



## TOP TIPS FOR RUNNING YOUR PRAYER SPACE.

Here are a few top tips for the week you run Prayer Spaces from some people who have run a few of them over the years.

### Assemblies

For most of the Prayer Spaces we have done, we have taken the assembly on Monday morning. This is a chance to introduce yourselves and explain what a Prayer Space is and what the children and young people will find when they visit. We have taken the Lord's Prayer as our theme and we talk about it being like a recipe to create your prayers, with the elements of Please, Thank you, and Sorry as well as praying for the world and others, we call it the Prayer Sandwich. We then say these are the elements of prayer they will find in the Prayer Space this week. A copy of the Assembly can be found on the Google drive, for you to use or you can create your own assembly.

### Safeguarding/Pastoral team

Make sure you have touched base with the staff members who are responsible for picking up any safeguarding concerns that might arise. You only need to report them to the staff member, you won't need to get involved yourselves. Confirm with them how often during the day/week they would like you to bring any concerns to them.

## Final Checks

Check each station every morning and after each group, to check you have enough equipment. Check which classes you have coming along and the times. Double-check your risk assessment, that you are doing all that you set yourself to do.

## Teamwork

Ask your team to arrive 30 mins before the first group arrives, so they can get signed into school and find the room. Talk them through the stations if you haven't done this already and ask them which station they would like to be on if you are having one per station. It is helpful if the same person is on a station for the whole morning slot or at least until you have a natural break, as people begin to get their patter down and feel comfortable.

After each group has left have a short feedback moment, checking if they were any safeguarding issues (see spotting) and talking about the highs and perhaps lows of the session. Close with prayer for that group.

At the end of the whole event, do make sure you say thank you well to your team, I used to send handwritten cards to everyone who took part.

## Tea & Coffee

It's always good to know where you can make your team a tea or coffee, either ask if you can use the staff room or if you can bring a kettle in with cups, etc and make it in the room. Often the school is happy for you to use the staff room, but that might be a long way from the room you are in, so thinking about the logistics of it and the timings of your sessions. Bringing biscuits always keeps the energy levels up at mid-morning and mid-afternoon too.

# Prayer

Obviously prayer in a Prayer Space is very important! So, make sure that you make space to pray at the beginning of the day before the first group arrives and again before the afternoon session. Once the morning begins, there can be very little space between groups.

We also had a team of people who didn't come to the school but who were still praying for us over the week, which is a great way to get other members of your congregation involved. Give them the timetable of classes and team members so they can be praying specifically for you.

# Spotting

At any prayer stations where you are asking children & young people to write their comments, make sure you have someone who is reading the comments after each group has left, checking for any that you might need to flag up to the safeguarding team. If you do it regularly you will be able to narrow down the children or young people it relates to, if you are in a primary school, you will probably know the name of the child as you will have a leader on each prayer station.

If that is the case after the children have moved to the next activity remove the comment and keep it to give to the safeguarding team at the end of the session, write their name and class on the back.

If in a secondary school, write the name of the class or year that have visited and the time slot they came in, that will help the safeguarding lead find the young person concerned.

## Ring the bell

If you are running the Prayer Space with timed slots then it is really helpful to have a sound for children and young people to listen out for. We used a small desk bell, such as the ones you have on front desks to get attention. In a primary school we would split the class in half, only have 15 children in the Prayer Space at a time, then split the children into groups of 3-5 depending on the number of stations we have. We give them about 5 mins for each prayer station and then they heard the bell ring, we asked them to move around the room clockwise and when they were settled at the next station, we would start the timer again. It is helpful to have one person who isn't on a station to be the timekeeper but that isn't always possible, when we couldn't I would use my phone as a timer and then the children would all have a go pinging the bell when the time was up, they always loved that bit!

## Music

We would always have quiet instrumental music playing in the background to create a calm and relaxed feel to the space, but also so it wasn't silent. I would use classical music and worship music or hymns with no words. I created a playlist and had it on a loop, so I didn't need to worry about it stopping halfway through a session. You will need to bring small speakers so that the music can be heard across the space.

