



# **Together in Prayer**

SEEKING POWER FOR MISSION

Canberra-Goulburn Anglican Diocese

Ascension to Pentecost | 2021

**Introduction to the Prayer Focus** by Bishop Mark Short

Dear sisters and brothers.

You will all know the words of the well- known hymn:

*What a friend we have in Jesus  
All our sins and griefs to bear  
What a privilege to carry  
Everything to God in prayer*

Yet, how often do we take this privilege for granted, or fail to put it into practice! In prayer we are invited into intimate fellowship with the Maker of Heaven and Earth and offered the gift of partnership in God's mission to bring all things under the gracious rule of His Son.

During 2021 the Anglican Diocese of Canberra and Goulburn is joining in three seasons of focused engagement. In the first season, during Lent, we engaged with God's world through the study of God's word. Now in preparation for a season of mission after Pentecost we are joining in prayer for God's work.

Thank you to The Reverend Steve Nation for preparing this inspiring resource to help us in the journey. It builds on his book *A Call to Extraordinary Prayer: Recharging your Prayer Life through the Book Of Acts* (Christian Focus: 2017). I commend it to you, and you to God's grace!

+Mark Short

Bishop of Canberra and Goulburn

April 2020

## **Calendar of Events**

### **Things to do to prepare for this Prayer Focus:**

Contact here if you would like someone to come and preach, lead a seminar on prayer, lead a prayer meeting, guide a silent prayer day

### **Personal devotions:**

Read the above passage each day

- What does God want you to know or do from this passage?
- Who in church could you encourage with what you've read today? Send them an email, SMS or share after church on Sunday.

# Introduction to Prayer

## What is Prayer?

Prayer can be defined in a number of ways. In its simplest form, it is “the created capacity to commune with the Creator”. Or in more relational terms, prayer is “the personal, conscious awareness and communication with the living and true God”<sup>1</sup>.

This prayer that’s grounded in the new covenant, is prayer enabled by the extraordinary access given to Christians - guided by the Holy Spirit, mediated by God the Son, heard by God the Father<sup>2</sup>.

## How can we pray?

Together in church

As a Diocese

As individuals

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<sup>1</sup> Stanley Gale, *Warfare Witness* (Ross-shire, Scotland, Christian Focus Publications, 2005) p114

<sup>2</sup> Steve Nation, *A Call to Extraordinary Prayer* (Christian Focus, 2017), pp.33-34

Different types of prayer that we will be looking at<sup>3</sup>:

- *Liturgical prayer*: to open ourselves to God through established patterns or traditions of written prayers and readings.
- *Extemporary (or conversational) prayer*: to talk naturally and unself-consciously to God in prayer times with others.
- *Fixed hour prayer*: to stop my work and pray throughout the day.
- *Intercessory prayer*: to turn my worries and concerns into prayer; to enter into God's heart for the world and then pray from there.
- *Prayer of lament*: to take my complaints, anger, sufferings, frustrations and heart-aches to God.
- *Prayer of recollection*: to rest in God, allowing him to calm and heal my fragmented and distracted self.
- *Prayer partners*: to share the journey of prayer with a trusted companion.
- *Praying Scripture*: to allow God to shape my prayer life through the words of Scripture.
- *Prayer walking*: to align myself with Christ and His intercession for the kingdom to come while walking in particular places (see also The Grace Outpouring book)
- *Fasting*: to let go of an appetite in order to seek God on matters of deep concern for others, myself and the world.

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<sup>3</sup> These different forms of prayer and their descriptions come from Adele Ahlberg Calhoun's *Spiritual Disciplines Handbook* (IVP, Downers Grove, Illinois; 2015), 13-16

# Introduction to the Book of Acts

## Who wrote Acts?

Luke, Paul's friend, travelling companion; a physician and historian.

## Who was it written to?

Both the Gospel of Luke and Acts were written to a man named Theophilus (Luke 1:3, Acts 1:1). Theophilus (meaning "friend or lover of God") could have been a real person, or a term describing a people who saw themselves as "friends of God".

## What is Acts all about?

To understand Acts, we first have to grasp what Luke's first Book (the Gospel of Luke) is all about. Luke's Gospel concerns what Jesus began to do and teach. The Gospel of Luke focusses on Jesus' earthly ministry (Acts 1:1). He wanted his readers to "know the truth concerning the things about which you have been instructed" (Luke 1:4). They had been instructed about the person and work of Jesus. A summary statement of Jesus' ministry can be found in Luke 4:18-21:

*"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,  
Because he has anointed me  
To bring good news to the poor.  
He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives  
and recovery of sight to the blind,  
to let the oppressed go free,  
to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour".*

*And he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant, and sat down. The eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him. Then he*

*began to say to them, “Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing”.*

In the rest of the Gospel of Luke, we see Jesus fulfilling the Scripture He read in Luke 4:18-19 (quoting Isaiah 61:1-2). Jesus lived the perfect life of God-revealing truth, love, justice, compassion, generosity, kindness, plus everything else that is good. He did this whilst exercising complete control over nature, sickness, evil, sin and death.

The Gospel of Luke moves in a very clear direction. We see this in Luke 9:51, where Jesus set His face towards Jerusalem. Jerusalem is called the “city of peace”. It was peace that Jesus had on his mind. It was in Jerusalem that Jesus would inaugurate His kingdom of peace. But it was there in Jerusalem that Jesus would experience anything but peace. There He would be rejected by His people, suffer physical, emotional and relational abuse, corrupt power in a shameful trial, and then be killed in the most inhumane way on a Roman cross. His death in the Book of Luke was:

- *Commissioned by God, determined beforehand, and fulfilled by Jesus willingly* (albeit with trepidation, 9:22, 44; 12:50; 17:25; 18:31-33; 22:15, 20, 22, 37; 24:25-27, 44-47)
- *Given as a pattern for life for those who would want to be His followers* (9:22). “The cross is the pattern of (Christian) life while the resurrection is the power of that life” (Scot McKnight).
- *Spoken by Jesus as an Exodus-like event* that was soon to take place in Jerusalem (“departure” or exodus”, Luke 9:31).
- *As the Suffering Servant prophesied in Isaiah 52:13-53:12<sup>4</sup>*. This is seen in the mistreatment of Jesus (18:32-33), as a servant (22:37), as one who remained silent under trial (23:9), as an innocent man facing injustice (23:4, 13-16, 20, 22; 23:41), suffering the indignity of people casting lots for his clothes as he was dying (23:34), plus more.

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<sup>4</sup> <https://kirkmillerblog.com/2014/10/22/the-significance-of-jesus-death-in-lukes-gospel/>

- *A satanic conflict* (Luke 22:3-6 & 22:53). The time of Jesus' death would be one where the power of darkness would seem to have control.
- *A new Passover* (Luke 22:14-20). Jesus' death, in His own words, was something that was done "for you", for the benefit of others (verses 19-20). This is seen in Jesus dying at the time of Passover, where he identified his upcoming death with the image of the Passover Meal (verse 15, Exodus 12:1-32). Passover was a re-enactment of God's great rescue of Israel from slavery and death. It was a celebration of being delivered from death, solely because of a sacrificial lamb's blood being smeared on their doorframes, and the angel of the Lord passing-over their houses. Jesus speaks of His blood, a symbol of His death, serving the same function. No more animal sacrifices would be needed. His sacrifice would not be restricted to the people of Israel, but would be sufficient for all people – which is why Jesus' final words in Luke's Gospel speak of *repentance and forgiveness of sins is to be proclaimed in His name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem* (Luke 24:46-47)
- *A new covenant sacrifice* (Luke 22:19-20). Jesus' death would atone for the sins of many so that they might enter into the new era of intimate relations with God. It would be the fulfilment of what Jeremiah prophesied in Jeremiah 31:31-34. Here, in Jesus' death would be the basis for God declaring, "for I will forgive their iniquities, and remember their sin no more" (Jer 31:34). This new covenant in Jesus' blood opened the way for the Holy Spirit, the 3<sup>rd</sup> person in the Holy Trinity, to come and dwell permanently with His people.
- *Opening the way for people to live in the permanent, relational presence of God* (23:45) – the curtain of the temple was torn in two, no longer. No longer would there be a restriction on God's people from approaching him to just once a year, only one person allowed in, and only with a sacrifice made to deal with



the sins of the people. Now God's presence, signified in the coming of the Holy Spirit, would be permanent (Ezek 36:26-27).

