

## Leading prayers in Church

First of all thank you for offering to lead us in prayer at our Eucharist service. It is good for us all to hear differing styles of intercessory prayer. But remember there is an important difference between private prayer, and leading intercessions in church. Whilst you are leading the intercessions, you are leading God's people in prayer, rather than praying on their behalf. So the way that you pray will be different from your own private prayer.



What are intercessions? They are pleas, petitions we bring before God. Petitions we all offer together for the Church, the world, our community, those who suffer and those who have died. They are not prayer of thanksgiving or praise, those are offered elsewhere in the service, although you may want to finish by offering thanks for our many blessings, support and compassion. The corporate act of intercession is the sum of the individual's thoughts and prayers.

For corporate prayer to happen effectively, the congregation will be praying along the lines that you lay before them, and extending them as individual hearts and minds engaging with the topics for prayer. It is important that they hear what you are praying, so those leading intercessions need to be **audible**, and to speak clearly and slowly. Think you are on the stage!

You are not praying at the congregation, you are praying with the congregation, so stand in the body of the people looking towards the altar.

A clearly defined structure to the intercessions will help people pray. You want people to engage with your prayers not just to listen in. The most common structure in Anglican worship is - prayer for the Church, for the world, for our community, ending up with prayer for others. If the intercessions during worship have a similar structure each week, it will help church members know where the prayers are going, and free them to pray.

A congregational response is a good way of marking out the structure, and bringing silences to an end. If you are using a congregational response different to the familiar, it is a good idea to introduce it clearly at the beginning.



Using silence in your prayers can be very powerful. Silence in corporate worship allows a transition from corporate prayer, where we join in common petitions, to private prayer, where we spend time individually with God. It is a good idea to direct people's prayers into the silence by saying something like 'In a moment of silence, let's bring before God...'. It needs to be managed by you not too long or some may feel uncomfortable, about 30 seconds is about right.

Leading prayers does not require a degree in poetry and prose, but is most effective in simple, clear everyday language. God is not impressed by complex phrasing, and long words. Use your own everyday simple language, avoiding Christian jargon.

The readings for the day and the collect will all give you a clue to the theme of the day, it is good to reflect the messages embodied in them. It's important to be up to date with the news, both national and local events, and also the current status of those who will be prayed for who are sick. Please do not go into why they are sick or their current state.

The length of intercessions will vary from person to person. However, the role of those leading prayers is not to cover everything. It is probably best to pray generally for the topic in one sentence, and then to focus on one or two specifics. Otherwise the service will last all day! Five minutes maximum.

You will need to prepare thoroughly.

Whether you use a script, or just notes is up to you, but in either case, it is unlikely that you will be able to do justice to the responsibility of leading God's people in prayer without spending some quality with Him ahead of the service.

Don't be anxious there is no need God is with you. Allow the congregation time to settle before you start speaking. Speak slowly and clearly and above all have confidence in your words. Pause, after the final 'Amen', before returning to your seat.

For those of you who might like to buy a book of intercessory prayers which reflect the three year cycle of Sunday services here are a few suggestions.

Prayers of Intercession for Common Worship by Susan Sayers

Hear our Prayer by Raymond Chapman

Intercessions for years A,B & C by Ian Black

The Intercessions Handbook by John Pritchard



Also, here are a couple of frameworks as set out in Common Worship to help you. Where the dots occur you can make your contribution.

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

Almighty God, our heavenly Father,  
you promised through your Son Jesus Christ  
to hear us when we pray in faith.  
Strengthen our bishop and all your Church in the service of Christ,  
that those who confess your name may be united in your truth,  
live together in your love, and reveal your glory in the world.

Bless and guide Elizabeth our Queen; give wisdom to all in authority;  
and direct this and every nation in the ways of justice and of peace;  
that we may honour one another, and seek the common good.

Give grace to us, our families and friends, and to all our neighbours,  
that we may serve Christ in one another, and love as he loves us.

Comfort and heal all those who suffer in body, mind, or spirit ...;  
give them courage and hope in their troubles;  
and bring them the joy of your salvation.

