

LEADING THE PRAYERS

INTRODUCTION

Thank you so much for being willing to lead the prayers in Church - it is an important part of our worshipping life together and we are grateful for your involvement. Some of you have led prayers for many years, some of you are new to the rota so I thought this leaflet might assist in your preparation.

No matter how experienced we may be in praying in private, leading the prayers of the church is rather different! We are seeking to help others to engage in prayer and to bring to God the needs of the world, the nation and our community on behalf of everyone. We want them to be praying rather than listening to our prayers.

We are aiming for...

- Four minutes of prayer
- Prayers that everyone can say "Amen" to
- Prayers that are simple, informed and direct
- Prayers that focus our attention outside as well as inside the Church

SOME POINTERS

- The prayers are to be prayers of 'intercession' i.e. that are prayers of 'asking', 'requesting', 'pleading'. We are bringing our needs and the needs of the world to God. These prayers are not primarily meant to be prayers of praise or thanksgiving or confession which should all be covered in different parts of the service. Having said that, it is fine to include a line of thanks or praise but not to make this the main focus.
- Try to avoid a long gap while you make your way to the lectern. Note where the prayers are in the order of service and move to the front before this to be ready. An order of service showing where the prayers will come is at the back of church.
- Speak in a loud, clear voice - it is best to ignore the presence of the microphone and to project your voice as well as you can. The sound team can always turn you down but it can be hard to turn you up without getting feedback. Try not to drop your voice as you pray and take your time. Your tone will help people to engage – or not.
- Avoid reading long passages of Scripture – these are hard for the congregation to engage with. A phrase or verse can be helpful and may even provide a basis for the structure of your prayers but keep it short and easy to remember. Don't worry about tying into the theme of the service, though it is fine to do this if you want to.
- Try to pray 'we' prayers rather than 'I' prayers so that people feel involved and engaged. Pray positively for things rather than against things - e.g rather than, "We pray against war" pray "We ask you for peace..."
- Be mindful of the church's intention to be inclusive; don't use language which may exclude, offend, or shame anyone listening.
- Choose about three areas to be the focus of your prayers. We often want to pray for the world and everyone in it but this can lead to long, unfocussed prayers that people do not engage with. The areas we pray for can include international events, national concerns or local issues. We are told in Scripture to pray for those in authority over us and it is always good to pray for those who

serve in government, councils, hospitals, schools, the police, and others. The focus will change from week to week and there may be breaking news items which need to be prayed for. Have a think about what has dominated the news during the week and always check the news on Sunday morning. It is also good to pray regularly for people associated with St Mark's.

- Try to arrive early when you are leading prayers so that people have time to talk to you about any prayer requests.
- With so much to pray for, it is important that we let the Spirit lead us and ask in our preparation what He wants us to pray for.
- It is good to help the congregation to be involved by inviting them to respond from time to time. The words 'Lord in your mercy' with the response 'Hear our prayer' is well known but any simple phrase and response can be used. Just explain clearly what you want the congregation to do and get them to practise it with you before you begin. Please also mention it to the technical team so they can ensure the response is available to read on a slide. The Lord's prayer in the modern version can also be used and should always be included in All Age Services.
- If you feel you can, it is good to be creative in the way we do the prayers from time to time. This is especially true for All Age Services where it is great to involve the children, either in some prayer activity or in reading prayers you have written for them with simple language. The vicar or Children and Family Work Co-ordinator would be happy to advise about this and suggest children you could ask. Make sure the sound team know so that they can organise the microphone for you. The use of pictures on the screen and/or short periods of silence can also be very effective.
- If you are unable to do the prayers please try and find someone to swap with or tell whoever is leading the service.

A lot to remember, but the key thing is to prepare carefully and prayerfully. Thank you so much for your help in this important ministry!