

FORM 5**A. REFLECTIVE PRAYER**

1. **Reflective prayer** will cover a wide variety of ways of praying — including different forms of meditation, contemplation and conversation. Forms 3 and 4 units have also involved some reflective prayer, so check with these teachers as to what your students are already familiar with.

Meditation is a way of thinking about God.
Contemplation is a time to being open to God.
Conversation is talking with God.

Often all three, Meditation, Contemplation and Conversation, will be a part of one time of prayer, at other times we will rely on just one of these, depending on our needs, feelings, environment.

For any of the following use the ideas in the Form 3 suggestions (pages 3-6) to begin the time of prayer.

2. **Reflecting with words**
 - a) Choose from the reflections in the '**Prayers and Reflections**' section.
 - b) Set an environment to highlight the theme of the reflection; use chapel, pictures, candles, flowers, wood, stones, water, books, icons, material that will focus the pray-ers.
 - c) Distribute the reflection chosen.
 - d) Ask one clear speaker to read the reflection aloud.
 - e) Allow a time of silence (or play soft background music)
 - f) Ask students to read a word, or line or phrase that speaks to them. Allow plenty of room for '**silences**'.
 - g) Ask students to share any other thoughts or prayers that the reflection reminds them of.
 - h) Conclude by reading the reflection together.

3. **Centering Prayer**

List the five steps of centering prayer on the board and discuss what each step is:

- a) Quieten down — compare this to the time spent preparing for prayer in the Form 3 section. Taking time to sit comfortably — in a semi-formal way — that is in a straight back chair or cross legged on the floor — not just 'lounging'. Gently close your eyes, cut out the distraction caused by what we see. Relax, breathe slowly.

- b) Move towards God within you. Think only of God, of God's Presence deep within you, of the love God shows you. Let God's overwhelming love surround you. Rest in God's presence.
- c) Respond with a prayer word or phrase.
Take a word or phrase — for example:
'Jesus', 'I Love you', 'My Lord and my God', 'I long for You'
Repeat the word or phrase over and over.
- d) Attend to God, enjoy God's Presence. When distractions intrude on your thoughts, use your word or phrase to bring you back into the presence of God. Don't try to think meaning into it — just let God be with you through it. Give all your loving attention to God.
- e) Pray a familiar prayer. Use the words of the Our Father, Hail Mary or some similar prayer to bring you back into the present.

Now guide the students through an experience of the prayer.

— Put up a poster with the words:

'Be still and know that I am God.'

Take time for them to choose their positions, to quieten down, remind them to concentrate on breathing slowly a few times, to close their eyes and to dwell on God's love in them. Say quietly, 'Jesus, I believe you are present in the centre of my being, loving me. I want to remember that I am all yours. Let me come into your presence. Draw me to yourself, Jesus.'

Ask them to repeat in their minds, either the word 'Jesus' or the phrase —

'Be still and know that I am God.'

Allow five or ten minutes for this.

Pray the Our Father quietly together.

It is a good idea to follow this up by asking them to write a response — answering for themselves how they felt, whether they could sense God's presence, whether they want to repeat the experience, any questions about the experience they have. Allow a short time for anyone who wants to share their response.

Suggest that prayer needs practice, that they choose a time and place, that they will put aside five or ten minutes over the next few days to repeat their centering prayer experience. Repeat the experience in class, allowing more students to become comfortable with this form of prayer.

Suggested verses for use in Centering Prayer are:

'My God and my all.'

'Love one another as I have loved you.'

'In God we live and move and have our being.'

'An open heart.'

'Freely you have received, freely give.'

'Take my yoke upon you and learn of me.'

'Glory to God.'

'The joy of the heart is your strength.'

'Thy kingdom come, thy will be done.'

'If anyone thirst, let them come to me.'

'Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me.'

'The Lord your God is with you wherever you go!'

'The Lord be with you and with your spirit.'

Another form of reflective prayer is to write each of the above verses, or other verses suitable for your class, on to sheets of paper. Distribute these sheets around the class. Play quiet, reflective music and invite each student to read the reflection they have as they want to, allowing time for people to pray with each verse before the next verse is read. You may like to encourage students to keep the verse with them as they go on through the day.



FORM 5

B. CREATIVE PRAYER**1. A Clay - Prayer Walk**

Give each participant a lump of clay — allow them to walk through an interesting natural area — bush, stream, garden, etc. As they walk they mould the clay, allowing it to take different forms — exploring the use of nature. (eg: imprints of bark, leaves, flowers), and the end of the walk allow time to complete and dry these creations.