On the third day after His death, Jesus rose victoriously, bodily and world-shatteringly from the grave. He showed Himself to His apostles and some 500 people (Luke 24 & 1 Corinthians 15:4-8). It is this reality that the Apostle Peter spends significant time proclaiming in the first section of the Book of Acts (2:14-36; 3:12-26; 4:8-12; 5:30-32)

In the days after Jesus rose from the grave<sup>5</sup>, He taught His disciples the central theme of Scripture (Luke 24:45-47)

*Then he said to them, "These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you – that everything written about me in the law of Moses, the prophets and the psalms must be fulfilled". Then he opened their minds to understand the scriptures, and he said to them, "Thus it is written, that the Messiah is to suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, and that repentance and forgiveness of sins is to be proclaimed in His name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem".*

The question that the Gospel of Luke finishes with is: how would God's people take His gospel to the ends of the earth? In Acts 1, the scene is set for the onward progress of the redemptive plan of God.

Acts has been called by many names, but perhaps the most helpful is "The Acts of the Risen Lord Jesus through His Spirit-empowered witnesses". Acts 1:8 is the engine room and summary statement of what happens in the book:

*[Jesus said] "But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth".*

The Book of Acts then centres around the movement of the gospel from:

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<sup>5</sup> Nation, Extraordinary Prayer, pp31-33

1. Jerusalem and Judea – Chapters 1-7
2. Samaria – Chapters 8-12
3. Ends of the earth (first Asia & Europe, then Rome) – Chapters 13-28

Jesus promises this great movement of His people into all the world, and then He ascends to heaven (1:9)

The disciples have just been given the largest endeavour the world has known, or will ever know – to make disciples of all nations (Matthew 28:18-20, Luke 24:45-47, Acts 1:8). What was the first thing they did? The second thing they did was to arrange for a replacement leader for Judas (Acts 1:15-26). But that was not the first thing they did. The first thing they did, after Jesus ascended to His heavenly rule, was to hold a 120-person prayer meeting! (See Acts 1:13-15)

Here in verse 13 we read of the following people:

- Eleven apostles who deserted Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane; who included Peter with his threefold denial of Jesus (who by the time of this prayer gathering had just gone through a threefold restoration to Jesus' mission).
- Former enemies in Matthew (a redeemed tax collector) and Simon (a former Jewish Zealot).
- Jesus' brothers who once thought Jesus was going out of His mind – but who've moved from unbelief to belief (John 7:5).
- Mary and the women who had been on such a profound rollercoaster ride – from front row seats to the horror of Jesus' crucifixion, to being the first to see Jesus' resurrection appearances, to having their report rejected then vindicated.

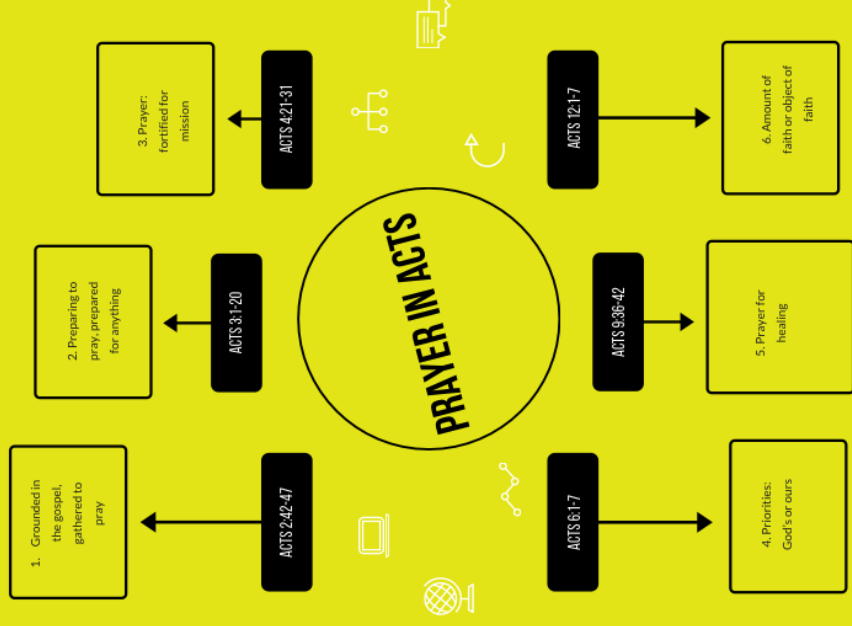
It was this motley crew that was tasked with being Jesus 'witnesses to the ends of the earth. And so it makes sense what they do first. They pray – together! The word used to describe their prayer is 'constantly'. Later, Luke describes the early church as devoted to prayer (2:42) and earnest in prayer (12:5).

Like this gathering of believers, the church today is made up of a motley crew of people from vastly different backgrounds and experiences, who carry the same sense that the Great Commission is overwhelming to the point of hopelessness. The harvest is plentiful; people are harassed and helpless like sheep without a shepherd, the workers are few (Matthew 9:36-38). So what do we do?

- Beginning on May 23, we who make up Christ's witnesses in the Canberra-Goulburn Anglican Diocese will be going on Mission. We'll be actively engaging in God's mission by sharing the love and truth of Jesus.
- But before we do that, we will be spending six-weeks seeking power for mission by engaging God in prayer. Let's get started.

# TOGETHER IN PRAYER

The Book of Acts teaches us that a distinguishing mark of a Christian and of a truly Biblical church is that they pray. The way Christians pray in the Book of Acts is largely corporate in nature. These studies are designed to help us pray - for the gospel to go forth, asking God to bring multitudes of the lost under the Lordship of Christ, and mature His church till we see Him in glory.





# WEEK ONE

## **Glued to prayer**

Sun 4/4: Acts 10:34-43

Mon 5/4: Acts 2:14, 22-32

Tues 6/4: Acts 2:36-41

Wed 7/4: Acts 3:1-10

Thurs 8/4: Acts 3:11-26

Fri 9/4: Acts 4:1-12

Sat 10/4: Acts 4:13-21

Big idea: the new Jesus-centred community, formed by the Spirit, is glued to prayer as it lives, loves and grows together.

## **Week One Bible study: Grounded in the Gospel, gathered to pray (Acts 2:42-47)**

Imagine that have just come out of this following meeting<sup>6</sup>:

You are part of a company think tank, gathered in a boardroom to come up with plans and changes for moving the company forward, helping each person in the company to improve their contribution, and using the vast resources of the company to bring these things about. The name of the company is Microsoft (assume you are happy with this!) and Bill Gates has agreed to come to every think tank meeting, and authorise the use of his resources to enable every venture that will improve the company. You meet together, read over the company documents, talk things over, come up with some astounding ideas, realise you've used nearly all your time, forget that Bill is in the room, ask him for nothing, and head off to try and do everything yourselves.

What would you be thinking about the success of this meeting upon reflection? Wise? Foolish? Guilty? Motivated to go back and say sorry then ask for his help?

How might the above scenario be similar to how we treat God the Father every time we don't pray together?

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<sup>6</sup> from [macarisms.com/category/prayer-2/](http://macarisms.com/category/prayer-2/)

It's easy to slip into a guilt trip regarding prayer. But moving forward, what positive reasons can you give as to why we should pray together?

*Read Acts 2:42-47.*

Context: Jesus 'commissioning of the disciples as His witnesses, His ascension, the Day of Pentecost and the resultant ingathering of 3000 new believers. Then the first 'post-Pentecost' church meeting is described. What we read of in Acts 2:42 is a church that is devoted to four practices.

What are they?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.

The word 'devoted' carries the sense 'attachment like glue does How .'<sup>7</sup>  
prayer fit as part of these fourfold practices of the church?

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<sup>7</sup> D. Cook, Teaching Acts (Ross-shire, Scotland; Christian Focus Publications, 2007), pp.81-82



Have a look at the different types of prayer above (page 5).

What types of prayer have you practiced in the past? What happened?

Are there any types of prayer that you haven't practiced before, that you'd like to? Why?

**A time to pray**

## Students Commissioning Prayer

Invite all students<sup>8</sup> in the congregation to stand, and pray for them using the Student Commissioning Prayer below (feel free to edit it as you see fit).

### Option A

Immortal, Invisible God only wise, help our hearts to recognise you as the greatest Person or thing in the universe that can be studied and known. With darkened minds, we come to you the Giver of Light. With foolish hearts, we come to you the possessor of all wisdom. With a great thirst to know so much about this world we live in, we willingly take this time to turn aside from what you have made to drink from your fountain of truth and know you as our Maker.

