



Ormskirk Parish Church - 24 Hr Prayer Event

I wanted to mark the beginning of the 'Giving in Grace' series of services with an event that focused on prayer, as I firmly believe that prayer is often the missing ingredient to initiatives in our church, that would make the difference between things going okay, or even going well, and the life-changing transformation of our church, which may be beyond our wildest dreams, but doesn't even come close to God's.

The Concept

We have had weekly prayer meetings, for half an hour on a Wednesday night. These have had a small attendance, but a few people who've come every week, and some who've just come once. This was not a surprise as people in our congregation often find it difficult to fit a weekly commitment into busy lifestyles. I passed on some of the material for use in services to those leading intercessions at both main Sunday services, and everyone in church was given prayer cards for use in their own personal prayers, but I still felt the need for a one off event that would give everyone the opportunity to take part in our prayer life as a church, with a minimum of commitment.

Having had a series about 'Passionate Spirituality' earlier in the year, I wanted to give people the opportunity not only to pray about 'Giving in Grace', but also to experience unfamiliar ways of praying, new ways of communicating with God. With the help of my husband, Paul, we came up with ideas for prayer stations to be set up around a room that would be devoted to prayer for 24 hours. People were asked to sign up for an hour in the room throughout the day, with three hour slots overnight, for which the participants were locked in for safety. We chose the Tower Room at the back of church because it has facilities for making drinks and toilet facilities (essential - especially for those who stayed in the room overnight!). This enabled the event to take place in church, whilst minimising disruption to the Sunday mornings services (and to the wedding which took place on the Saturday afternoon!).

The Outcome

In fact about half of the people who attended signed up for more than one slot. These were strongly committed church members, almost all of whom have a core role within the church (clergy, lay readers, church wardens, PCC members, etc.). It was a struggle to get other people to sign up, although those that did all found it to be a rewarding experience. Almost everyone I spoke to afterwards said that they wished they'd had more time to spend in the prayer room, and several people expressed the desire for a similar event in the future.

Although I would ideally have liked more members of the congregation to get involved, I was not disappointed with the event. The response of those who did get involved reaffirmed my faith in the power of prayer, power to transform God's people, to inspire them to explore God's purposes for them, and to break down barriers between them. The visible response on the Graffiti Wall was probably the most awe inspiring. People of all ages used their creativity to express their response to the other stations. Some had clearly had revelations about their own lives. People not only spoke to God, but listened to Him too.

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Prayer Co-ordinator for 'Giving in Grace' at Ormskirk Parish Church

October 2005



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These are the ideas that we used for the stations around the prayer room including a list of the materials needed for each one.

Station - Graffiti Wall

Items required:

Large area of wall or free standing notice board
Roll of Lining Paper (or use the back of some cheap wallpaper)
Masking Tape
Marker Pens with large nibs
Felt Tip Pens

Idea:

To have somewhere that people can write words or draw pictures that have come to them during their time of prayer in a visible way so that everyone can share in their responses. Also gives somewhere to display things produced at the Craft Table station.

Practicalities:

Cover an area of wall or large board with the lining paper and leave pens around for people to use. We ruled out using paints, although they look really good, because of the potential mess, given that we had a very limited amount of time to clear up.

Text for Station Card:

Please use the marker pens and felt tips in the pot or any of the materials from the Craft Table to draw a picture to represent your prayer to God on the Graffiti Wall, or to write a prayer on it.

Station - Craft Table

Items required:

Table
Chairs
Lots of blank paper and card
Felt Tips, crayons, chalks, colouring pencils
Punches for cutting out shapes
Glue sticks
Scissors
Disposable tablecloths

Idea:

To have somewhere that people can write words or draw pictures that have come to them during their time of prayer in a visible way so that everyone can share in their responses. To let God use people's creativity to talk to them.



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Practicalities:

We opted for paper crafts, again because of the lack of time we had to clear up any mess. Paints would be great too, but you'd need to have some old shirts or something to protect people's clothes. Clay or Playdoh also works really well. Just put anything that could be used creatively on the table and let people go for it.

Text for Station Card:

God gave us all the ability to be creative. Use any of the materials on the table to express your prayer to God. He may have put a picture into your head that you could put down on paper. You can stick what you make on the Graffiti Wall or take it home with you. Or maybe you'd like to make God a thank you card, to thank Him for all the wonderful things He's done for us.