Begin and conclude with readings on **The Potter**. Jeremiah 18:1-6.

2. Interweaving

Prepare in advance a wooden frame and hold the warp (vertical) threads with tacks 1cm apart and wool wound around these. Encourage the class to add to the weaving over a length of time. Encourage them to weave in things that have meaning for them, from nature, words, poems, colours.

At the conclusion a meditation on Weaver God or Weaving the path of life. There is a good meditation in **More Than Words**, - refer Resource page 60.

3. Writing

Creative writing can encourage students, especially those less likely to speak, to formulate their ideas of prayer to share at a class level. Rewrite traditional prayers in your words, adding your own reflections. It is important in all of these to remember that the writing of the prayer is a part of the prayer; so the atmosphere of prayer is an important aspect. Begin each session by asking for a time of quiet, a time of placing ourselves in God's presence, a time of seeking to find God within us, then play quiet, reflective music as your students write. Pray for the students while they write, write a prayer yourself. If you invite students to share their written prayers, always allow them a choice - God hears our prayers spoken or unspoken!

There are a number of ways of asking students to write prayers:

- a) Use the prayer verses as given in 'Centering Prayer' and ask them to write a reflection on this.
- b) Use current news items, school events, personal moments on which they write their own prayer.
- c) Write prayers which express sorrow, these may be used as part of a reconciliation service.
- d) Take a word — 'thanks', 'faith', 'praise', 'love', and form a prayer around them.
- e) Reflect on a picture/slide/short extract from a video and write a prayer on it.

- f) Take something from nature — a leaf, flower, rock, branch and create a written prayer.
- g) Write prayers of thanks. This may be on a specific theme — prayers of thanks for mothers or those who care for us, prayers of thanks for the season of the year, for holidays, for friends, for creation.
- h) Write personal prayers to the Holy Spirit.
- i) Write a short personal prayer to be said daily.
- j) Write prayers in small groups and form a prayer poster — this may become part of the theme being taught at the time.
- k) Write prayers asking for God's help in some specific way.

4. Drawing and Painting

- a) Create a prayer wall, preferably with blackboard and chalk or large paper and crayons on which students can create a mural. This could be used on a topic being studied, an event within the school, a scriptural phrase.
- b) Create a mural as a group/class, this could use a prayer theme or an extract from scripture. The Creation Story in Genesis, Chapter 1 lends itself to this type of art work.
- c) Take a section from scripture but try to choose something that relates to a particular theme or concept of relevance to the class. A few examples could be:

Isaiah	43: 1-3;	1 Corinthians	13;	Isaiah	55:1-3;
1 Corinthians	12:12-30;	Jeremiah	1:4- 8;	Jeremiah	18:2-6;
Ephesians	3:14-21.				

Ask students to reflect on the scripture chosen and to draw some expression of the prayer within them.

- d) Ask students to draw something which reflects their understanding of:
 - God
 - The Holy Spirit
 - Life
 - Their relationship with God
 - Prayer, Fear, Hope

Encourage students to share their thoughts, but be sensitive to those who would prefer not to.

- e) Suggest students use paints and crayons to express what they want to communicate with God — it may be thanks, confusion, hope, a specific dream or event they want to communicate about, doubt, a specific difficulty.

5. Photo/Artwork

Choose an appropriate photo/artwork (NB: many libraries lend out artwork) and display. Ask students to gather around the display and to think about the feelings it provokes and then to speak to God about those feelings. You may ask students to speak quietly one word that reflects their feelings. The choice of photo/artwork may come from the theme being studied, from current events, from a specific prayer theme. For example, if you are focusing on reconciliation you may use a photo that depicts war or anger or fear, if you are focusing on creation you may use a photo of nature. If you are focusing on an aspect of Christ's life you may use one or several of the artworks of that event. It is a good idea to build a resource of photos/artwork (or places where they are available from) that reflect different periods of history, different cultures, different interpretations of events.

