

The Habit of Prayer

The Greek philosopher Aristotle said “*We are what we repeatedly do*” - it is our habits that determine the kind of people we are.

During September we want to challenge the whole church community to get into the habit of praying every day by committing to a routine of praying at particular times each day and to thanking God before meal times.

While it's important to maintain a flexible and spontaneous element to our prayers, a regular routine like this helps keep us on track when we don't 'feel' like praying. It's a discipline which gives shape to the day and which keeps us focussed on God, and after a while it becomes a habit.

Christians in every generation have discovered the richness of regular prayer, and we want to invite everyone to take the plunge and to give it a go.

So we want to invite you to committing to praying regularly at

8.30am, 12.30pm & 5.30pm.

It may be that your routine makes these times difficult, in which case do find your own pattern - but once you have chosen it, the key is to make it a priority and to stick to it. And as you pray, know that many of us will be doing the same, so we can be together in prayer even if we aren't physically in the same place.

We have suggested a simple format for each of the prayer times. Please feel free to use these or to develop a structure that works for you.

Morning prayers will take place throughout the month in St Mary's at 8:30am on Tuesdays and in Christ Church at 8:00am on Fridays. Compline, a beautiful prayer for the end of the day, is said at 5:30pm every Friday in Christ Church.

Morning Prayer

Opening Prayer

The night has passed, and the day lies open before us;
let us pray with one heart and mind

Pause in silence and be still before God

As we rejoice in the gift of this new day,
so may the light of your presence, O God,
set our hearts on fire with love for you;
now and for ever. Amen

A short reading for the day

You might already use a daily bible reading plan, in which case please stick with it; if not you could follow the daily lectionary, which you can find at www.churchofengland.org/prayer-worship/join-us-in-daily-prayer.aspx, daily reflections by Nicky Gumbel, which you can find here www.htb.org/bioy or simply read a chapter from a book of the bible each day - Mark's gospel or the Acts of the Apostles are a good place to start.

A time of silent prayer for anything on your heart and mind this morning, finishing with the Lord's Prayer

Final Prayer

O God, set your blessing on us
as we begin this day together.
Confirm us in the truth by which we rightly live;
confront us with the truth from which we wrongly turn.
We ask not for what we want,
but for what you know we need,
as we offer this day and ourselves for you and to you,
through Jesus Christ our Saviour
Amen

12.30pm Prayers

Opening Prayer

I bind unto myself today
the strong name of the Trinity,
by invocation of the same,
the Three in One, and One in Three.
Of whom all nature hath creation;
eternal Father, Spirit, Word:
Praise to the Lord of my salvation,
salvation is of Christ the Lord.

Or watch the Iona version at www.youtube.com/watch?v=U-He--hIMr0

Psalm

Say the Psalm slowly, either silently or out loud

Monday - Ps 126, Thursday - Ps 133

Tuesday - Ps 17:1-8, Friday - Ps 23

Wednesday - Ps 48

A time of silent prayer for the day so far, and for what lies ahead

Final Prayer

Glory to the Father and to the Son
and to the Holy Spirit;
as it was in the beginning is now
and shall be for ever. Amen.

Eternal light, shine into our hearts,
eternal goodness, deliver us from evil,
eternal power, be our support,
eternal wisdom, scatter the darkness of our ignorance,
eternal pity, have mercy upon us;
that with all our heart and mind and soul and strength
we may seek your face and be brought by your infinite mercy
to your holy presence,
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

May God bless the work of our hands, Amen.

5.30pm

or before you (or the youngest child) goes to bed

Light a candle and say The Lord's Prayer

Gratitude prayer

Think of things to thank God for one that particular day, write them down on a small piece of paper and collect them in a jar.

The Grace Prayer

May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ,
and the love of God,
and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit
be with us all,
now and evermore.
Amen.

Evening benediction

May the road rise up to meet you.
May the wind be always at your back.
May the sun shine warm upon your face;
the rains fall soft upon your fields
and until we meet again,
may God hold you in the palm of His hand.

Or listen to this lovely Matt Redman song: youtu.be/K6cf0V62PSU
or another suitable piece of music

Grace before eating

Jesus and thanksgiving - Jesus is recorded regularly giving thanks to God for providing food.

For example, at the feeding of the five thousand, he presented the food before heaven, gave thanks, and from five loaves of bread and two fish, five thousand men (not including their families) are said to have been fed. At the last supper, when he was aware of His coming suffering, Jesus remember to give thanks for the food:

"While they were eating, Jesus took bread, gave thanks and broke it..."
(Matthew 26:26)

Paul and thanksgiving - It was common practice for the Apostle Paul to give thanks before eating. In the Acts of the Apostles, during a terrible storm at sea, he gave thanks for food:

"After he said this, he took some bread and gave thanks to God in front of them all. Then he broke it and began to eat".
(Acts 27:35)

The early Christians give thanks - The earliest Christians followed the example of their Lord, and their times around the table were filled with the joy of being in the presence of God and others:

"They worshiped together at the Temple each day, met in homes for the Lord's Supper, and shared their meals with great joy and generosity - all the while praising God and enjoying the goodwill of all the people."
(Acts 2:26-7a)

Some examples of Graces

God is great, and God is good, And we thank him for our food;
By his hand we all are fed; Give us, Lord, our daily bread.

God, we thank you for this food. For rest and home and all things good. For wind and rain and sun above. But most of all for those we love.

O Lord, we thank you for the gifts of your bounty which we enjoy at this table. As you have provided for us in the past, so may you sustain us throughout our lives. While we enjoy your gifts, may we never forget the needy and those in want.

Bless us, O Lord, and these your gifts, which we are about to receive from your bounty. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Bless this food to our use, and us to thy service. Fill our hearts with grateful praise. Amen.

Or try making your grace up - you could try to make up a rhyming grace each meal, or set the words to a well known song (This one fits with the superman theme)

Thank you Lord for giving us food,

Thank you Lord for giving us food.

For the things we eat, the people we meet, thank you Lord.

Amen

And if you want to talk with someone about your experience of prayer, your struggles with prayer or anything else, please contact Rev Hugh Nelson on 01580 211739 or hugh.nelson@ymail.com

A prayer of John Wesley

Do all the good you can.

By all the means you can.

In all the places you can.

At all the times you can.

To all the people you can.

As long as ever you can.

Amen