

Tips on Praying with Others (January 2024)

We can all pray – no one needs special training to talk to God whether about themselves or about someone else. However, sometimes we can worry about praying with someone else present – we are not sure what to say or might worry about how they will experience our prayer. It is important that when we are praying for someone else we do so in a way that cares for them as best we can, shows dignity and respect, and reflects God's love for them. So, here are some tips for praying with someone else using Paul's examples in Ephesians 1:15-23 and Philemon.

Remember...

It is God who ministers! When we pray, we are trusting that God will pour out his power and love (Ephesians 1:15-23), that the Holy Spirit will help us more deeply understand Christ and help us know what to do (Philemon 1-7). We do not need to use lots of words but can pray simply as we share our faith by praying with one another.

At St Mary's, we have a number of people who have experience and more in-depth training in prayer (e.g. in how to pray for healing). If you feel uncomfortable at any time, members of the ministry team (clergy, LLMs) or prayer ministry team can help.

Before you pray...

Someone may have approached you to ask for prayer. Or you may offer e.g. "how would you feel/what would you think about praying for that situation right now?"

- Begin by **listening**. Prayer is not a counselling session - there is no need to ask follow-up questions. Allow the person to say as much (or as little) as they would like. You may need to simply ask: "What would you like to pray about today?"
- Think about **where you are**. Pray in a public space where others can see you. At times, it might be helpful to find a quieter spot: the Lady Chapel or the Tower Room (with door open) are good options in the church building.
- Think about **physical touch**. Do not assume that touch will be welcomed even if you know them well. Always ask permission before laying on hands or otherwise touching the person. Always ensure that the use of physical contact is appropriate (i.e. a hand on the shoulder). Appropriate physical contact can be very powerful. Inappropriate or unwelcome physical contact is usually damaging.
- It is best practice to **pray in pairs**. So, find someone else to join you!
- Do not pray for a child or vulnerable adult without their parent or a member of the ministry team involved.

Then pray!

- **Follow Paul's example!** Thank God for this person. Pray that they would have God's power so that they will know God's love. Pray that they would have a deeper understanding of Christ so that they will know what the right thing to do is. Or you might pray together for someone else they are worried about: "Lord Jesus, we pray for NAME's daughter, that she would have God's power..." etc.
- Then **wait** together. Sometimes we see that the Holy Spirit is at work. Some of us find we feel emotional or have a clear thought about the way ahead. Others will not! There is no "right" or "wrong" response. Simply pay attention.
- You might have a sense of God speaking to you in a word or a picture or a verse from scripture as you wait. Always ask if it okay to share and allow the other person to decide whether this is relevant or not. "Would it be okay to share a picture/word/Bible verse with you? You can take it or leave it".
- When you feel it is time to stop praying, **say "Amen"** to show you have finished.
- **Keep your eyes open** as you pray so that you can check how the person you are praying with is responding and stop if they are uncomfortable.
- **Do not give advice or offer judgement/analysis of a situation in a time of prayer.** It might be there are times when you do have advice to offer. If so, make it clear this is your personal advice and ask if they wish to hear it: "Would it be useful to have a conversation about what you could do in this situation?". You might want to signpost to the ministry team or more specialist advice.

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After you pray...

- If you think someone may be at risk (especially if a child or vulnerable adult) tell one of the ministry team or the **Parish Safeguarding Officer** (Sue Morley) immediately. Our safeguarding policy can be found online and on notice boards.
- **Keep anything you are told confidential.** The only time you should share is in the situation above (and then only with the necessary individuals) or if the person you are praying for asks you to e.g. on the prayer chain or WhatsApp Prayer.
- **Reflect** with someone and with God! Continue to pray for the situation during the week, perhaps. And find a friend or leader to tell about your experience of praying for someone: What did you notice about your experience of praying for someone? Did you learn something about God through this time of prayer?