You have called each and every one us to be students – disciples of the Great Teacher Jesus Christ. Help us all to remember that no student is great than his Teacher, but that when they are fully trained they will be like their Teacher. Train us Lord and make us like you.

In light of these truths we pray for our brothers and sisters that have entered into study at our local schools, TAFE and universities. May each of them have it clear in their minds that you are the greatest subject that can be considered by men and women. May they each be settled in their hearts that they are university students for but a few short years – perhaps only a few more months now, whereas they are called to be students of Christ for their life-time.

But we pray that each of them would study well. Help them to be diligent and disciplined and even, if possible, to excel. But let their hearts not seek success to please their parents, or impress their professors and peers, but show them how to strive for your glory in

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<sup>8</sup> 'Students' here can refer to children and youth at school, University and TAFE students, but also broadened to include adults and seniors in ongoing professional development and developing a new skill in life.

their studies. We pray that your Spirit will constantly whisper to their hearts “ –What is your purpose in studying?” “How will you use your degree to glorify God?” “Are you planning to use your skills and the money you earn only for yourself or for the furtherance of God’s kingdom?” Convict my brothers and sisters when they do not wish to answer these things and help them earnestly and zealously look for ways to use what they learn to glorify you and benefit humanity.

We pray that you would keep them safe throughout the year at university and throughout their degree. Grant them discernment to know when false and unhelpful ideas are being presented to them. Help them learn valuable things from their lecturers, while being careful not to adopt many of their non-Christian assumptions. Help us as a church to encourage them and teach them to guard their hearts when their faith is under attack. Lead them to talk with mature Christians they can trust when they have doubts. Bring them back to your path that leads to life if any begin to wander.

May you bless them with good, quality friends. Christian friends who can encourage them, as well as non-Christian friends they can love and bless. Help them to walk the tightrope of living respectfully with those who reject you, without succumbing to any influences to identify with ungodliness instead of with Jesus Christ.

Finally Lord, we pray that they will go to their place of learning and connect with people with a real hope of seeing the Great Commission being fulfilled on their campus and in the lives of their friends. We confess together that All authority in heaven and earth has been given to you. Equip our students therefore to share the gospel with those they meet and spend time with on and off campus. Help each of them to be partners with us in the gospel, especially in the area of making disciples of people in and around \_\_\_\_\_ (suburb name/parish area). Prepare the way ahead of them. Give them opportunities and courage to speak. Fill their minds with wisdom and their hearts with love to engage with people in a genuine and winsome way. Impress upon their souls the knowledge that when they live in this way, they can be confident that you are with them always – til the end

of the age.

May we see your Kingdom coming and your will being done on earth as it is in Heaven, including our places of study. In your mercy you have made yourself known to us. Now we pray make yourself known through us.

In the Name of our Master, Instructor, Teacher and Lord – Jesus Christ.  
Amen.

### Option B

*Service leader:* God has called each of you into full time ministry. He has set you apart for his purposes. With this privilege comes responsibility.

Will you commit to serving God throughout the week with integrity and in a way that brings him honour?

Will you agree that your studies are more than information gathering for future work, but a gift of God to love and serve Him, and the means by which God will draw your fellow students to Himself?

Will your decisions, character traits and conversations shine the light of Christ?

Will you pray for those you study with?

Everyone: “With God’s help I will”




# WEEK TWO

## **Be prepared!**

Sun 11/4: Acts 3:1-20  
Mon 12/4: Acts 4:23-31  
Tues 13/4: Acts 4:32-37  
Wed 14/4: Acts 5:17-26  
Thurs 15/4: Acts 5:27-33  
Fri 16/4: Acts 5:34-42  
Sat 17/4: Acts 6:1-7

Big idea: those who are prepared to pray are prepared for anything -  
with eyes open to others needs and a readiness to speak of the love  
and power of Jesus.



## **Week Two Bible Study: Preparing to pray, prepared for anything (Acts 3:1-20)**

Acts 3<sup>9</sup> begins with Peter and John going up to the temple to pray at 3pm, the afternoon prayer time. Like we saw last week, the church was “glued to prayer”. Jesus’ disciples in Acts kept the regular hours of prayer (the Jewish hours of prayer - Acts 3:1; 10:3, 30). But the early church, like Jesus, was not content with restricting prayer to a liturgical form only. Peter prays at noon (10:9), the Jerusalem church interceded at night for the imprisoned apostle (12:5, 6), while Paul and Silas were praying and praising God in prison at around midnight (16:25). They pray because “prayer is shown to be the means by which God has guided the course of redemptive history, both in the life of Jesus and in the period of the church’s expansion”<sup>10</sup>.

At the end of Acts 2, we saw a great crowd of 3000 people joining Christ’s church, then the gathering of the church and what they did. Now in Acts 3, we move from the many to a single person.

We meet this man in verse 2. He is described as a lame man who survived by begging next to the temple (a place he would not have been allowed to enter because of his disability, see 2 Samuel 5:8).

Then there’s the meeting (verses 3-10). The man looks at Peter and John. They look straight back at him. Peter sees him. He doesn’t walk past him. He’s not too busy. Yes, he’s going to pray, which is essential. But he stops. Just like Jesus did. The Gospel writers describe Jesus compassionately looking at people nearly 40 times. This meant it was a regular practice of Jesus.

*Read Acts 3:1-11.*

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<sup>9</sup> Nation, Extraordinary Prayer, p33

<sup>10</sup> P.T. O’Brien, ‘Prayer in Luke-Acts’, Tyndale Bulletin, 24 (1973), p.112

What happened?

*Read Acts 3:12-20*

List how Peter describes Jesus and what happened to Him?  
(vv.12-18)

What does it mean to repent and turn to God? (vv.19-20)

What three blessings and what warning does he promise them in vv. 17-26?

The Apostles Peter and John were going to pray at the appointed prayer time. But like the Good Samaritan in Jesus' parable in Luke 10, they were not too busy to stop and bring help to someone in need. Peter and John were prayerful people who lived with their eyes open to the needs around them.

## Incarnational Prayer<sup>11</sup>

It is quite easy to pray for people 'at arms length', but much more challenging to uphold needy people before God with passionate involvement. This type of prayer ('Incarnational Prayer') is a response to the challenge of the writer to the Hebrews: *"Regard prisoners as if you were in prison with them. Look on the victims of abuse as if what happened to them happened to you"* (Hebrews 13:3, The Message).

Incarnational prayer can be very costly. When our prayer reflects God's heart for human suffering, we may find ourselves starting to think and feel as if we are sharing the same experience. A natural progression then is to ask "are there ways we should live differently?"

Incarnational prayer is prayer that also seeks to create space for God to speak to us about responding by to the needs in the world around us. This may have an impact on our lifestyle, priorities and attitudes as we become part of God's answer to our prayers (see Matthew 9:36-38 where the disciples are called to see as Jesus sees and pray for compassionate workers to go into the world. Then in Matthew 10:1, the people who pray are sent out to be the answer to their prayers).

### Action Plan

- Identify a specific situation (unemployment, civil wars, famines, acts of injustice and abuse) which is affecting people adversely. Newspapers and a simple Internet search will provide local, national and international ideas. The people can be, but don't need to be, named or known personally to your group.
- Encourage group members to imagine themselves as a person in that specific situation, for example, a parent in Africa nursing a child about to die from malnutrition, a victim of abuse, or an unemployed person unable to provide for their family. Ask questions like:

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<sup>11</sup> Alan Harkness, *Praying Together* (Scripture Union/OMF, 2004) p43



- What might they experience?
  - What might they feel?
  - What would they do?
  - Who could they turn to?
  - What would they say to their children? To God?
- Pray together for these people. By doing this, in a special way you are sharing their experience and their cries for help.
  - Encourage the group to ask “what should we do?” And be open to respond practically to God’s challenge.
  - Ensure follow up next week to the prayer and discussion. Bring resources for making appropriate responses from a range of Christian social service, mission and development organisations.



# WEEK THREE

## **Don't get even, get praying**

Sun 18/4: Acts 4:21-31

Mon 19/4: Acts 6:8-15

Tues 20/4: Acts 7:51 – 8:1


Wed 21/4: Acts 8:1-8 (Anselm, Archbishop of Canterbury,  
teacher, d. 1109)

Thurs 22/4: Acts 8:26-40

Fri 23/4: Acts 9:1-20 (George, martyr, d. c. 303)

Sat 24/4: Acts 9:31-42

Big idea: The church responds to hostility not with vengeance nor entitlement, but in with humble prayer, knowing that the Holy Spirit fills us with the love and hope of Jesus, ready to share with others.