# Lunchtime

If your team is staying all day, then sometimes the school will provide you with lunch. This is a lovely opportunity to go and sit with the children and young people in the canteen. They love to talk to you and if you have done an assembly at the beginning of the week, they will all know who you are, and it reminds them that they will get their chance to experience the Prayer Space. It is also lovely to spend time in their space after they have been in your Prayer Space.

If you are bringing your own lunch in, you can ask to eat it with children and young people or in the staff room and chat with the staff. We have sometimes bought cakes or sweets for the staff the week we are in school and left messages to say we are praying for them this week too.

You could offer to have a Prayer Space left open for the staff to use during the lunch break if they would like, you could have one member of the Prayer Space team left in there over lunch or allow the staff to use it while it's unmanned.

Do make sure you have a bit of space over lunch where you can be quiet though, being in the Prayer Space is exhausting and if you are there all day, you will need some space at lunchtime.

# Setting up and taking down

It will take you longer to set up than to take it all down again. Ask to set up on Friday if you are starting on Monday morning as can take about 2 to 3 hours to set up.

As well as your station contents there are a few extras that make all the difference if you have them with you.

### **List of the basics to take with you:**

- Extension leads – one per activity that needs on.
- Sheets or old curtains and drapes to cover notice boards and equipment that you won't be using, to create a different look to the space.
- Safety pins, drawing pins to put up the drapes.
- Extra post-it notes
- Scissors
- Blue-tac
- Tissues
- Wet wipes
- Hand sanitiser
- Watering can, if you are using the Thank you duck station and Bubble tube this is so you can fill the paddling pool and the tube.

When you are taking it all down, make sure that you don't clash with the end of the day rush in the corridors, check when you can bring your cars round to load up.

Always make sure you have said goodbye to the staff who have supported you during the week before you leave, so you have rounded your time off well.

If you are asking for feedback, give them a questionnaire before you leave or email them that evening so it's fresh in their minds and give them a date you would like to receive their thoughts by.

## **Look after yourself**

Leading and being involved in a Prayer Space is exhausting, no matter how long you are involved, so make sure that you are gentle with yourselves in the evenings or at the end of the week. You will have been emotionally and spiritually invested in the lives of children, young people, and staff members, which is so rewarding but also draining, be aware of what you book in to happen the week of Prayer Spaces and have people praying for you too.

## What's next? The Discipleship Pathway

Prayer Spaces are never one-off, standalone events, think about how you will end the week, what will you invite the children to who have been through the prayer space? Do you run a Messy or Muddy Church, do you have a festival coming up that you can invite them to, Harvest, Christingle, or Easter? Do you have a youth group they could come along to? What about reproducing the Prayer Space in your church and invite the children or young people to bring their whole family to experience it together?

## Take home

One of the best ways to encourage people to come from a Prayer Space to another event such as Messy Church or Muddy Church is with a personal invitation. The other way you can do it, it's to give them something from the Prayer Space that they bring to your church service, such as a Star to put on a Christmas tree, or prayer to attached to a prayer tree, be creative and use it as a way of engaging the children, young people and their families in other activities that your community wants to welcome them into. Look at each of your stations and think about which one could be a 'take home and bring to church' moment, encourage children, young people, and their families to have more than one point of contact with you so you can develop a relationship with them that may lead them to faith.

## Final thoughts

Being involved in a prayer space is a wonderful and privileged position to find yourselves in. It can lead to all sorts of conversations and live changing moments, don't underestimate the power of being prayer in the heart of a school for a week. Be prepared, have a good team around you, pray, and enjoy yourselves. In my experience schools love it and usually ask you back again, so think about how you might plan to run a Prayer Space in school once a term, there are 5 different themes you can choose from that we have created or you can create your own with the help of the Prayer Spaces in school's website, which is full of resources and ideas.