep.
- The Northumbria Community: <https://www.northumbriacommunity.org/offices/how-to-use-daily-office/>. Short but poetic forms of daily prayer in the "Celtic" style.
- Pray As You Go: <https://pray-as-you-go.org/>. A short (11-12 minutes) daily act of prayer and worship, available online or as a tablet and smartphone app (search for "pray as you go" in your app store and look for the headphone logo). This easy to use, beautifully produced site uses music and pictures to help you pray and reflect with a passage of Scripture. Follows the Roman Catholic calendar, but widely used by Christians of all traditions. There are also special seasonal meditations.

• Word Live:
<https://content.scriptureunion.org.uk/wordlive/living-faith>. Daily Bible study and prayer points from Scripture Union. Linked to a Facebook group where you can share your thoughts and prayers with other Christians.

A Prayer Labyrinth

You might find it helpful to 'walk' the labyrinth by tracing it with your finger as you pray.