## Anselm: a snapshot

Anselm<sup>12</sup> is (considered to be) the most important Christian theologian in the West between Augustine and Thomas Aquinas. His two great accomplishments are his *Proslogium* (in which he undertakes to show that Reason requires that people should believe in God), and his *Cur Deus Homo?* (in which he undertakes to show that Divine Love responding to human rebelliousness requires that God should become a man).

He was born in Italy about 1033, and in 1060 he entered the monastery of Bec in Normandy to study under Stephen Lanfranc, whom he succeeded in office, first as prior of Bec, and later as Archbishop of Canterbury.

### A prayer of Anselm: for zeal<sup>13</sup>:

O almighty and merciful Father, you pour out your benefits on us, forgive our unthankfulness for your goodness. We have stood before you with dead and senseless hearts, unkindled by the love of your gentle and enduring goodness.

O merciful Father, turn us and we will be turned. Make us hunger and thirst for you with our whole heart, and with all our longing desire you.

Make us serve you with our whole heart and with all our zeal seek whatever is pleasing in your sight; for the sake of your only Son, to whom with you and the Holy Spirit be all honour and glory, for ever and ever. Amen.

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<sup>12</sup> <http://justus.anglican.org/resources/bio/141.html>

<sup>13</sup> <https://acollectionofprayers.com/tag/anselm/>

# Commissioning of Workers' at Sunday services

**Decoration:** Set up the church stage area with office work station, ironing board & iron, and then lots of work items eg: stethoscope, hardhat, visy gear, apron, etc..

## **Congregation prep:**

Invite the whole congregation a few weeks prior, to come dressed in the gear they wear during the week . Make it fun - ask stay at home mums to come in their clothes, school kids in uniforms, the pastors to come in what they would like to wear during the week??

**Meet and Greet.** Get the congregation to say hi to at least 3 people in the greeting time and find out what people do during the week. Have some set questions that they can fall back on

**Interviews workers or DVD's.** Have some interviews of workers and how they have tried to be salt and light at work/ make progress in sharing their faith, how God has been at work in their workplace - either live interviews or on DVD.

**Photos.** Have someone take snaps in the foyer of different workers together

**Commissioning.** Invite all workers (paid and unpaid) in the congregation to stand, and pray for them using the Workers Commissioning Prayer below (again, feel free to edit it as you see fit).

## **Post Service**

Ask people during the last song to come up the front and take either an IMPACT card or something similar which gets them to identify 3 people in their workplace that they will pray for this year, try and share their testimony with and try and invite them to an event.



## **Worker's commissioning Prayer**

Almighty Creator of Heaven, Earth and Sea. Maker of all that is seen and unseen. Redeemer of fallen men and women around the world. You are the Good Shepherd, the Great Physician, the Architect of worlds, the Supreme. Judge and Sovereign Potter.

When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars that you have established; what are human beings that you are mindful of them, mortals that you care for them? Yet you have made them a little lower than God, and crowned them with glory and honour. You have given them dominion over the works of your hands; you have put all things under their feet, all sheep and oxen, and also the beasts of the field, the birds of the air, and the fish of the sea, whatever passes along the paths of the seas.

We acknowledge that you created us to work as your agents in your creation. And yet because of our sin and the fallenness of the world cursed for our disobedience, we confess that we fail at all times to fulfil the task you have given to humanity. As individuals we each fail to display your glory, sovereignty and goodness in the way we work and at our best we are still unprofitable servants. Nevertheless Lord, we know in your mercy you will forgive us for these sinful failures and that you call us to persevere in work that is wholesome and good. Wash us, cleanse us and refine us for a more pure service in the next season of life we pray.

We thank you for our workers here. Lord, irrespective of what wage or recognition each of your precious saints here receive for their labour,

we thank you for their willingness to work eagerly and honestly in a world that is hard to work in. Grant to each one of us strength and rest to continue in whatever vocation or station of life you have graciously granted to us.

For those who struggle with their career, industry or particular workplace and colleagues, we pray you will grant them patience, wisdom and endurance to live in a way that glorifies you. Help each of us know how to use our work for the benefit of our family, neighbours and community. And give us a spirit of wisdom and generosity when it comes to spending whatever we earn. Help us to use the best of our resources for the furtherance of your kingdom and to invest in things that are eternal and do not fade or deteriorate with time.

Holy Spirit, you are carrying out your work: applying the work of Christ on the cross to individual lives – to rescue sinners from spiritual death. As you do this in our city, in our neighbourhoods we pray that you would consecrate our workers to yourself and use them as the instruments that accomplish your work. Grant them boldness to speak to their workmates and contacts about you whenever you create an opportunity. Help them not to believe Satan's lie that no one wants to hear about Jesus. For you have people in this city and we are your means of reaching them. Show them Christ's glory anew and afresh that they might have the passion that witness flows out of. Grant them favour with their employers and colleagues, not for their own material gain, but so that they might have the influence and means to do good and bear witness to you.

Lord you send us out into all the world to proclaim repentance and forgiveness of sins to all people. We pray that you will help us to consider our future career paths in light of the mission we have as your people. Whenever we're looking to change jobs or location, may we give due consideration to how this will affect our opportunities to serve you, encourage your people and reach the lost. Father give many of us courage to leave comfortable situations to live more strategically for gospel growth in our world. Create opportunities for some of us to live and work overseas in places where there is a shortage of Christians.

Lead some of us to places near or far where churches lack people and resources needed to grow and reach their community.

Help us whatever we do, to work heartily, for you and not for people, knowing that from You we will receive an inheritance as our reward. For we are serving the Lord Christ. Help us to walk in wisdom toward outsiders and make the best use of our time. May our speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that we may know how we ought to answer each person we speak to. Help us not to be choked by the cares of this world and its riches but to bear good fruit and through our fruitfulness glorify your name and benefit others.

Be with us as we live for you and seek to serve you in and through our work. Amen.



## **Week Three Bible Study - Prayer: fortified for the mission (4:21-31)**

Have you ever been opposed, mocked or rejected for living for or talking about Jesus?

*Read Acts 4:1-22.*

Imagine you are a newspaper reporter. How would you describe what is going on in verses 1-22? What would you emphasise?

*Read Acts 4:23-31.*

How did the church respond to these threats (vv. 23-31)?

What do we learn from the way they prayed and what does it teach us about prayer?

How does the early church's example challenge the way you face opposition to the gospel – whether real or perceived?

How will the truth from this passage equip you to face resistance?

What do we learn from the way they prayed?

Pray

# WEEK FOUR

## Priorities

Sun 25/4: Acts 4:5-12

Mon 26/4: Acts 11:1-18 & Isaiah 62:6-12

Tues 27/4: Acts 11:19-26

Wed 28/4: Acts 12:24 – 13:5

Thurs 29/4: Acts 13:13-25 (Catherine of Siena, spiritual teacher, d.1380)

Fri 30/4: Acts 13:26-33

Sat 1/5: Acts 13:44-52 & Isaiah 30:18-21 (Philip and James, Apostles & Martyrs)

Big idea: God will see His Word triumph in the face of racial discrimination and church conflict through humble, attentive, other-people serving, Word and prayer prioritising churches

## Catherine of Sienna<sup>14</sup>

Caterina Benincasa's birth in 1347 caused scarcely a ripple; she was the twenty-third of 25 children! As a young girl, Catherine often went to a cave near her home in Siena to meditate, fast, and pray. This extraordinary girl blossomed into an extraordinary woman whose spiritual, moral, and political efforts had enormous effects on the lives of many.

Catherine began an active ministry to the poor, the sick, and the imprisoned of Siena. When a wave of the plague struck her hometown in 1374, most people fled, but she and her followers stayed to nurse the ill and bury the dead. When the crisis abated, she embarked on a letter-writing ministry to convert sinners and reform the church and society. Like many reformers of the day, she was disturbed by the rampant corruption of the church.

In her 383 extant letters and *The Dialogue*, which she referred to as "my book" and which describes her mystical experiences, she expressed her driving motivation to love God. She wrote that God told her "not to love Me for your own sake, or your neighbour... but to love Me for myself, yourself for Myself, your neighbour for Myself."

