

Leading intercessions at St Mary's Felpham

Thank you, thank you, thank you. You do an amazing task of leading the community in prayer. This is a huge responsibility, and you are all wonderful people. Below is a guide to steer and to help you when writing prayers. We have had new intercessors join us and this might be useful to them and helpful to people who have been leading intercessions for years.

Maybe read scripture as it helps to focus our mind on what we are actually doing. Biblical guidance: Matthew 6:9-13; 1 Timothy 2:1-4; Romans 8:26-27

THE AIM OF INTERCESSIONS WITHIN OUR SERVICES

- To lead the congregation in prayer for other people and for situations
- To pray for God's Kingdom to come, for God's will to be done and for our 'daily bread' (Matthew 6:9-13)
- To pray for everyone, especially those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness – so that all people will be saved
- To model intercessory prayer, so that what we do in our services becomes part of our everyday lives

WHAT WE ARE NOT DOING

- Confession or meditation
- Telling God what is what
- Telling people what God thinks
- Telling people what you think (about the latest hot topic or the latest news item!)

WHAT TO DO WHEN THE ROTA ARRIVES.

1. Receive the rota. Please be gracious! If you are not available, arrange a swap and tell the warden.
2. Prepare your intercessions. Pray them yourself before the service.
3. Time yourself in advance, reading at 'prayer speed'. Intercessions should not be longer than 4 minutes please.
4. Arrive in church at least 10 minutes before service begins. Make sure the warden knows you are there. Check with the minister if anybody has recently died and needs adding to the prayer list.
5. Occasionally ask for feedback from service leader, your friends ... and those who you don't know!

FOR WHOM DO WE PRAY?

"I urge, then, first of all, that petitions, prayers, intercessions and thanksgiving be made for everyone".

1. THE WORLD

The emphasis is that we pray for everyone everywhere. We do not pray for nations, but for leaders of the nations, and the people of those nations. We all slip into this from time to time. Aim for the best.

- Do we pray for peace? Or rather should we not pray for people that they might know peace?
- For people who are victims of environmental disaster, economic problems, injustice, prisoners of conscience.
- For those who have to take decisions that affect our lives: political and national leaders, business leaders, media leaders.
- Praying for the head of state. We pray for an individual, using that individual as a way of praying in a specific way for all the people who they represent (eg. prayer for the King, in his role as head of state – what we pray for him, we pray for the people of this country) **Caution:** Think more about how people hear what you say than how you think it is heard.
- *What am I actually praying for? What are we asking for?*

2. THE LOCAL COMMUNITY

We have a particular responsibility for our community, the village, the town and the parish.

- Local community – people in positions of responsibility (politicians), business leaders, media, police leaders, police, families, couples, singles, younger people, older people (residential homes: Hollymead, Summerly Care Home, Oaklands Court, Gateway Lodge)
- People who work in local institutions: businesses (What could we pray for Butlins, the Uni workers), hospitality givers, hospital, hospice, the three schools)

*Be alert to the latest news from local papers/TV/radio: but don't become a newsreader.

3. THE CHURCH (the people of God)

- International: Church leaders (of different denominations), overseas churches, churches facing persecution, mission partners like FSW.
- National: Archbishops, witness, unity, synods. Pray for those who lead the church
- Local: Our own bishops Ruth and Martin (as we pray for them we pray for the diocese). Different church organisations, church leaders. Archdeacons, Church House, Rural Dean, PCC, the list goes on be creative.
- Parish: homegroups, ladies group, mens group, tea and chat, church mice, the youth clubs, the choirs, the servers, our musicians, church committees, different congregations (expression of unity); those involved with Introducing

Jesus, baptism, Confirmation candidates, wedding couples. Those working on specific projects, our architect, our finances.

- Specific events in our churches life: look at notice sheet
- **Caution:** Focus on one or two things. Do not give a long list. And yes, pray for the clergy but pray for the laity with equal measure.

4. INDIVIDUALS

God works through individuals (2 Chronicles 36:22). If we don't pray specific prayers we cannot expect specific answers. This is especially true when praying for mission (eg. Colossians 4:2ff)

- Individuals with a specific task.
- Individuals in need. Use the 'Focus for Prayer' (We are all in need, but there are some people whose situation particularly touches us).
- Individuals bereaved.

Pray with confidence, trusting God's promises (We do not pray for the dead that they need help because we trust in God's promises, but we pray for their souls united with God. We 'Give thanks for them', or 'Remember them before God')

HOW DO I KNOW WHO TO PRAY FOR?

What is big this coming week? (eg. Elections)

What has touched you this week? Financial difficulty? A successful business deal? A news story?

