



St Francis C of E Primary School & Nursery Prayer Week



The aim of the week we spent focussing on prayer was to:

- Raise awareness of the importance and centrality of prayer in Christian life.
- Discuss the questions:
 - Why do we pray?
 - What do we pray about?
 - How can we pray?



Themes:

Every day was centered on a theme which was developed in a variety of ways. Our Collective Worship included a different prayer activity every day and this was explored further in daily class and lunchtime activities. Lunchtime activities were planned and led by the worship council and the children were all involved in whole school and class collective worship. We also created whole school prayer areas which anyone, adult or child could add to during the week.

Visitors

The week was a fantastic opportunity for us to develop closer links with St Francis church and we were delighted that members of the congregation were willing to visit each class to share their thoughts about the importance of prayer to them. Some of our parents also came in to speak to the children and supported our worship council in running lunchtime prayer activities. The adults explained what they prayed about, when they prayed and what they found helped them to pray and feel closer to God. The children heard about the use of the Bible, music and art in prayer as well as the importance of being able to speak just a short "help!" prayer or sit in silence to listen to God. Guidance was given beforehand where children may feel sensitive about issues around prayer, including illness or bereavement and teachers were there to help the children feel secure and share ideas if they wanted to.

| <u>Day</u> | <u>Theme</u> | <u>Creative ideas for class reflections</u> |
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| Monday Led by Jill Stolberg from B'ham Diocese 1 Thessalonians 5:18 | Be thankful | Children are invited to write or draw things that they are grateful for onto giant 'thank you' cards, heart-shaped post-it notes, etc. Sow a seed to celebrate creation, Make a "Blessings box." EYFS - paper houses, prayer shouts. |

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| Tuesday Psalm 46:10 | Be still | Small groups of Children are invited into a gazebo/tent to pause and reflect on their lives, God, spirituality, or on a specific question for a few minutes. Cushions and visual cues often help with this. Icons? Beautiful display of nature pictures and items brought in. A time of silence to be planned into the day. |
| Wednesday Mark 1: 1-5 | Be sorry | Children are invited to reflect on, and write or draw their 'sorry' onto a Magnadoodle, or onto paper thrown into a bin or fed into a paper-shredder, in sand, with water etc. Place stones at the foot of the cross, wash hands in bowl of water symbolically. Draw path doodle or pray a sorry prayer. Music can be played to aid a time of quiet reflection. |
| Thursday Matthew 6: 14-15 | Be forgiven | Children are invited to begin to forgive others for the wrong that has been done or said to them, by dropping a stone into a bowl of water, writing or drawing their forgiveness onto paper or card, etc. Stick sculpture & Fizzy forgiveness (dissolving a effervescent vitamin tablet symbolically in water) - Ideas from Prayer Spaces for Schools. |
| Friday Matthew 6:25-34 | Letting go | Children are invited to write or draw their worries, anxieties, fears, etc. - things they want to 'let go' of - onto luggage tags, into a box, onto stones which they place in a large bag, etc. Weightlifting worry - write worry onto a ring of card which is threaded onto a long tube and lifted. God loves you - create own prayer collection. |

Ideas for creative prayer activities - lots!

{ HYPERLINK "http://www.prayerspacesinschools.com/resources/library" }

Collective Worship:

During assemblies the children experienced different approaches to prayer such as:

1. Prayer hands (each finger represents a different prayer need)
2. Taize music and visual prayer presentation with music
3. Praying the compass - facing different walls each with a different prayer focus
4. Rev Peter leads morning prayer
5. Mexican wave - Amen when children lead our spontaneous prayers

Lunchtime:

The worship council led creative activities that the rest of the school could choose to join in with during lunchtimes such as:

- Braided prayers - 3 ribbons plaited to make a braid, each strand representing a different prayer which is then hung from a washing line
- Making prayer chatterboxes (very popular!)

- Play dough - expressing prayers kinaesthetically
- Paper chain of prayers
- Giant Jenga - building a strong community (bricks labelled - can't stand together without every part)
- Cardboard homes - sitting in boxes - pictures of the homeless.

Whole School Prayer Areas - ongoing throughout the week:

Prayer Wall

Particular focus on prayers of thanks (heart shaped post its) - also an opportunity to promote our prayer tree and heart board for more personal requests.

World Wall

Children are invited to add post its or stick prayers for people they know, or events happening around the world onto a world map including newspaper articles about topical world events.

Big Questions

Children are invited to write 'big questions' about God, life, themselves, their beliefs, suffering, etc. onto a giant question mark displayed in the school hall.

This was also the week of prayer for World Peace which involved making a paper crane. We found further information on developing this theme here:

{ HYPERLINK "<http://www.barnabasinschools.org.uk/week-of-prayer-for-world-peace-october/>" }

Some staff linked this to our charity work and/or links to the community and the children prayed specifically for them.

Children's Feedback:

"I really enjoyed decorating my cross because it made me think about Jesus." Jack, Year 2

"The special picture Mr Gibson showed us was really colourful and interesting. I liked learning about how he prays to God." Daisy, Year 2

"When we played "Community Jenga" I learnt that when you build a community everyone needs to work together to keep it working." Isabella, Year 5

"Giant Jenga was great fun!" Sam, Year 5

"I learnt that prayer is about talking and listening to Jesus." Charlie, Year 5

"It was good to pray for world events, especially asking God to end wars." Fynn, Year 5

Adult Feedback:

"I really enjoyed getting to know other members of St Francis church and hearing about why prayer is important to them. It helped me to reflect on the importance of prayer in my life."

Mrs Jones