Station - Street Light

Items required:

Flip Chart or notice board
Black and white map of the town/parish
Black Light
Highlighter pens (yellow, orange and green work best)
Blue Tac
Gaffer tape

Idea:

To relate our prayers to one of the points of our church's vision: the Streetlight project, which involves visiting the shops in our town centre. Also to focus on reaching out to our community, and the impression that we give them of what God's people are like.

Practicalities:

Stick the map onto the Flip Chart or pin it on a notice board. Attach the Black Light just above the map using the Gaffer Tape. People mark a route that they take regularly on the map using the highlighter pens. When the light is switched on the highlighter pen that people have used on the map glows. Remember to set this one up near to an electrical socket outlet.

Text for Station Card:

It is part of our vision to support the Street Light project. We want to be a shining light to the community we live in, to show people what a difference God could make to their lives. We can do that by our example, by the way we live. Everywhere the members of our church go, we are the light of Christ to the people we meet. Using the highlighter pens below, mark out a route on the map that you make regularly. Turn on the black light using the switch on the right hand side to see how far our 'light' shines.



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Station - The Cross

Items required:

Large Cross
Christmas Tree Lights
Some Large Nails (not sharp ones!)
Cushions or bean bags to sit on

Idea:

To have somewhere for people to reflect on what Jesus went through for us, what God gave for us. To focus on the cross, but realise that this is not something to get sad about, but to be extremely thankful for and joyful about.

Practicalities:

We didn't have a large cross, so we made one, by fixing two large pieces of wood together using silver gaffer tape. We then covered the whole cross in gaffer tape. It looked really cool and stopped anyone from getting splinters. Wrap the lights around the cross. The nails were just scattered at the foot of the cross for people to pick up. It helps some people to have something tactile. Remember to set this one up near to an electrical socket outlet.

Text for Station Card:

Look at the nails at the foot of the cross. Hold one of them. Think about what Jesus went through, how He suffered, and what He gave up. Now remember that He went through all that for you, so that you wouldn't have to pay the penalty for sin, but might have eternal life. The lights are there to remind us that the cross gives us hope, and gives us reason to be thankful, even joyful.

Station - Fruit

Items required:

As wide a selection of possible of fruit on a tray or in a big bowl
(Good if it can be Fair Trade or grown locally)
Napkins or Kitchen Roll (for wiping fingers!)

Idea:

To reflect on God's provision for all our needs. To recognise that none of the things we take for granted in our daily lives would be there but for God's gift of creation, and to remember to be thankful. This idea can be extended into the area for drinks.

Practicalities:

Just make sure that the fruit isn't too close to its 'sell by' date and don't put the station somewhere too warm. It's going to be there for a long time.

Text for Station Card:

All good things come from God. He provides for all our needs. Please take a piece of fruit. As you eat it, think about all the good things God provided to enable you to be eating the fruit right now: soil, trees, sun, rain, farmers, transport...



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Text for Drinks Card:

Please help yourself to tea, coffee or squash. Remember that all the things that go into making these drinks came from God too: the tea leaves, the coffee beans, the water...

Station - Pebbles and Water

Items required:

Pebbles, if possible of different shapes and sizes
Large glass bowl
Large jug of water or bottles of water
Plastic/paper cups
Basket or similar (to put the pebbles in to start with)

Idea:

An act of confession and of handing things over to God. To experience God's grace in action, as it refreshes, renews and heals areas of our lives that we are willing to let go of and place in God's control.

Practicalities:

The cheapest pebbles are ones that you collect yourself from the garden or beach, but this can be time consuming. Bags of pebbles are available from most Garden Centres, or somewhere that sells candles, and even some supermarkets. We used bottled water as it was not as heavy for children to lift as a jug and also so that the lid could be replaced, given how long the water was out for. We used disposable cups as we didn't want someone washing up and disrupting the atmosphere in the room.

Text for Station Card:

Take a pebble and hold it in your hand. Think about anything that is bothering you, or that you want to say sorry to God for. When you feel ready, put the pebble into the bowl of water, to represent you are handing these things over to God. He will cleanse, renew and refresh those areas of your life. Using a cup, take a drink of water, and feel God refreshing you.