### **Love Undefined<sup>15</sup>** (by Catherine of Siena)

Eternal God, eternal Trinity, You have made the Blood of Christ so precious through His sharing in Your Divine nature. You are a mystery as deep as the sea; the more I search, the more I find, and the more I find the more I search for You. But I can never be satisfied; what I receive will ever leave me desiring more. When You fill my soul I have an ever-greater hunger, and I grow more famished for Your light. I desire above all to see You, the true light, as you really are. Amen

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<sup>14</sup> edited from <https://www.christianitytoday.com/history/people/innertravelers/catherine-of-siena.html>

<sup>15</sup> <https://www.daily-prayers.org/angels-and-saints/prayers-by-st-catherine-of-siena/>



## **Week Four Bible Study: priorities: God's or ours? (Acts 6:1-7)**

"The greatest single cause of atheism in the world today is Christians who acknowledge Jesus with their lips, then walk out the door and deny Him by their lifestyle. That is what an unbelieving world simply finds unbelievable" (Brennan Manning). Discuss.

*Read Acts 6:1-7*

Last week we looked at how the church responds to difficulties coming at them from outside (persecution). Today, we come to another crisis. This time it comes from within the church.

What are the problems revealed in 6:1-6? How is this a new threat to the church?

How did the apostles set out to solve the problem?

- 1.
- 2.

What qualifications were important in the ones chosen for this particular task? Why?

The apostles delegate the practical matters to suitable people. But before they do that, the apostles hear the church members' complaints. They actually listen. They don't get defensive. They listen to the complaint against the perceived failure of Christian standards. They listen, and they act.

People often think the church cannot change. A comment on a newspaper article about Christians in America having less power in the elections went like this:

Hahahahaha Christians! Your stupid, hate-filled and oppressive superstition is slowly but surely dying! Hahahahahahaha!!!!!!!

Really? Are we hate-filled and oppressive? Unfortunately, sometimes. Are we dying? No, Jesus is still on the throne overseeing His mission. Is change needed? Often! Is change possible? Thankfully, yes, change is possible:

'Churches can change. Bitterness can be put to death. Fear can be defeated. Compulsions can be broken. Stony hearts can be made soft, and soft words can come from an acid-tongue. People can have power without becoming corrupt. Churches can be places of safety, love and healing. Change is possible because the King has come, sent His Spirit, and is in the business of change' (Paul Tripp)

And that's what we see in Acts 6. The apostles stop, listen, and act.

Steve Nation, *A Call to Extraordinary Prayer*, pp.56-57

What is the result of prioritising the Word and prayer in church? (see 6:7). Is this guaranteed?

How could our church/ministry grow like Acts 6:1-7? What is/might be your role in this?

## **Week Five Bible Study: prayer for healing (Acts 9:36-42)**

“Nature is not cruel, only pitilessly indifferent. This is one of the hardest lessons for humans to learn. We cannot admit that things might be neither good nor evil, neither cruel nor kind, but simply callous – indifferent to all suffering, lacking all purpose<sup>16</sup>.”

What's your first reaction to this quote by Richard Dawkins?

What might it be like to live in 'this 'world'?

*Read Acts 9:36-42*

Tabitha was a faithful Christian woman<sup>17</sup>. She became sick and she died. The church heard that Peter was nearby – so they called for him. What

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<sup>16</sup> Richard Dawkins, *River Out of Eden: A Darwinian View of Life* (London; Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1995), p. 112.

<sup>17</sup> Nation, *Extraordinary Prayer*, p86



# WEEK FIVE

## Restoration

Sun 2/5: Acts 8:26-40

Mon 3/5: Acts 14:5-18

Tues 4/5: Acts 14:19-28

Wed 5/5: Acts 15:1-6

Thurs 6/5: Acts 15:7-21 & 1 John 1:1-5 (John, Apostle & Evangelist)

Fri 7/5: Acts 15:22-31

Sat 8/5: Acts 16:1-10 (Julian of Norwich, holy woman and mystic, d. 1417)

Big idea: God's plan is to reverse the curse this world is under. That includes sickness and suffering. He invites us to pray for people to be healed. Only a church that prays for healing will see healings happen

they expected from him is unknown. But Peter, in his usual

straightforward manner, went to the house where her body was, sent all the mourners out of the room, got down on his knees, and prayed. What result Peter expected from his prayers we don't know. But, in close parallel to Jesus and Jairus' daughter (Mark 5:41), Peter spoke to the deceased Tabitha and told her to get up, which she did (this is all related very matter of factly!).

It's a profound story. What do we do with such a miraculous event? It's a simple healing – no medical follow-up required. Should we today have confidence to pray for healing?

What might prevent us from praying for another's healing?

Let's step back for a moment<sup>18</sup>. A question that every Christian has to face at some point or other is: how am I to understand myself in this world? We are 'present-tense' sinners, like Paul (1 Tim. 1:15). And at the very same time, we are saints (1 Cor. 1:2). How does this work? The old Latin phrase 'Simul iustus et peccator' sought to acknowledge these two realities. We are at the same time both righteous and a sinner. We are sinners who've been forgiven, cleansed, and made right in God's sight (Titus 3:3-7). But where does suffering come into this?

Michael Emlet<sup>19</sup> helpfully adds a third category: sufferers. He writes: 'Scripture assumes that, since the fall, the people God has chosen are sufferers.' I find this helpful because it enables our ministry to others to be specific – to encourage the saints, to comfort the suffering, or to confront sin. Sometimes suffering has nothing to do with our sin. But at other times, suffering is the direct consequence of our sin.

How do we apply the Word and prayer to the specific details of the suffering of God's people? What might this look like? Acts 9:28 is James 5:13-16 in action – the church taking responsibility for the sick and hurting, and the leaders of the church praying for healing.

### *Read James 5:13-16*

Have you ever been prayed for in the James 5 manner? If yes, explain.

Do our churches take responsibility for the sick and hurting? How might we?

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<sup>18</sup> *ibid.* p. 89

<sup>19</sup> Michael R. Ellet, *CrossTalk* (New Growth Press, 2009) p76





# WEEK SIX

## **praying to GOD!**

Sun 9/5: Acts 10:44-48

Mon 10/4: Acts 16:11-15

Tues 11/4: Acts 16:22-34

Wed 12/4: Acts 17:15, 22 – 8:1

Thurs 13/4: Acts 1:1-11 (Ascension Day)

Big idea: in prayer, it's not primarily the amount of faith we have, but who we have faith in that counts.

**Week Six Bible Study: amount of faith or object**

## of faith? (Acts 12:1-17)

“When I pray, coincidences happen, and when I don't, they don't”  
(William Temple)

What coincidences have you experienced during these past five weeks?

*Read Acts 12:1-17*

Having<sup>20</sup> experienced the heights of the Holy Spirit being poured out on the Gentiles in Acts 10-11, the church is brought down to earth with another phase of persecution.

For Peter and the early church in Acts 12, things looked dark. It's a heightened season of persecution. There's emphasis on the security assigned to him. Squads of soldiers (v. 4); soldiers, chains and sentries (v. 6); two lines of guards and an iron gate (v. 10). Peter's a prize catch.

But, and it's a big but – there is a hint of hope. In verse 5 we read the church was 'earnestly praying to God for him' (v. 5). Unfortunately, Luke does not record the specific request(s) directed to God, though he does indicate that the intercession was continuous and earnest (v. 5). God, in His sovereign grace, hears their prayers – and miraculously rescues Peter from prison.

Peter then heads straight for the prayer meeting (v. 12). What a triumph this meeting will be! What encouragement and joy at answered prayer!

What happens?

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<sup>20</sup> Nation, Extraordinary Prayer, p79

What do we make of this?

Acts 12<sup>21</sup> begins well for Herod. The Jews are onside. The Christian leadership is contained, even decimated. But the church was praying. At the time of war between Protestants and Catholics in Britain, Mary, the Catholic Queen of the Scots, famously said: 'I fear John Knox's prayers more than an army of ten thousand men.' Prayers had healed the sick. Prayers had raised the dead. Prayers had led to the conversion of thousands.

Do we believe that God still answers prayers? (We may in theory, but do your practice affirm or deny this?)

Have you lost sight of who it is we are praying to? As individuals or as a church? What steps will you take to grow in praying big prayers to our big God?

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<sup>21</sup> *ibid.* p80



## **Answered Prayer<sup>22</sup>**

God, like a loving parent, wants us to ask for what we need, and delights when we express our gratitude for what he does in response to our requests (Luke 17:11-19, 1 Thessalonians 5:18).