6. Prayers from Pictures

Use old magazines/newspapers and ask students to create picture prayers on a specific theme:

For example: reconciliation
 thanksgiving
 life
 hope

7. Slide/Sound Prayers

- a) Use prepared slide/sound sequences in a prayerful atmosphere, asking students to be aware of their feelings and thoughts while watching - and to express these in prayer - spoken, written, drawn.
- b) If you have a photographer in your midst, create a 'class prayer' slide/sound reflection - with photos of members of the class at various activities and a 'theme song' chosen by the students. This may be used as part of a Class Prayer Service at which parents are present.

8. Music

- a) Use current songs from the 'pop list' (find what these are from the students, radio station or record store — you are sure to find students who have the tapes.) Many of these themes can be used as a catalyst for students to create their own prayers.
- b) Use reflective song music, eg: music by Weston Priory, Paul Gurr, John Michael Talbot, Carey Landry, Kevin Bates, Frank Anderson, Chris Skinner — all available as cassettes, as background music for other forms of creative prayer - clay modelling, painting, writing.
- c) Sing! Use you own or students' musical talents to encourage singing of suitable popular songs and liturgical songs. If ability to play musical instruments is limited, use a tape which students can slowly sing with as they become familiar with the songs — choose catchy tunes — lead by example!

- d) Use scriptural songs, eg: from the 'Glory and Praise' Series, the Weston Priory, as reflection and prayer.
 - i) Ask students to note words, phrases, feelings significant to them whilst the tune is replayed.
 - ii) Play the song several times reasonably loudly, then turn the volume down and invite students to speak significant words or phrases.
 - iii) Play the song several times and then make a creative response in artwork, clay, writing, poetry.

9. Gesture and Movements

- a) Encourage students to use their imaginations in their use of movement — for example, pretend you have a butterfly — try to follow the butterfly, to recapture the butterfly. Take time to reflect on the feelings, the actions and allow students to express these. They might find joy in freeing the butterfly, frustration in seeing it disappear, anger at not being able to recapture it; and be able to relate these feeling to their own lives.
- b) Write words in the air using movement to express the feelings related to these words; eg: Jesus, life, hope, faith, trust.
- c) Take a line of poetry, prayer or scripture and create movements to express what it says to you. eg: Psalm 8; Psalm 9:1; Psalm 13:1; Psalm 139:1-12; Psalm 23; Psalm 25:1.
- d) Take time to stop and watch some aspect of nature — the movement of clouds, wind in a tree, autumn leaves falling and then create individual or group movements that reflect what you have seen and offer thanks to God for creation.

I would suggest using music as a background to many of these exercises. If you know of or can find a person in your area who does interpretative or modern dance, invite them to your class.

10. Posters

- a) Use professional posters (eg: Argus Posters) to set the atmosphere for prayer, or to reflect on during prayer — the quotation and picture may set off the imagination for prayer, or teach about prayer.
- b) Ask students to create their own posters, finding a verse that is significant for them and creating a picture — using paint, magazines, photographs, that speak of their life journey.
- c) Create a 'class poster' that sets the theme for the class that year — it may be a poster that is added to during the year.

FORM 5

C. PRAYING WITH SCRIPTURE

1. **The Form 4 section** gives some suggestions for praying with the Gospels; ideas from here can be used again in Form 5. There is a wealth of Meditations from the Gospels, so it is good to build on their Form 4 experiences — and to use this as a time to remind students that we can pray a number of times with the same section of scripture and this deepens our understanding and insights; also that at different stages of our lives, the Gospels will speak to us in different ways.
2. **Encourage students to read sections of the Bible reflectively** — choose a section to be read aloud. Many sections from the prophets in the Old Testament and from the Epistles in the New Testament are suitable for this.

Ask students to note, in a special journal for prayer, or a section of their Religious Education book, any words, phrases, thoughts that they find significant.

(Note: journalling is a part of Form 6, however an introduction of the idea in Form 5, can easily be built on in Form 6. I suggest the Religious Education teachers gather and discuss their use of journalling).

This exercise can be repeated with different scripture passages — to begin, select the passage yourself and lead the prayer session. Then encourage students to select a passage they like and to lead the time of prayer.

