

## ***Find a space***

### ***The church is open for you – to sit, to think, to pray***

#### **A focus on missional prayer**

*Find a space* is a pilot project that aims to help parishes to explore and connect with the spiritual interest of the people of the communities they serve. It has arisen out of the experience of parishes involved in the Houses of Prayer initiative and recent research by the University of York. This research, about covid, churches and communities, found that nearly 1 in 2 non-members of the church said they might have come to a church building for prayer<sup>1</sup>, had they been open.

The project will help to explore this finding: Is this increased desire for prayer true in your parish? Is it still true now during the recovery phase as people continue to think through the experiences of the last year? If so, how can you encourage more local people to connect with God through prayer?

To find out, the approach the project takes is simple - a parish hosts a dedicated week or weekend to throw open the doors, to be more public with their continued role of praying for and with local communities. This might be during August or early Autumn or at another time that works best for the church. Many churches are already involved in initiatives like this: perhaps this project will provide a fresh encouragement for organisers and volunteers.

#### **Why do this?**

There are reasons to think such an approach have value. In addition to the York findings described above):

1 in 2 people come to faith through spiritual encounter, which is as influential as growing up in a Christian home<sup>2</sup>

During the pandemic some media reported a 50% increase in the number of people searching online for prayer<sup>3</sup>

The desire for prayer and reflection goes far beyond the church congregation.

Can your parish capture this moment to go deeper or experiment with new ways to connect with those who are spiritually seeking?+

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<sup>1</sup> **[Churches, COVID-19 and Community: experiences, needs and supporting recovery](#)**. By the Centre for the Study of Christianity and Culture, University of York, March 2021. Full report, p56.

<sup>2</sup> Barna Group, on behalf of the Church of England, Evangelical Alliance and HOPE Together. (2015). Talking Jesus: Perceptions of Jesus, Christians and evangelism in England. Retrieved from <https://talkingjesus.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/Talking-Jesus.pdf>, p23. If key factors in coming to faith associated with spiritual encounter are added together, this totals either 41% or 48%, depending on which are included.

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/global-health/climate-and-people/pandemic-prompts-surge-interest-prayer-google-data-show/>

### **How can your parish take part?**

At its simplest, a parish opens their building for prayer and 'goes public' on inviting local people to come. This opening up is publicised widely, using posters and flyers produced by the diocese if they are appropriate, or through the local press, community noticeboards and the church's social media.

As well as simply opening their doors church's might:

- Have people present willing to talk or offer prayer. A church could team up with another church to increase capacity.
- Make prayer resources available for people to take away, e.g. [Try Praying](#) booklet and website.
- Provide interactive prayer stations outside or inside church, or a prayer wall/board or interactive prayer space.
- Provide or highlight prayer boxes on the outside of the church building for people to 'post' their prayers
- Develop a video to show in church, perhaps on a loop - a short talk on what prayer is and how it is possible, or explaining what prayer means to different people
- Introduce an invitation to pray with existing events or activities, such as in a community church café
- Encourage the congregation to pray for this and/or as part of this
- Offer people stepping stones to discover more on their faith/spiritual journey, e.g. promote an Autumn discipleship course.

Do what is possible. 'Less but better' is far preferable than trying to do too much.

### **What support will the Diocese provide?**

1. Branded promotional material : poster and flyer template in different sizes available to download
2. Personal support and advice from Outreach Team
3. Houses of Prayer webpage: see 'resources for creating prayer spaces' at [Diocese of Chester | Houses of Prayer \(anglican.org\)](https://www.anglican.org/Houses-of-Prayer)