### **Action Plan**

1. Invite group members to tell how God has specifically answered their prayers or the groups earlier requests.
2. Thank God that he has been at work in these ways.
3. Keep a record of what the group is praying for, and specific requests made. Check this record from meeting to meeting, and encourage group members to see how God is at work in these areas.

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<sup>22</sup> Alan Harkness, *Praying together* (Scripture Union/OMF, 2004) p38

Many churches have been doing some or all of the following practices for sometime. By including them here, we hope to encourage you to keep pressing on in your praying together, maybe with some new ideas. They are also to help you possibly introduce new practices to your church or group.

## **Pre-service prayer**

**Begin with joining a pre-existing group or ask your church leaders to create a pre-service prayer gathering. (15 mins)**

- The group can meet in the hall, vestry or an office, and pray for 15-20 minutes (or longer if the group desires)

- Pray for Jesus to be made known in the service, and His love,



# GETTING STARTED

## **churches creating time and space for prayer**

- Pre-service prayer
- Monthly prayer meeting
- Fasting
- Church leaders in prayer
- Prayer Maps
- Planning for a prayer walk
- 24-hour prayer vigil
- Evangelistic prayer triplets (EPT's)
- Praying for your church leaders
- Ascension Day



mercy and grace to be heard, received and rejoiced in.

- Pray for those who come to church today – for the saints to be encouraged, sufferers comforted and sinners confronted/restored/reoriented
- Pray through each part of the church service – for God to move amongst those leading and receiving each of the thanksgiving, confession, absolution, Gospel reading, congregational prayer, Scripture reading/s, message, Lord's Supper, songs, announcements, benediction and sending into the world.
- Pray for visitors to be seen, connected with, loved, welcomed, followed-up well.
- Pray for those who can't make it today.

# Monthly prayer meeting

## Tips for preparing and leading a prayer meeting

### Devotion time:

### Praying together

Here is a simple model that many have found helpful. It follows the threefold function of the church as stated in many systematic theologies:

**Up (worship):** asking God's name to be hallowed in and through the life and ministry of the church; giving thanks for the manifold gifts of God; and confessing our sins (1 John 1:9)

Thanksgiving & Confession: see APBA

Lament<sup>23</sup>: "Cry out to the Lord... let your tears flow like a river day and night; give yourself no relief, your eyes no rest" (Lamentations 2:18).

"Lament is a cry of belief in a good God, a God who has His ear to our hearts, a God who transfigured the ugly into beauty" (Ann Voskamp). Lament includes putting words to the pain and hurt we feel; it is trusting God to hold the pain (carry our burdens - 1 Peter 5:7) while we cry and rail, rather than shouldering our burdens alone or sharing them with other people and not the God who loves us. It is an act of honesty, living in this fallen world with eyes wide open to the pain, injustices and needs of humanity and environment. It is an act of trust in God's ability to hold all of us, going to the depths with God rather than catastrophic thinking.

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<sup>23</sup> Calhoun, *Spiritual Disciplines Handbook*, pp272-274

## What to lament about?

- Aboriginals and Torres Strats Islander people in Australia<sup>24</sup>: Communities are neglected, exhausted. Aboriginal communities are also suffering from a mix of issues, often a consequence of the trauma people have experienced: Real and long-standing experiences of disrespect, being silenced (in particular regarding land and the experiences of the stolen generation). Also the lack of services. Lack of medical care. Little education. High unemployment. Support staff exhaustion. Decaying infrastructure (sewerage and clean water provision). Broken families. High crime rates. Ineffective government programs. Clash of families.
- The depth and breadth of mental health issues in Australia
- Family: domestic violence in Australia, divorce, conflict
- Climate Change
- Institutional Sexual Abuse
- Church losing trust in community
- When we've lost sight on Jesus and His gospel in the church
- War, famine and disaster

When you finish your time of lament, read Psalm 56:8. How does it feel to reflect on this reality?

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<sup>24</sup> Source: Aboriginal communities are breaking down - Creative Spirits, retrieved from <https://www.creativespirits.info/aboriginalculture/people/aboriginal-communities-are-breaking-down>





**Out (mission):** we ask God to make His love, grace and mercy known in the world – praying for the work of the gospel locally and globally, as well as for pressing local/national and world events.

Helps:

- The Diocesan Cycle of Prayer (can be accessed at...)
- Anglicare Prayer Diary (can be accessed at...)
- Operation World (can be accessed at [www.operationworld.org](http://www.operationworld.org))

Prayer for your local community<sup>25</sup>

- Pray that many will realise their need of God and will turn to Him in true repentance and faith, and find Jesus Christ as their Saviour and Lord. Pray that great numbers will be born again (John 3:5-8, 1 Peter 1:3), into the Kingdom of God.
- Pray that the Holy Spirit will convict the world, and our own communities, of guilt regarding to sin and righteousness and judgement, so that many will turn from sin (John 16:8).
- Pray that the community will be less tolerant of sin. Pray that many will see the awfulness of sin and all its damaging consequences, and turn from their sin in the strength of the One who gives forgiveness of sin and deliverance from sin (Romans 6:1-11).
- Pray that many will realise the emptiness of life without Him and will find that Jesus Christ gives them life, and life to the full (John 10:10).

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<sup>25</sup> The below are edited prayers from those found in Bill Price, *Enriching Your Prayer Life* (pp.83-85)

- Pray that Jesus will be exalted in the view of those in your community who now have no regard for Him (Psalm 46:10).
- Pray earnestly for young people, so many of whom are suffering under enormous mental, emotional, relational and spiritual stress (Matthew 9:36). Pray that many will repent, give their lives to Jesus and serve Him throughout their lives (Mark 6:18-20).
- Pray that many will turn from idols to (false beliefs, cults, untrue religions, pseudo-Christian cults, materialism, New Age superstitions and all beliefs that keep people enslaved in sin, see 1 Thessalonians 1:9-10), so that they will find new life in Christ.
- Pray that God Himself will restrain and reverse the amazing rise in Satanism and the occult in our community. Pray that He will protect His people from the opposition of Satan (1 Peter 5:8-11). Pray that He will deliver many from this sin into the Kingdom of the Son He loves (Colossians 1:13-14).

**In (edification):** for the needs of the congregation members specifically, praying through the Lord's Prayer, Paul's prayers – for all our church members, as well as church life in general.

Pray that God's people in your church will have a deep consciousness of the majesty, power, holiness and greatness of God (Exodus 34:6-7).

Pray that we will have an honest realisation of the sin tolerated in our lives and turn to our Father in repentance and re-dedication (1 John 1:5-10).

Pray that ordinary Christians like us will enjoy closeness with our blessed triune God, spending time in His

presence, delighting in prayer, stirred to earnest prayer (Luke 10:42).

Pray for an authentic outpouring of the Holy Spirit on your own church, so that people will speak the gospel boldly (Acts 4:31).

Pray that the lives of Christians in your church will be holy and loving, characterised by a concern for those living and dying without Christ and without hope ().

Pray that our Christian faith will affect our lives more deeply, that our faith and love for God will be more dominant in every aspect of our lives, when we meet together and throughout the week (Romans 9:2-3).

Pray that people will look for, and use, opportunities to tell others about our wonderful Saviour and what He has done for us, thereby obeying His order that we should be His witnesses (Acts 1:8).

Pray that those who plan activities in your church will value people more than programs, and will encourage activities designed to spread the gospel and to win the lost for Him (Acts 20:32, 1 Timothy 4:10).

Pray that we will build bridges to those outside Christ's kingdom with respect, honour and generosity; that we will live in such a way that they will understand what we are saying and why we share the Good News about Jesus (Matthew 5:16, 1 Peter 3:16).

By following this UP/OUT/IN pattern for prayer, we are able to pray in the Spirit on all occasions... with all kinds of prayers and requests... alert and always keeping on praying... for all the Lord's people (Ephesians 6:18)

The number of people participating in the meeting aren't everything. God could choose to work in whatever way He would like – our God is in the heavens; He does whatever He pleases (Psalm 115:3). But He chose to command His people to pray (1 Thessalonians 5:17), to hear our prayers, and to respond in His time and way.

## Fasting<sup>26</sup>

### **The focus of fasting should not be on the lack of food.**

Fasting from food can be done for a variety of purposes, either physical or spiritual. So abstaining from food alone doesn't constitute a Christian fast. Instead, a Christian fast is accompanied by a special focus on prayer during the fast, often substituting the time you'd spend eating with prayer.

