

To help you pray

Let the peace of this place surround you as you sit or kneel quietly. Let the hurry and worry of your life fall away from you. You are God's child. He loves you and cares for you. He is here with you now – and always. Speak to him calmly and thoughtfully – give yourself time for him to bring things to mind in your mind.

Lord, thank you

for your presence here, for the opportunity to pray, for the promise of peace, for the beauty of the world, the kindness of people... for all those whom I love, and who love me..... for your love towards me, and especially for..... Help me to show my gratitude in my deeds as well as my words.

Lord, I am sorry

for the times when I have been hasty or unkind, especially to ..., thought or acted selfishly, failed to forgive or ask forgiveness, forgotten your presence, taken your love for granted. I thank you for your promise to forgive all those who turn back to you in love and with a desire to make amends.

Lord, I am troubled

I am anxious and distressed for myself ... and for others ... especially about Help me to trust your love, for you carry our sorrows. Teach me to act and speak in the way your want. Give me the wisdom to know when not to interfere. Calm my fears, for all things are in your hands.

Lord, I pray for

My family ... and friends, my neighbours at home, at work, the ones I like, and dislike, for those who are ill, for those who are troubled or mourn, for the oppressed, the hungry, those involved in war or disaster. Bless them Father in their various troubles and bless the men and women who care for them. Show me how I may help.

And finally....

Help me to remember the love of Jesus, shown to his friends, and to strangers and those in distress, and help me to accept the new life and love and freedom he offers me as I follow him on my disciple journey. **Amen.**

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How can I pray?

Hillsborough Trinity
Methodist Church

The church by the park

Everyone else knows how to pray

You are not alone if you think this. Prayer is something we are often not taught. How often do we sit or kneel in church looking at other people and wondering what it is they are thinking in their silent prayer? They always look so holy. And here we are, trying to say something to Jesus....

Don't give up

Prayer is like every human skill. It is something that we need to learn how to do. We can use books, or ask a friend, or seek the guidance of a minister.

But, in many ways, prayer is something that we do have to find out about for ourselves. We are all made different, and so we will all pray differently. We will also pray differently in different situations.

What is prayer?

Some people pray to God, and some people pray to Jesus. Prayer is the way that we keep in touch with God, or we talk with Jesus. Many people think that they can change God: for example they might say "If I ask really nicely, then God will do what I want." For others, prayer is a form of magic: "If I say it the right way, then Jesus will answer and sort it out."

Neither of these is true. Prayer is the way in which we open up to Jesus, so that Jesus can work in us. And we can always hear an answer, although not always in the way we want.

What is prayer like?

If you love someone, you keep in touch. Prayer is the same. If we love God, or are trying to follow Jesus, we want to stay in touch. We want to talk with them, and listen to them. It's a conversation. It's a discussion between our spirit and their spirit.

Getting in touch

To begin our conversation we need to get ready. We may want to come consciously into God's presence. We know that we are always surrounded by the love of God, but to concentrate sometimes it helps to sit or kneel in a way that is comfortable and attentive. We know that we can always turn our head to ask in our mind what Jesus would say to us: and sometimes it helps if we want to set aside some time just to do this.

We need to calm down. Normally our minds are full of distractions; thoughts just keep happening. One way of calming down is to listen to our breathing, the regular pattern of it. Another way is to repeat over and over; 'Be still and know that I am with you.' After a while we settle down, our minds are less full, and then we are ready to pray.

Opening up

When we are calm, then we can start to pray. Sometimes this means continuing to listen, just letting the awareness of God, or Jesus, enfold us, like loving arms – we don't need to say anything else, the contact is enough.

At other times, we may feel the need to say something. This can be anything: 'Dear Father....' or 'Hello Jesus it's me again....' If you are going to say something (whether aloud or silently) then say what you want to say. God doesn't stand on ceremony, and in our hearts everything is open to him already.

Having the conversation

We need to take time to say what we want to say: 'thank you,' or 'sorry,' or 'I love you', or 'I'm frightened,' or 'I'm sad,' or 'guess what?' Take time to listen in your heart for the thoughts that come to you, be aware of your thoughts and feelings. Be aware of yourself and don't push it. Give God time to speak with you. Conversations take time..... and patience.

What will I hear?

Don't expect to hear an old man giving you just the answers you want in a powerful voice. Perhaps no-one hears God like that. We all hear God, when we listen, in a different way. Sometimes it will be an awareness in your mind of how other people are feeling. Sometimes it will be a realisation in your own mind that this is how things are, and your troubles can be shared with others. Perhaps it will be a chance for you to mull over your thoughts and feelings in the presence of God. At other times you may be cross, and hurt, and may feel no responding voice in your mind; but you can open your heart to your feelings, and lay them before God.

Mostly it will be a chance for you to offer to God your thoughts, and to spend a little time reflecting on how God's love might surround you, or how Jesus might respond to your words. What would he have done? What is suggesting in a whisper in my mind that I might do?

Keep in touch

Traditionally Christians pray regularly, but we all know that this is not always how we do things. The more we are in touch, the better it gets. The more time we take, the more rewarding it can be. As we pray, the more natural prayer becomes.