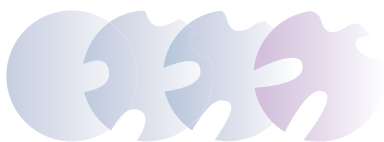


Pulse points: ideas for creative prayer

The committed prayer of individuals, the planning group, the PCC and the congregation is the spiritual heartbeat of the church as it prepares for Giving in Grace. This paper emphasises the importance of planning to pray and suggests some creative ways to get people praying, alone and together.



Prayer, personal and prayers said together, should underwrite any stewardship programme. It will help if one member of the planning group is willing to invest time and energy in promoting prayer and encouraging creative ways to pray. In addition, the clergy have the responsibility as chaplains to the planning group to support the prayer co-ordinator, to weave prayer for the programme into the corporate life of the church and personally to engage in and model prayerfulness.

The following are some simple suggestions of ways in which the church might encourage people to pray. The prayer resources mentioned can be found under Designing the Programme in the Prayer section.

1. **An identifiable 'theme prayer'** can be included as a distinct item in the weekly intercessions in the period leading up to and during the programme. A specially written 'Giving in Grace prayer' can be found alongside other suitable prayers in *Stewardship Prayers* at the [Prayer Resources](#) tab. This idea can be developed by also having a 'theme' hymn or worship song.
2. **Bookmarks** with the theme prayer or any other prayer could be distributed to the congregation. Some churches have turned their 'bookmarks' into fridge magnets as a daily reminder of the need to pray. Keep bookmarks fresh, perhaps by using one before the programme and one for when the preaching begins.
3. **Prayer cards** to encourage congregations to pray regularly can be downloaded from the Creative Prayer tab. There are three formats: postcard-sized cards; a 'week of prayer' trifold leaflet with a bible reading, a prayer and a focus for intercession; and, finally, credit card versions for wallets and handbags. Use these prayer cards as they are or develop the basic idea and design your own cards.
4. **A time of prayer before Sunday services** may simply be the vestry prayer before the service starts but many churches have a small group praying before the service.
5. **Prayer groups** may already exist in the church and are an obvious focus for prayer. If not, consider forming a small group(s) especially for the purpose of preparation for Giving in Grace. Free extempore prayer may be the tradition but be sensitive to those who may be new to this. As an alternative, make use of *A Short Prayer Service* at the [Prayer Resources](#) tab. For biblical passages to focus a time of prayer explore the multiple options under the [Preaching](#) tab.



6. **Prayer triplets** have proved over time to be an extremely effective way of developing sustainable, focused and flexible prayer. Planning group and PCC members in particular might form the nucleus of a prayer triplet, inviting a couple of friends personally to join them. Again they can be assisted by the prayer resources on the web site.
7. **A day of prayer or an evening prayer vigil** is the practice of many churches. Sometimes the approach is to invite people to fill spaces on prayer rotas. Very often the church is open for the day or a period of time for people to call in to pray. Prayer cards can help resource the prayers of the people on such days. The Daily Office or a special evening service with stewardship readings and prayers included can provide a shared focus within a prayer day.
8. **Prayer stations** can be used creatively to enhance the experience of prayer at a prayer day or vigil. Around the church, site small tables with a cloth covering, a candle and some physical objects (such as an offering plate or a wallet) alongside a passage of scripture, a brief written reflection and a prayer around the theme of the prayer station. The use of a paraphrase such as *The Message* can be very helpful in throwing new light on some familiar bible texts. The paper *Ormskirk: a case study in Prayer* at the [Creative Prayer](#) tab tells how one church sought to pray for Giving in Grace and includes details of prayer stations to support a night of prayer.
9. **Church council prayers** are an important place to start, because leadership in stewardship is so important. Make use of the liturgy in *A Short Prayer Service* and encourage the use of prayer cards by church council members. And, of course, prayer before each meeting of the planning group is essential.
10. **Home group or cell group meetings** can build prayer for Giving in Grace into their current patterns of prayer. Many such groups will tend towards extempore prayer but make available the prayer cards and liturgy as additional resources. As with special prayer meetings, consider using a bible passage to focus prayers.
11. A **prayer breakfast** is a common way of bringing people together to share and to pray; an evening **agape or shared meal** is an alternative way of achieving the same end. A meal followed by a scripture and a brief reflection on the passage and then some explanation of the purpose of Giving in Grace introduces a time of prayer.
12. **Sunday and/or midweek intercessions** are where the church comes together to pray. As noted in suggestion 1 above, it helps to use a theme prayer each week. Note also that each preaching series (except Exodus) is accompanied by liturgical resources that include bespoke intercessions themed to the bible readings for the week.
13. Churches are encouraged to talk about money and generosity as part of Giving in Grace, so think about how they can also pray for the programme. Explore the ideas in *Helping Children to Pray*. Note also the all-age resources for both the Luke and Exodus preaching streams, which also contain creative ideas for prayer.



Paul reminds us, 'by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God' (Phil. 4:6). Our need is for resources for ministry and to grow as generous givers. Encourage the congregation to pray at home and together for both these things.