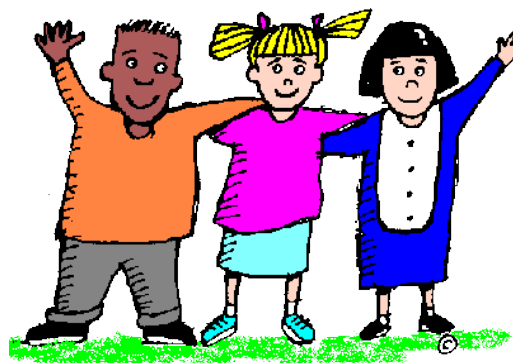


Working On Worship (21)



Prayer Spaces in School



"Prayer Spaces in Schools enable children and young people to explore faith and spirituality from a broadly Christian perspective in a safe, creative and interactive way. A range of flexible resources can be adapted to work for participants aged 5 to 18 bringing an experiential dimension to a variety of subject areas and to pastoral aspects of school life."

A story to think about

From: <http://www.prayerspacesinschools.com/stories>

"In February we were asked if we could provide a new activity at our village primary school during a PSHE week in June. Members of local churches are already involved with 'Open the Book' (see **Working on Worship paper 10**), small group pastoral work, assemblies and Governors.

The idea of Prayer Spaces in Schools sprang to mind and from there began an ecumenical conversation with Truro Diocese who arranged for a training session. We were inspired by this and were very pleased to already have a date in the diary, especially when we were told that this would be the first one of its kind in Cornwall!

The PSHE week was amazing, and we were delighted that many of the children said that their favourite thing had been our prayer space, called "prederi" (a Cornish word for "to think upon" which connects well with local culture). It was thrilling to find that after their initial visit children came back many times throughout the week to give thanks, say sorry, talk about their fears and sorrows or just to be still.

In total we had 11 activities including "Fizzy Forgiveness" and "Thankful Dough" but the most popular area was our sensory room (renamed by Year 3

children as “the room where you take your worries”) containing a bubble tube, thankful ribbons, cardboard home (to link with a visit at the start of the week from St Petroc's, the Cornish homeless charity) and “Be Still”, a tented area for quiet reflection.

We were blown away by many of the comments made not only by children, but also staff:

“This feels like a very spiritual place”

“Things can last forever”

And from the pupils:

“Fizzy Forgiveness lifts a weight from my shoulders”

“When I look at the bubbles it makes me think of going up to God”

“I feel safe and that nothing can harm me”

“I believed in God before but now I've been around here I believe in Him a bit more”

“God doesn't just see a little bit of the room – He sees the whole room”

“It's no fault of their own that people are homeless – circumstances have transpired against them!”

In addition to these there were many amazing conversations about God, life and spirituality and children and adults were able to talk about worries and sadness with team members.

The school are thrilled with the event and are now planning a permanent space – not necessarily the same as “prederi” but rather somewhere that children can go to reflect, or to have someone to talk to. We are currently talking with the school about the possibilities of providing a team for this purpose, building on the valuable chaplaincy-style work already taking place.

We are hoping “prederi” can be offered to other schools across our area, and have already had interest expressed from one or two for the forthcoming year.

Thank you to the Prayer Spaces in Schools team for their support and inspiration – it has been a privilege to be part of God's amazing mission here in the South West."

Julie Swann is the Children and Families Worker
for The Lizard and Mounts Bay Methodist Circuit



Getting Started

Prayer spaces in schools are becoming increasingly popular in both community and church schools. A number of local high, middle and primary schools have successfully held week-long prayer spaces assisted, for example locally, by Bury Christian Youth and Christian Youth Ministries in Ipswich. Well-run, these prayer spaces offer real opportunities for spiritual development and, within a Christian context, a greater understanding of what prayer means for believers i.e. prayer is more than just saying 'amen'.

You will find lots of interesting stories and suggestions on the **Prayer Spaces in Schools** website. Two are described below but it is really worth visiting the website and trawling the ideas. One particular idea is that every Prayer space should include an activity that is 'outward' facing and deals with an issue of justice in the world.

Some of the ideas would make great stand-alone prayer 'corners' but the real impact comes from having a number of activities for children to visit in a specially-designated space.



God speaks to us,
if we take time to listen

What will Ofsted / SIAMS say

- School inspectors should be looking for opportunities for spiritual development and Prayer Spaces should hit the mark here.
- In Church schools, in particular, the SIAMS inspectors, who look at the Christian side of school life, are now required to look at ways in which prayer opportunities are provided outside Collective Worship; again, Prayer Spaces will hit the mark.

Some common developments

Where Prayer Stations have taken off, schools and churches have also tried:

- Inviting children to develop their own prayer stations
- creating a permanent prayer and reflection space
- running an annual event sometimes in school, sometimes in church, sometimes in a tent on the school field!
- developing themed prayer spaces e.g. Justice, Who am I?, Easter



Top Ten Prayer Spaces

If you're planning towards your first prayer space, we would strongly recommend that you look at and use some of the Top Ten prayer themes and activities found at www.prayerspacesin schools.com. Below we have given you **two** examples.

We also recommend you select a combination of prayer activities that are directed upwards (towards God, e.g. Big Questions, Prayer Wall), outwards (towards the world around us, e.g. Pray The News, Stop The Traffik), and inwards (reflective, towards the self, e.g. Who Am I?, Fizzy Forgiveness).

Prayer Wall

In Jerusalem there is a wall, called the Wailing Wall, where thousands of people push their paper prayers into tiny cracks every day. After the UK riots in 2011, prayer walls appeared in lots of cities - people wanted to express their hopes, fears, gratitude and requests to God. This activity provides an open space for students to write or draw their prayers and add it to a 'prayer wall'.



There are lots of alternative ways to set up a 'Prayer Wall'-style prayer activity. Students could write or draw their prayers onto sheets of lining paper that have been pinning onto walls, making it more of a graffiti-style prayer wall. Or, instead of a wall, students could attach their prayers to some kind of prayer tree. With post-it notes, you can use almost any object or location and turn it into a 'Prayer Wall'.

Thankful Board

Gratitude means thankfulness, counting your blessings, noticing the simple pleasures and acknowledging everything that we receive. Gratitude requires time to reflect, to stop and think. This activity encourages students to think about their lives, and to identify the things that they are grateful for... even if some things aren't great.



There are other prayer activities in our library that focus on gratitude and being thankful, and there are many more ways to set up this activity. For example, you could use; over-sized thank you cards, thank you letters, write on helium balloons and release them, etc.