

# Exploring Worship and Mission

## Praying Together



**A series of workshops designed to help local congregations explore different aspects of worship and their relation to mission.**



**Aim:** to explore how prayer can integrate more effectively with the mission of the local church.

### Mission Thinking:



Prayer is fundamental to the life of a church.

Through prayer – especially praying together – God’s purpose for a particular people in a particular place may be discerned. Many a church project has grown out of prayer. And yet a busy and active church is not necessarily a faithful one.

Our mission activities need to be in dynamic relationship with prayer i.e. both informing and sharpening our prayer and also being supported and upheld by prayer. Is there sometimes a danger that our activities, however worthwhile, become peripheral ‘fringe events’, divorced from the main life and purpose of the church?

Individual Christians are involved with the world in many ways. Their daily Christian witness at home, work and in the community matters. It is a part of the mission of Christ’s church. How adequately do we reflect the issues with which they struggle, in our prayer together?

Leaders. It is useful to have more than one leader. One can act as scribe while the other speaks.

### Objectives:



- 1) To identify ways in which prayer and mission inter-relate.
- 2) To experience one method of identifying the prayer needs of a worshipping group
- 3) To introduce a variety of methods of praying together

### Practical Matters

**Timing:** Allow 1  $\frac{3}{4}$  hours.

#### Prepare a brief act of opening worship

#### You will need:

- Flipchart and pens
- Plenty of strips of paper, e.g. pink, yellow and green, for exercise 3
- Pens and pencils
- Copies of handout Praying Together – Some Methods and Approaches

**Space:** arrange the chairs in a circle if possible. If this cannot be arranged you may need to arrange for a display board on which to place the prepared suggestions in Activity 3.

Buzz groups do not need much space but being able to move the chairs helps involvement.

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### 1. Welcome and Introductions

*(Duration 15 minutes)*

- 1.1** Open the session with a brief act of worship.
- 1.2** In your own words, introduce the purpose and outline of the workshop (see the aims and objectives)
- 1.3** Clarify any domestic arrangements as necessary.
- 1.4** Invite participants to introduce themselves, if necessary.

### 2. How does praying together relate to the mission of the church?

*(Duration 20 minutes)*

**a)** In buzz groups of 3 or 4 people, ask the group to discuss the question:

**“What are we doing when we pray together?”**

After 5 minutes, take feedback and note responses on the flipchart.

**b)** The same buzz groups are asked this time to discuss the question:

**“What does mission mean for your church?”**

Explore the links that can be made between the two lists created from the two buzz sessions.

- 2.1** Does your discussion on mission suggest to you any additional points concerning the meaning or nature of prayer? If so, add them to the list from **a)**
- 2.2** Does your discussion on prayer suggest to you any additional points concerning the meaning or nature of mission? If so, add them to the list from **b)**

### 3. Identifying themes for prayer

*(Duration 25 minutes)*

This exercise is offered as a means of identifying relevant themes and topics for a worshipping community. It serves here as a stimulus for discussion about ways of praying together. It may be commended as a worthwhile exercise for any regular worshipping community to undertake on occasions.

**3.1** Explain that the exercise involves thinking about first our personal lives, then our life as a Christian body, and finally the wider world. We shall try to identify some of the issues, questions, or concerns which come most obviously to mind.

**3.2** Make it clear to everyone that they are free to write as many or as few contributions as they wish (or none, if there is nothing they wish to contribute!) Each should be on a separate piece of paper.

**3.3** Explain that these papers will be used in a group exercise, so participants would be better **not** to write down anything that they would not want to share. There will be an opportunity to explain briefly about what they have written.

**The exercise is in three stages, as follows:**

**i) On Pink Sheets** - Think of the activities and concerns of your day to day lives, at home, in work or voluntary activities. Write down some of the most important concerns, questions, or issues that challenge you personally e.g. how to respond to 'difficult' young people, ethical questions at work, conflicting demands or tensions within the family, personal health choices or uncertainties.

**ii) On yellow sheets** – Now think of the gathered group as a Christian body – a part of the body of Christ. Write down some of the most important concerns, questions or issues which come to mind e.g. tensions, decisions to be faced, local events and projects, reasons for sadness or celebration.

**iii) Lastly, on green slips** – Think of the wider world, and current social and political affairs. Write down what, today, are the concerns, questions or issues that we want to bring to God in prayer.

Take a, b and c in turn, ask people to lay down their slips of paper on the floor, (perhaps in concentric circles of pink, yellow and green,) offering them the opportunity to add brief explanations if they wish.

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### **4. Ways of praying together.**

*(Duration 25 minutes)*

**4.1** Distribute and briefly introduce the handout "Praying Together – Some Methods and Approaches."

**4.2** Handout "Praying Together – some methods and approaches."

**4.3** In groups of 4 – 6, consider:

**a)** How could you make use of the information on the coloured sheets (from the previous exercise) in worship? (The handout may stimulate suggestions. You may have other ideas of your own). E.g. compile a diary of intercessions, offer the slips of paper in an act of worship. Or re-distribute them so that members anonymously pray for one another's concerns during the coming week.

**b)** Are there some significant themes that arise from the above exercise? What methods of corporate prayer are the most appropriate in addressing these themes?

**c)** In the last 10 minutes, write a prayer or plan an act of prayer which reflects one or more of the themes/issues that you have identified.

**4.4** Take feedback from the groups in an open discussion.

### **5. End with prayer together**

*(Duration 25 minutes)*

Use one or more of the groups' prepared contributions or use some other way which reflects the fruit of today's discussions.

**Use this space to write down notes:**

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### Praying Together – Some Methods and Approaches

#### 1. Written Contributions

- add written statements to a prayer tree/collage; or offer them with the collection.
- have a prayer suggestion box/request book/notice board.

#### 2. Spoken contributions

- worship leader invites people to mention names/places, then incorporates these in prayer.
- pauses during prayer for people to add their contributions.

#### 3. Praying the Bible

- meditation on scriptural verses, imaginative contemplation or bible passages.

#### 4. Prayer with images

- use of posters, slides, powerpoint, newspaper headlines, or objects.

#### 5. Poetry etc

- use of poetry, newspapers, quotations etc. as prayer stimulus.

#### 6. Silence

- or guided meditation, with the aid of words, music, visual focus.

#### 7. Responsive prayer

- includes spoken or sung refrain.

#### 8. 'Liturgical' prayer

- scripted prayer for leader and congregation, or for several voices.
- use of hymns or Psalms in this way.

#### 9. Open prayer

- a time for spontaneous contributions

#### 10. Use a Symbolic action

- e.g. lighting a candle, placing stones, tying/untying a knot, planting a seed.

#### 11. Prayer with movement

- use of hands, posture, dance or movement.
- Moving from one part of a building to another as a pilgrimage.

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