Hear us as we remember those who have died in the faith of Christ ...;  
according to your promises,  
grant us with them a share in your eternal kingdom.

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

*or*

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

O God, the creator and preserver of all,  
we pray for people in every kind of need;  
make your ways known on earth,  
your saving health among all nations ...

We pray for the good estate of the catholic Church;  
guide and govern us by your good Spirit,  
that all who profess and call themselves Christians  
may be led into the way of truth,  
and hold the faith in unity of spirit,  
in the bond of peace and in righteousness of life ...

We commend to your fatherly goodness  
all those who are any ways afflicted or distressed,  
in mind, body or estate;  
comfort and relieve them in their need,  
give them patience in their sufferings,  
and bring good out of all their afflictions ...

We remember those who have gone before us  
in the peace of Christ,  
and we give you praise for all your faithful ones,  
with whom we rejoice in the communion of saints ...  
All this we ask for Jesus Christ's sake.

*or*

In the power of the Spirit and in union with Christ, let us pray to

the Father.

Almighty and ever-living God, who by thy holy apostle hast taught us to make prayers and supplications, and to give thanks, for all men: we humbly beseech thee most mercifully to receive these our prayers, which we offer unto thy divine majesty; beseeching thee to inspire continually the universal Church with the spirit of truth, unity and concord; and grant that all they that do confess thy holy name may agree in the truth of thy holy word, and live in unity and godly love.

We beseech thee also to lead all nations in the way of righteousness and peace; and so to direct all kings and rulers, that under them thy people may be godly and quietly governed. And grant unto thy servant Elizabeth our Queen, and to all that are put in authority under her, that they may truly and impartially administer justice, to the punishment of wickedness and vice, and to the maintenance of thy true religion and virtue.

Give grace, O heavenly Father, to all bishops, priests and deacons, especially to thy servant N our bishop, that they may both by their life and doctrine set forth thy true and lively word, and rightly and duly administer thy holy sacraments.

Guide and prosper, we pray thee, those who are labouring for the spread of thy gospel among the nations, and enlighten with thy Spirit all places of education and learning; that the whole world may be filled with the knowledge of thy truth.

And to all thy people give thy heavenly grace; and specially to this congregation here present, that, with meek heart and due reverence, they may hear and receive thy holy word, truly serving thee in holiness and righteousness all the days of their life.

And we most humbly beseech thee of thy goodness, O Lord, to comfort and succour all them who in this transitory life are in trouble, sorrow, need, sickness, or any other adversity.

And we commend to thy gracious keeping, O Lord, all thy servants departed this life in thy faith and fear, beseeching thee, according to thy promises, to grant them refreshment, light and peace.

And here we give thee most high praise and hearty thanks for all thy saints, who have been the chosen vessels of thy grace, and lights of the world in their several generations; and we pray that, rejoicing in their fellowship and following their good examples, we may be partakers with them of thy heavenly kingdom.

Grant this, O Father, for Jesus Christ's sake, our only mediator

and advocate.

*or*

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

For the peace of the whole world,  
for the welfare of the Holy Church of God,  
and for the unity of all,  
let us pray to the Lord.

For N our bishop,  
for the leaders of our sister Churches,  
and for all clergy and people,  
let us pray to the Lord.

For Elizabeth our Queen,  
for the leaders of the nations,  
and for all in authority,  
let us pray to the Lord.

For this community,  
for every city, town and village,  
and for all the people who live within them,  
let us pray to the Lord.

For good weather,  
and for abundant harvests for all to share,  
let us pray to the Lord. For those who travel by land, air, or water,  
for the sick and the suffering,  
[for ... ,]  
for prisoners and captives,  
and for their safety, health and salvation,  
let us pray to the Lord.

For our deliverance from all affliction, strife and need,  
and for the absolution of our sins and offences,  
let us pray to the Lord.

Remembering [ ... and]  
all who have gone before us in faith,  
and in communion with [ ... and] all the saints,  
we commit ourselves, one another,  
and our whole life to Christ our God;