

Resources

The following are resources that may help you with intercessions. There are lots to try, so ask for recommendations.

- Adam, D., *Clouds of Glory, Traces of Glory, Glimpses of Glory; Years A/B/C*, (London: SPCK, 1998-2000). In a more celtic tradition
- Black Ian, *Intercessions for Years A, B & C* (London: SPCK, 2009)
- Chaplin, Doug, *Leading Common Worship Intercessions* (London: Church House Publishing, 2015)
- Chapman, R., *Leading Intercessions* (Norwich: Canterbury Press 1997)
- Colquhoun, F., *Parish Prayers, New Parish Prayers, Contemporary Parish Prayers* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1999-2000)
- De Lange A. and L. Simpson, *How to Lead the Prayers: A Training Course W 169* (Cambridge: Grove Books)
- Fawcett, Nick, *Selected Prayers for Public Worship* (Mayhew, 2003)
- Odell, C., *Companion to the Revised Common Lectionary, Vol.1, Intercessions* (Peterborough: Epworth Press, 1998)
- Pritchard John, *The Intercessions Resources Book* (London: SPCK, 2018) or his earlier *Intercessions Handbooks* (2004)
- Brother Tristram SSF, 1997 *Exciting Holiness: Collects and readings for the festivals and lesser festivals* (Canterbury Press, 1997)
- <https://www.churchofengland.org/prayer-and-worship/topical-prayers/leading-prayer-through-intercessions>
- More recent books and links can be found at:
<https://www.bathandwells.org.uk/lwa-hub/>

Acknowledgements

Material in this leaflet has been based on:

- Chaplin, D. *Leading Common Worship Intercessions* (CHP, 2015)
- Diocese of Salisbury, *Training Course for Lay Worship Leaders*
- Bent, H. and L Tipple, *Worship4Today: Part 3* (CHP, 2014)

Exploring Worship



LEADING INTERCESSIONS

January 2019

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Things to check

- Remember you are praying but also leading public prayer;
- Your language should broadly match the style of the service;
- Intercession should be more than a 'shopping list' of concerns;
- Intercession is not the time for news reports, personal opinions or sermons; they are appeals to God on behalf of everyone.
- Check the latest news as close to the start of the service as you can
- Keep to time, short simple and sincere prayers are best
- Are these prayers real to you? Can you honestly pray them?
- Is there silence for reflection, space to make their own prayers?
- If you are praying for individuals, are they happy to be named in public and to have their details shared? Don't breach confidences.
- Are the prayers sensitive to the variety of people who will be there?
- Can everyone say 'Amen' to your prayer?

Practicalities

- Make sure you know when the prayers come
- Practice with any microphone/ sound system beforehand
- Make sure you can get quickly to the place where you will pray

Opening and Closing Prayers

Keep the opening and closing invitations brief but clear.

If you have a response you will need to introduce it. Common Worship has set introductions and conclusions that can be helpful.

Interactive Prayers

Prayer is the work of everyone, which is why we have responses. It is possible to be creative and interactive in intercessions so people really do pray for themselves. We will explore this later.

Forming Prayers

The prayers themselves can be introduced in various ways:

1. You can invite prayers: "Let us pray for the sick and for those who suffer, for those in hospital and in care homes, and for those who are housebound. Let us remember all who are sick, among them ... " (be careful that you don't lose the focus on God with invitation prayers and start addressing the congregation!)
2. You can list the prayers : "We pray for this community, for the villages of ..., and for all the people who live within them."
3. You can start with what you hope from God: "Comfort and heal all those who suffer in body, mind, or spirit, especially ... (a list of names follows) Give them courage and hope in their troubles; and bring them the joy of your salvation."
4. If there is an important hymn or reading then you could use that to start each section of prayer.
5. or...

When you begin leading intercessions there are plenty of set forms you can use. You don't have to re-invent the wheel! As you grow more confident you can start to write your own and be more adventurous. The resources section below gives you guidance. Common Worship Communion Service books and Morning and Evening Prayer give sample prayers. Feel free to edit them to make them appropriate.

Whatever form you choose sustain it throughout the prayers so that the prayers are consistent and unified. At the end, double check that you are praying not preaching.

Preparation

Why Intercede?

Intercessions provide an opportunity for the congregation to bring their personal and local concerns and those of the world to God

Prayer is one of the mysteries of faith. We believe God knows our needs without having to be told them. We also believe God cares about the world infinitely more than we do. We cannot use prayer to control or manipulate God, nor is God limited by our prayer. Some prayers will get the answer we hope for, others will not. This doesn't mean we got some prayers 'right' or that we, somehow, earned the answer. Answered prayer always comes by the grace of God. And yet God invites our intercessions and, in some mysterious way, they are effective. At the very least, our prayers remind us of God's concern for the world and that God often works through human beings, such as us, to address those needs. Prayers can energise us to be God's answer.. Ultimately, it is good to share our concerns with the one who loves us.

Leading intercessions

Leading intercessions is a privilege as well as a responsibility. We have the honour of being the ambassador of our congregations before God taking with us their concerns and needs. This means:

- our prayers must be addressed to God (not the congregation)
- our prayers must represent the concerns of *all* the congregation

As a leader of intercessions, it pays to remember we are praying and not preaching or teaching, but unlike our private prayers, these prayers have a representative role. The congregation needs to be able to pray with us, and make our prayers their own. Preparation is therefore very important.

What to intercede for?

A lifetime is not long enough to pray for our broken world, so we need to choose, and trust God to take care of the rest. It's tempting to pray for large catch-all topics (the sick, the people of Africa). The problem is that the prayer becomes too general to be meaningful and we get disheartened at never seeing any answers. Finding the right balance between specific and general prayers is an art.

Prayers need to cover our own needs but also look beyond ourselves to other's needs. This puts our own needs in perspective and joins in God's care for all creation. Common Worship suggests therefore that the intercessions cover:

- a) The church;
- b) The world, creation, society and those in authority;
- c) The local community;
- d) Those who suffer;
- e) The communion of saints.
- f) Ourselves

You may like to vary the order depending upon the theme of the service and the particular needs of the time.

The intercessions are rarely a stand-alone prayer time but form part of a bigger worship event. Therefore your intercessions should contribute to the overall flow and be appropriate to the rest of the service.

In order to prepare intercessions you will need to find out:

- the news headlines
- local community news and events
- local and national church concerns
- what the preacher and worship leader are planning
- the readings and hymns and the Church season

Writing Intercessions

To script or not to script

Writing intercessions out in full will help you stick to the point, not waffle, and not forget what you want to say. The drawback is that they can also sound stilted. You may prefer to write bullet points. However, it is perfectly possible to write good intercessions in full if you remember you are writing prayer for speech not for reading.

Things to help writing for speech:

- Write short sentences
- Read it aloud beforehand, does it sound natural?
- Avoid subordinate clauses (although, because, therefore...)
- Write one sentence per line like poetry (note how modern liturgy is set out)
- Use contractions as in speech "We're" rather than "we are"

Check your script at the end to check you really are addressing God

Responsorial Prayers

Prayers with responses enable the congregation to respond to each request and make it their own. They also help keep concentration.

There are various forms but two of the most common are:

Lord, in your mercy

(All) **hear our prayer.**

or

Lord, hear us.

(All) **Lord, graciously hear us.**

If the responses are not written in the service sheet, then start by announcing them: "When I say... Please respond..."