



Prayer Case study Ormskirk Parish Church

Introduction



(Photo: Brian Wallington)

People have been praying at Ormskirk Parish Church for a very long time. One of only three churches in the country that has both a tower and a steeple the church contains Norman, Saxon and perhaps even some celtic masonry in the East wall. The steeple dates to the 15th Century while the tower was built a hundred years later to house the bells from Burscough priory after the dissolution. Today the church is at the heart of Ormskirk town centre and is home to a thriving worshipping congregation. Visit their [web site](#) for an overview of activities.

Prayer and Giving in Grace

A number of parishes in the Diocese of Liverpool commented that not only was prayer central to a successful Giving in Grace initiative but that it also provided a focus for growth in prayer.

Ormskirk Parish Church was fortunate in having a trainee lay reader, Kirsty Childs, as prayer co-ordinator. Kirsty brought commitment, passion and creativity to the post. As prayer co-ordinator Kirsty took an active role in liaising between those responsible for the leading the Sunday services and those leading the intercessions. She personally ensured that leaders and intercessors had access to the relevant liturgical material from the web site. This

is important because intercessors especially may not even be aware of the dedicated liturgical resources.

Kirsty was also responsible for planning and leading a special prayer group. For a month before the preaching series began a small prayer group numbering five or six people met to pray for half an hour. It wasn't a large group; those attending came once or twice over the month, but it didn't need to be. What it did was to get around twelve people praying for Giving in Grace and underlined that this is an initiative around discipleship and spirituality.

Prayer cards

During the Giving in Grace initiative prayer cards were used effectively. Before the preaching series began each church member was given a special *pre launch prayer card*. This had the Giving in Grace prayer on the front and a series of prayer pointers on the reverse. On the Sunday which saw the first sermon in the preaching series a *second prayer card* was made available. This card again featured the Giving in Grace prayer this time with the General Thanksgiving on the reverse.

A special *bookmark prayer card* was also made available to the members of the house groups in the church. This card features prayers from the Iona Community and the Methodist Covenant Service. This was particularly helpful in providing simple but beautiful prayers that helped the small groups to pray together at the end of the evening.

A humorous and effective touch was to create a series of business card sized prayer cards for wallets and purse. Each time during the programme that a credit or debit card was needed the GiG prayer card was there for all to see!

Children were not excluded from either Giving in Grace or the prayer material. A special children's prayer card was made available featuring "Grandpa George", a puppet who makes frequent appearances at family services and praise parties in Ormskirk.

Copies of all these prayer cards can be accessed and adapted for local use from the [Ormskirk prayer case study](#) page on the Giving in Grace website

The prayer event and prayer stations

Kirsty also developed some interesting resources for a special Giving in Grace prayer event. We are grateful to Kirsty for making them available for other churches to use and adapt in their own Giving in Grace programme. Influenced by the 24/7 prayer movement Kirsty planned to launch the Giving in Grace initiative at the parish church with a 24 hour prayer event. Church members were invited to sign up for an hour's prayer from between 9.45 on the Saturday morning and 9.45 on the morning of the first Sunday preaching. The church was kept open for prayer apart from a period overnight. A wedding in the church posed a problem but Ormskirk is fortunate to have a reasonable sized room underneath the tower which was perfect for the purpose.

Those on the prayer rota could of course simply come to the church or the prayer room and sit and pray. However, to help people pray Kirsty planned a series of "prayer stations" around the room. The Prayer stations allowed people coming to pray to move around the room moving from one focus or activity to the next in their own time and at their own pace. Prayer stations are simply small areas of the prayer room with specific activities and prayer focus. Some were quite traditional, one station featured a bowl of water and small pebbles, another a cross and nails, another had food while another used a

globe to represent reflection on world mission. Others were more unusual such as the "street light" or food and drink. Kirsty's ideas can be found at [Prayer Station ideas](#). Use her ideas as a starting point for developing your own.

The prayer room was largely silent with some Celtic music played in the background from a portable CD. The impact upon the thirty or so who attended was significant. many stayed longer than the hour they had pledged, several came back later in the day and others expressed the wish to do a similar initiative again. Attendance was good but the really important thing was to offer Giving in Grace "first to the Lord" in prayer before preaching, teaching and encouraging people to make their own response to the grace of God. (2 Corinthians 8:5)