Station - Thank You Letters

Items required:

Writing Paper
Envelopes
'Post Box'
Pens or pencils

Idea:

An act of thanksgiving. To enable those who feel less creative/who are better with words than pictures to put something down on paper. To give people privacy to express their thanks to God for things they may not wish to make public. Puts a new slant on something familiar to children.



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Practicalities:

To make the post box we covered an old shoebox in gift wrap and cut a slot in the top. No one read the letters, they were disposed of unopened at the end of the event (in a paper recycling bin) to respect people's privacy.

Text for Station Card:

Big or small, we all have blessings to count. Think of the things you are most grateful for. Use the notepaper to write a Thank You Letter to God. Post it in the purple box.

Station - Bibles

Items required:

A wide selection of Bibles

Idea:

To ground our prayers in Scripture, whilst allowing unfamiliar translations to open our eyes to things we hadn't noticed before.

Practicalities:

Try to get translations which are different from the one you usually use in church, including a selection of Children's Bibles. Don't just stick to modern paraphrases like 'The Message' and 'The Street Bible'. Whilst these can bring the Bible alive for some, they can also turn some people right off. Use some KJVs or similar as well. The poetry of older translations can have just as powerful an effect on people as more modern language which is 'in yer face'.

Text for Station Card:

Sometimes reading a passage in a version of the Bible we are not familiar with can open up the passage to us, and reveal things we hadn't noticed before. Please feel free to use any of these Bibles in your prayer time.

Station - Globe Clock

Items required:

Clock, which shows international time zones if possible
Globe

Idea:

To reflect on our church's vision for Overseas Mission. To expand people's vision of what we can do as a church.

Practicalities:

The clock we had was combined with a globe. The same exercise would work with a separate globe and clock, or even just a globe and a list detailing the time difference in some countries of relevance to your church.



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Text for Station Card:

Part of our vision is to give more to Overseas Mission. This clock shows the time in different places around the world. Turn the globe around see what time it is in some of the places we support projects. Have you ever thought about giving some of your time to mission work? Pray about what it is God wants you to give.

Station - Listening Station

Items required:

CD player
CDs
Headphones
Songbook

Idea:

People can be moved by music and lyrics more than any other type of worship. We selected songs to help people focus on the theme of Giving in Grace.

Practicalities:

We provided a songbook which was made especially to include the lyrics of all the songs on the CD. Reading the words whilst listening can help some people to focus. We used a CD player which could play MP3 files from a CD to maximise the number of songs we could fit on one disc, as we felt that someone constantly changing discs could disturb others in the room. A list of the songs we used can be provided. We had quiet instrumental playing in the room to create an atmosphere, so headphones were essential to this station, so as not to 'disturb the peace'.

Text for Station Card:

The songs on this CD have been specially selected for Giving In Grace. The words can be found in the Songbook provided. Please feel free to browse through and listen to any of the 69 tracks. The words may help you to think about God's grace and our response to it.

Text for CD Player Card

Please feel free to listen to any of these CDs. All of them feature music in a reflective Celtic style. The volume has been set at a level that shouldn't be distracting and cannot be heard outside the room. If you would prefer complete silence, feel free to stop CD.

Station - Candles

Items required:

Votive Candles
Tray
Gravel or Sand
Matches



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Idea:

To think about our witness to our community. This is part of our church vision. An act of commitment to Christ in response to God's grace.

Practicalities:

Obviously there are Health and Safety issues with this one. Check out your church's policy, and any insurance policy guidelines. Make sure the station is well away from anything flammable. Children in the room must be supervised at all times. Consider extra long matches or using a taper with children, but don't exclude them.

Text for Station Card:

Please light a candle as a sign of your commitment to be a light for Christ in our church and our community. Place it in the gravel, away from the sides of the tray.

Station - World Impressions

Items required:

Squashy Balls (tennis/cricket ball sized)
Box or bowl (to put them in)

Idea:

To reflect on what effect our lifestyle has on our planet, and what effect God would want us to have.

Practicalities:

If you can get them, balls made to look like the Earth or globes are ideal, but they need to be small enough to fit in someone's hand.

Text for Station Card:

Take a ball and hold it in your hand. Imagine that this is our planet. God gave it to us to take care of. Squeeze the ball. Each of us makes our own impression on the world we are living in. Think about the impression you want to leave.