### **Fasting provides a real-life illustration of dependency.**

Although modern people thrive on the idea of being independent, beholden to no one, fasting helps you put the facts in the proper perspective. It's easy to believe in your independence with a full stomach, but when you start to feel hunger pains in your belly after missing a meal or two, you awaken to your body's dependency on food to survive. Fasting reveals a physical reliance on food that points to the ultimate dependency – the fact that you're dependent on God for things far more important than food.

### **Fasting fosters concentration on God and his will.**

Oswald Chambers once said that fasting means "concentration," because when you're fasting, you have a heightened sense of attentiveness. Food or any physical sensation can satisfy, fill you up, and dull your senses and spiritual ears. In contrast, a hungry stomach makes you more aware and alert to what God is trying to say to you.

### **Fasting offers a way to impose self-control in your life.**

It gives you a "splash in the face" to awaken you to the need for the personal strength of will that you need to grow spiritually. When you restrain yourself physically, you'll find it easier to apply this same self-discipline in your spiritual life.

One last thing – everyone can participate. Not everyone may be able to fast from food (pregnant women and diabetics for example), but everyone can give up something in order to focus on God (e.g.

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<sup>26</sup> <http://www.redeemer.com/connect/prayer/fasting.html>, originally sources from Richard Wagner, Christianity for Dummies.

unplugging the television for 24 hours could also be an effective way of joining the fast)!

# Church leaders in prayer

## *Personal praying<sup>27</sup>*

What would happen in our local church if clergy and lay leaders give ourselves to prayer the way we give ourselves to budgets, emails and policies? Could ministers carry around with them the membership list of their church, praying in the car at red lights, on the commute to work, etc? How this would change the life of the elder/pastor, as well as the lives of those being prayed for – because Jesus 'throne is the throne of grace, and He is at work, through the prayers of His people, to meet the needs of His needy people.

As the early church modelled their ministry on Jesus 'two-pronged ministry of proclamation and prayer, so must the church today.

## *Church leaders prayer meetings*

Our church leadership meetings need to move beyond simply opening and closing the session with prayer, and then getting to the real business of the meeting. Prayer isn't an aid to the work – it is at the very heart of the work elders do (Acts 6:4). To be ministers of the Word and prayer, church leaders need to carve out time to pray – which might include systematically praying through the church membership roll; it might mean having two leaders 'meetings: one a 'business meeting 'and the other a prayer meeting<sup>28</sup>.

Or

Set aside two meetings in the calendar for the rest of 2021. These meetings are to be for church leaders who will do nothing but pray through the church roll, praying by name, for each person who is part of your church.

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<sup>27</sup> Nation, Extraordinary Prayer, pp73-74

<sup>28</sup> ibid. p72

Church leaders have limitations of time, energy, knowledge and gifting. And we have a choice to make: what is the best use of our time? As Paul Miller in his wonderful book, *A Praying Life*, says: 'if you are not praying, then you are quietly confident that time, money and talent are all you need in life. You'll always be a little too tired, a little too busy. But if, like Jesus, you realise you can't do life on your own, then no matter how busy, no matter how tired you are, you will find time to pray. 'He goes on to say, 'time in prayer makes you even more dependent on God because you don't have as much time to get things done. Every minute you spend in prayer is one less minute where you can be getting things done doing something "productive". So the act of praying means that you have to rely more on God.<sup>29</sup>'

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<sup>29</sup> *ibid.* p73



## Prayer Maps<sup>30</sup>

Your group might want to pray for people and events in geographical locations which you can't visit in person. Perhaps you want to focus on schools in your vicinity, a prison, another parish in our Diocese, countries where the gospel is being lived and proclaimed in the midst of hostility, or the places where Christian workers supported by your church live and serve God. Visual stimuli like maps or photos can prompt our imagination and enhance our prayers.

### Action Plan

- Bring to the group a map of the area you plan to pray for, for example your city, country, or region of the world. Alternatively, prepare an outline map or draw one together on a large sheet of paper. Maybe bring an article to read that helps the group understand.
- Mark on the map the specific locations which are to be the focus of your prayer.
- Using the map as a focus, discuss specific prayer items.
- Pray for the different locations, encouraging members to look at the map as they do so. After each location is prayed for, by one or several members, Mark it with a t in a thick pen or with a cut-out symbol. Express thanksgiving to God for what he has been doing and will continue to do.
- Members will be encouraged as they see the scope of their prayer. It will also be a reminder of areas still to be prayed for.
- Light a candle and place it on a location as it is being prayed for, as a powerful symbol of the light of Christ in the situation. (An alternative is to have symbols or lit candles already on the map. Members identify situations where the presence or light of Christ has been marred by injustice, abuse etc)

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<sup>30</sup> Harkness, Praying Together, pp48-49

- If you have an extra large space such as a church hall or car park, use chalk to draw an extra large map (10x12 metres). Encourage members to physically move to a location to pray.

# Planning for a prayer walk<sup>31</sup>

## What is a prayer walk?

Prayer walking is about getting out into the communities and towns where we live and praying for God's Kingdom to come. When we are out and about, we are connected with the physical places where people work and spend their lives. Here God can show us his heart for the community and his aspirations for those that dwell there. Prayer walks can also be more devotional in nature and we shall deal with this second type of walk further down this page.

## Ideas for prayer walks

### Before the walk

1. Plan a route round your city, town or suburb that takes in significant places and buildings. Examples of this might include the seat of local government, at least one school or college, the shopping centre and where people congregate, brothers, hospitals, other churches and any other important landmarks or historic places.
2. Are there any projects that your church (or local churches) are involved with in the town? E.g. youth outreach work, foodbanks, Anglicare centre, work with the homeless, etc. Remember to contact the leaders involved with these groups and see if there are any current issues in need of prayer.
3. Print out a map of your route (Google maps are useful for this) and mark with "x"s some prayer stations where people can stop and pray. Also prepare a list of prayer points for these places. For example, "At the council offices stop and pray for your local councillors, for wise decision making and godly leadership".

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<sup>31</sup> [https://www.prayerscapes.com/prayers/resources/prayer\\_walk.html#ixzz6foTAJ4XB](https://www.prayerscapes.com/prayers/resources/prayer_walk.html#ixzz6foTAJ4XB)

4. Make sure that your walk is not too long. About an hour out and about is usually a good length of time to aim for.
5. Arrange a venue to meet in before you go out. You may want to return here at the end for drinks and snacks, so remember to check this is OK with whoever you have asked to host the event.

### When you walk

1. Begin by explaining what you are going to do. Hand out the maps and prayer points and brief everyone about the route, and your suggested places for stopping and praying. Inspire people to pray by looking at an appropriate scripture (like Matthew 28:18-20) or share a quote you like: "All God's giants have been weak women and men who did great things for God because they reckoned on God being with them" (Hudson Taylor)
2. Split the group into two's or three's. People are more likely to pray in small groups like this than pray out loud with a large group in public. (Also, avoid sending people out on their own if it's night time).
3. Explain that prayer can be out loud, although it's also OK for prayer to be in silent as well. There may be some in group who are more comfortable with this, especially in public spaces.
4. Pray! Pray before you go - for discernment, protection, and inspiration in prayer. Pray that God would reveal things to you as you are walking around your town and in amongst it's people.
5. When you send people out, stagger the groups so that not everyone goes at once! Also consider sending one group clockwise around the route, and another anticlockwise.
6. Arrange a time for returning to the house or meeting place. When people arrive back ask everyone how things went and if God spoke to them about anything as they prayed. Commit to praying about these things for the rest of the week.



## 24-hour prayer vigil<sup>32</sup>

**What is a prayer vigil?** The idea is many centuries old. "Vigil" indicates a time of "vigilance", wakefulness, a watch, originally "kept on the night before a religious feast with prayer or other devotions."

**How to run sprayer vigil?** Choose a date and time. The prayer vigil can be for 24 hours, or it can be for 6 or 48 hours. There's no rules on time. One idea is for people to pray for an hour at a time in the church sanctuary or hall.

**Sign ups.** On the Sunday's in the weeks leading up to the vigil, circulate a sign-up sheet in the shape of 12-hour clock. If an hour or two is vacant, ask someone to shift to one of those less popular times. If people are concerned about praying for an hour, share the linked document which is a helpful guide<sup>33</sup>. As people begin to visualise themselves actually praying for an hour, they are more willing to risk it. After one successful experience, they're eager to sign up the next time.