Warning: Try not to be too personal: if there is something personal, make it a general.

What has touched the community? Use the specific to pray out to the general. (eg. a child killed in a road accident: "We pray for the family – that in their sorrow they will know comfort of friends, hope, strength and peace. We pray for other families who have lost children"). Ask – what is it (if anything) that people will have on their minds as they come to church.

What are the issues that we are supporting or dealing with as a Christian community: mission focus, new curate, Holiday club. Use notice sheet – usually on website by Friday.

What is the bible passage about? Does it give any hints? (**Warning:** Please do not preach another sermon!)

PLANNING PRAYERS FOR NORMAL SERVICES

1. Include standard forms of prayer (eg. Common Worship framework can be very helpful). But vary order if appropriate.

Forms can be found in Common Worship: (page 281-289) or on the Common Worship pages of the Church of England website.

Using responses: repeat response at beginning, so people know what it is that they are being asked to say. Keep the response very simple!

2. Use other forms

Use our Vision statement: To share God's love with everyone. If we don't pray this and don't say this it won't happen.

3. Add your own choice of prayers.

You may like to use

- a) set prayers from service book
- b) published prayers from other books
- c) prayers you write yourself for the occasion
- d) There are great prayers from other community on websites, Costa Blanca is one. Be careful using these. Others use them and you may find that prayers said at the 9.30am are the same as prayers said at the 11am. Not an issue but it may be obvious that these are not tailored to us or the congregation you are praying with.

4. Please Keep prayers short and easy to concentrate on. Any prayers you choose/write should be no longer than the average 'collect' length. Even that maybe too long.

5. Do not pray 'spur of the moment' prayers, unless you are sure it is appropriate. Usually they ramble and waffle. Write it out and time it.

6. Don't try and cover everything. It might be right to simply focus on one country or on one situation. In general I like to start with the world, the church, the community, those in need, the dying, the dead and years minds and then something to send us out on. A positive prayer, ie Lord equip now from the service to go and do your work.

7. Allow other people to pray

- Use silence. Give people time to think and pray time (When you say 'Let's have silence' it will seem much longer to you, so time it on your watch: 15-to a max of 30 seconds of silence is a good length of time) Start at 15 seconds and find out what feels right
- Don't preach at people, or express your own personal viewpoint (eg. we pray that the Liberal Party will win the next general election hahahahaha)
- Avoid the temptation to teach during prayers : prayers are from the people to God, not vice-versa!! Also be extremely careful when praying about subjects which may be sensitive to members of the congregation, such as divorce, etc.

8. Use an introduction (eg. 'We pray for next week's Confirmation service'), followed by silence and then a prayer, and/or a response.

9. Include thanksgiving in your prayers.

BEGINNING AND ENDING PRAYERS

An opening sentence or promise from the Bible can set the right tone or theme for the prayers.

Biddings

“Let us pray for the Church and for the world,
[and let us thank God for his goodness]”.

“In the power of the Spirit and in union with Christ,
let us pray to the Father”.

“From the rising of the sun to its setting, let us pray to the Lord”.

“Let us pray to the Father”. The chosen versicle and response follow.

One of these responses may be used in a set of prayers.

General

Lord, in your mercy

All hear our prayer.

Lord, hear us.

All Lord, graciously hear us.

God of love

All hear our prayer.

Father of all

All hear your children’s prayer.

In faith we pray

All we pray to you our God.

Lord, meet us in the silence

All and hear our prayer.

In seasons

Father of life

All make known your glory.

Lord, revealed in the world

All hear our prayer.

Lord, we come to the cross

All in your mercy, hear us.

Lord of life

All in your mercy, hear us.

Father, Lord of creation

All in your mercy, hear us.

As we pray to the Father
All Lord, send your Spirit.

Father, by your Spirit
All bring in your kingdom.

Your kingdom come
All your will be done.

Ending prayers

Acknowledgement that we are praying together with the saints.

"Rejoicing in the fellowship of [N and of] all your saints,
we commend ourselves and the whole creation to your unfailing love."

Liturgical endings:

IMPORTANT Please avoid using the phrase 'Merciful Father ...' until your final, final sentence. It is a trigger to the priest to stand up and go to the altar. If you want to see if the priest is listening...say Merciful father a few times and see them twitch!

End the prayers by saying Merciful father accept...

FINALLY

- Remember to whom we are praying: 'Our Father in Heaven'
- Remember for what we are praying: 'Your kingdom come, your will be done'
- Remember why we are able to pray: 'Jesus Christ, the Son of God, our Lord'
- Remember our need for the Holy Spirit

Other resources

<https://www.churchofengland.org/prayer-and-worship/topical-prayers/leading-prayer-through-intercessions>