**On the day of the vigil.** Upon entering the place designated for the prayer vigil for their hour, it is helpful to have next to a log-in sheet some brief instructions for first-timers. Have helps available such the Prayer Book, a globe and prayer requests from church supported groups such as the Church Missionary Society, Australian Board of Mission, Bush Church Aid, Anglicare, Prison Ministries, School Ministries, etc. Some use a copy of the church directory in their intercession. Prayer request slips from the previous Sunday's service can be collated and with space for an ever-growing list on which participants enter other needs.

**How to pray:** Since only one or two people are usually present at a time, encourage people to pray the way they feel most comfortable. A kneeler can be placed at the front of the church, though most of people pray sit. But some walk while they pray. Occasionally someone prays prostrate on the floor.

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<sup>32</sup> <http://www.joyfulheart.com/maturity/vigil.htm>

<sup>33</sup> <http://www.joyfulheart.com/maturity/prayer.htm>



## Evangelistic Prayer Triplet (EPT's)

Identify two other people (of the same sex) you know who have shown a desire to reach out to their friends with the love of Jesus. Ask them to join you once a month, for one hour, to pray in the following way:

- Share three people you are actively seeking to share Jesus' love with
- All three of the group pray that the sharer will be bold (like the church in Acts 4:31), and for God to open doors to the gospel and help them to speak graciously and clearly, with gentleness and respect (Colossians 4:5-6, 1 Peter 3:15-16a). Pray for the Lord to open the friend/family members heart to the message, and to enter God's beloved family (Acts 16:14).
- Once everyone has prayed the above for one of the group members, do the same for the second and third member of the group.



## Praying for your ministry leaders.

What do our Clergy, Wardens, Parish Councillors and everyone who has a role leading our churches, schools and ministry units need? Prayer for the following is vital. Pray for:

- The proclamation of the Word (2 Tim. 4:1-5) and oversight of the sacraments (Acts 2:42, 16:33; 1 Corinthians 11:17-34)
- The discipline of prayer for the church/ministry unit as a whole and the members of the church as individuals (2 Thess. 5:16-18).
- Holiness of life: character (1 Tim. 4:16). Or in the words of Robert Murray McCheyne: 'A holy minister is an awful weapon in the hand of God.'
- If they are married, then a godly, growing and gracious marriage relationship – marked by Christ-like love, commitment and joy (Eph. 5:22-33; 1 Tim. 3:1-7).
- If they are parents, then to be present for their children, to bring them up in the instruction of their good Lord (Eph. 6:4), to see their children as a gift and not a project (Ps. 127:3-5), to shepherd their heart and be a safe person of trust and counsel.
- For their physical and psychological health: Paul's mental anguish and anxiety for the church/es (2 Cor. 11:28), Timothy's regular stomach ailments (1 Tim. 5:23).
- For their partnership with co-workers: see Paul and John Mark (Acts 15:36-40), and the reconciling, nurturing ministry of Barnabas (Acts 9:26-28; Col. 4:10).
- For their work as an evangelist (1 Tim. 4:5).
- For friendship: Paul's close relationship with Timothy. Hebrews 3:13 and a Hebrews 10:24-25 – under God, we are both needed and needy.

# Ascension Day

Scripture passage: Acts 18:7-11

In verses 7-8<sup>34</sup>, we read of Paul's ministry success – the pure joy of seeing people come to Christ under his gospel proclamation. But then in verse 9, we meet Paul in his weakness. And in Paul's weakness, we are brought into the precious words of the risen Lord Jesus to assure and encourage (give courage to) Paul. Here, the great gospel proclaimer needs to be encouraged not to be afraid or silent. Why? Because he was afraid and tempted to be silent. So Jesus lifted up Paul's heart and mind to the sovereign Lordship of Jesus over His mission. The result being verse 11 ' –So Paul stayed in Corinth for a year and a half, teaching them the word of God'.

The ascended Jesus oversees his mission.

## A morning of prayer and fasting for our upcoming mission (8am - 1pm)

30 minute slots:

1. One parish in our diocese to be prayed for each slot
2. For us to be *motivated* by love, *equipped* to share, *available* to invite and help in the activities planned.
3. For God our Father, Son and Spirit to be honoured in all we do.
4. For the gospel of God's grace in Christ to be proclaimed clearly, winsomely, humbly and suitable for each context.
5. For the hearts of all listeners to be opened to receive the good news of God's grace in Christ like Lydia in Acts 16:14-15.

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<sup>34</sup> Nation, Extraordinary Prayer, pp43-44

# A Service of Prayer for Healing

## *Preparation*

Blessed be God: Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Blessed be God's kingdom, now and for ever.

The Lord be with you.

**And also with you.**

Almighty God,  
to whom all hearts are open,  
all desires known,  
and from whom no secrets are hidden:  
cleanse the thoughts of our hearts  
by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit, that we may perfectly love you,  
and worthily magnify your holy name, through Christ our Lord. Amen.

## *Liturgy of the Word*

A reading from the Book of Revelation (21:1-5)

### *Responsorial Psalm Psalm 84.1-7*

1 How lovely is your dwelling-place:

**O Lord God of hosts!**

2 My soul has a desire and longing

to enter the courts of the Lord:

**my heart and my flesh rejoice in the living God.**

3 The sparrow has found her a home,

and the swallow a nest where she may lay her young:

**even your altar, O Lord of hosts, my King and my God.**

4 Blessed are those who dwell in your house:

**they will always be praising you.**

5 Blessed are those whose strength is in you:

**in whose heart are the highways to Zion;**

6 Who, going through the valley of dryness,

find there a spring from which to drink:

**till the autumn rain shall clothe it with blessings.**

7 They go from strength to strength:  
**they appear, every one of them,**  
before the God of gods in Zion.

*The Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to Luke (21:29-33)*

29 Then he told them a parable: 'Look at the fig tree and all the trees; 30 as soon as they sprout leaves you can see for yourselves and know that summer is already near. 31 So also, when you see these things taking place, you know that the kingdom of God is near. 32 Truly I tell you, this generation will not pass away until all things have taken place. 33 Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.

*Penitential Rite*

Let us pray.

Lord Jesus, receive the prayers we offer.

You bore our weaknesses and carried our sorrows.

Lord have mercy,

**Lord have mercy.**

You felt compassion for the people and went among them doing good.

Christ have mercy,

**Christ have mercy.**

You commanded your apostles to heal the sick in your name.

Lord have mercy,

**Lord have mercy.**

Lord have mercy on us now,

and help us in our time of need.

*In penitence and faith, let us confess our sins.*

Merciful God, our maker and our judge,

we have sinned against you in thought, word, and deed, and in what we have failed to do:

we have not loved you with our whole heart;

we have not loved our neighbours as ourselves;

we repent, and are sorry for all our sins. Father, forgive us. Strengthen us to love and obey you in newness of life; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

*The priest says*

Almighty God,

who has promised forgiveness to all who turn to him in faith:

pardon you and set you free from all your sins,

strengthen you in all goodness

and keep you in eternal life,

through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

*Invitation for anointing and laying on of hands*

Are any among you sick? They should call for the elders of the church and have them pray over them, anointing them with oil in the name of the Lord. The prayer of faith will save the sick, and the Lord will raise them up; and anyone who has committed sins will be forgiven.

Therefore, confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another, so that you may be healed (James 5:14–16)

*The minister says*

Almighty God,

in your word we are encouraged to pray for the sick

and anoint them with oil.

Grant that N who is anointed with this oil

May be strengthened by your Holy Spirit,

healed and restored, according to your good purposes;

through Jesus Christ our Saviour. **Amen.**

*The minister anoints the sick person, saying*

N, I anoint you in the name of the Lord Jesus. **Amen.**

*or*

In the faith of the Lord Jesus Christ, I anoint you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit

*The minister lays hands on the sick person. Those present may join in the laying on of hands.*

*The minister says these or similar words*

Laying hands on you in the name of Jesus Christ, we pray for healing

*The minister says*

The source of life and health,

grant you release from pain,

refreshment of spirit,  
and wholeness in body and mind. **Amen**

*The sick person may return thanks using his or her own words, or the following prayer.*

Lord Jesus, your love never fails.

Thank you for this assurance

that your hands are stretched out to me,

to forgive, to strengthen, and to heal. **Amen**