3. **You may sometimes help the time of reflection** by asking or giving out, written copies of reflective questions they may use. eg:
 - a) Jeremiah with **The Potter** : Jeremiah 18:1-7

Who do you think the 'potter' is in your life?
 How do you feel your life is being moulded?
 When things go wrong, do you feel you get a chance to start again?
 Who gives/does not give you this chance?
 - b) The Call of Samuel, 1 Samuel 3:1-9

Samuel heard God calling, but did not know the voice.
 How do you know what God is asking of you?
 Who helps you to recognise God in your life?
 How do you feel about saying, 'Speak, Yahweh, your servant is listening?
 - c) The variety and unity of gifts. 1 Corinthians 12:4-11

Ask God what gift or gifts God specifically wants you to use in your life.
 Think of some of the people you know who have some of the gifts named in Corinthians - how do they use their gifts?
 Think of this class and the gifts of the individuals in this class — how do we use these gifts to help each other?

4. **Take short quotes from scripture**, place them on cards for each individual (some quotes may be repeated) and then add a reflective question. Set an atmosphere of prayer — in the classroom, chapel, or outside. Distribute the cards to students and encourage them to spend time reflecting on their quote and then to take the quote and reflection with them through the day. eg:
- a) *'We know that Christ lives in us by the Spirit that he has given us.'* (1 John 3:24)
How do you experience Christ in your life?
 - b) *'Be happy at all times; pray constantly, and for all things give thanks to God.'* (1 Thessalonians 17)
What do you want to give thanks to God for?
 - c) *'There is nothing I cannot master with the help of the One who gives me strength'* (Philippians 4:13)
How do I experience God's strength in my life?
 - d) *'Pray all the time, asking for what you need, Praying in the Spirit on every possible occasion'* (Ephesians 6:18)
How often do I really ask God with trust for what I need?
 - e) *'May the God of hope bring you such joy and peace in your future that the power of the Holy Spirit will remove all bounds to hope'* (Romans 15:13)
What do you really hope for in your life?
 - f) *'I lead you with reins of kindness with leading strings of love.'* (Hosea 11:4)
In what ways do you experience God leading you with love?
 - g) *'Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, before you came to birth I consecrated you.'* (Jeremiah 1:4)
What would you like to tell God about yourself?
 - h) *'Seek Yahweh while he is still to be found call to him while he is still near!'* (Isaiah 55:6)
In what ways do you seek Yahweh in your life?
 - i) *'Do not be afraid, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by your name, you are mine'* (1 Isaiah 43:1)
What fears do you wish to hand to God?

5. A Handout to go with Praying with Scripture



1. RELAX

- get into a peaceful mood
- leave behind the rush of classes, TV, & last weekend.

3. REVIEW

- go over a sentence or phrase that strikes you
- listen to the words in your heart.



When you dare to let go and surrender one of those many fears, your hand relaxes and your palms spread out in a gesture of receiving. You must have patience, of course, before your hands are completely open and their muscles relaxed.

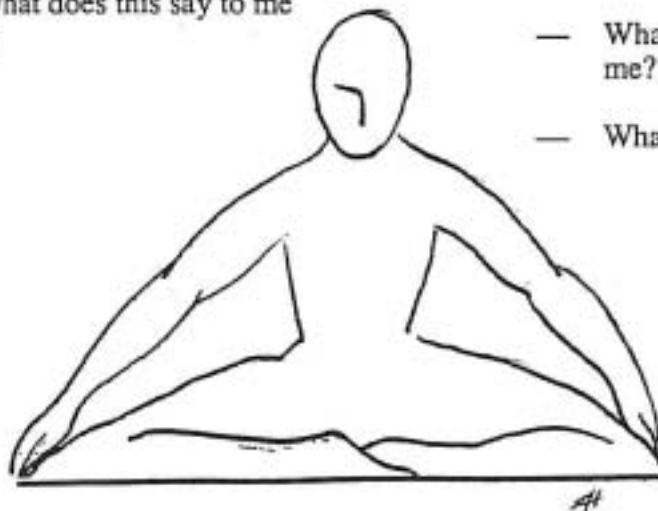


2. READ

- read 2 or 3 times and slowly
- read 'between the lines'
- ask what does this say to me here?

4. REFLECT

- sit back & think about the words
- God is speaking to me **now**
- What is God asking me?
- What should I do?



FORM 5

D. SUGGESTED RESOURCES FOR TEACHERS

Brooke Avery

Hidden in Plain Sight, The Practice of Christian Meditation

Vineyard Books, Seabury Press, NY. 1978

This book contains a wide variety of methods of prayer — basic meditation, liturgical, rosary type, psalms.

Ortegel Adelaide

Banners and Such, Resource Publications,
PO Box 444, Saratoga, CA 95070, 1980

Great ideas on creating banners, candles, buttons, posters etc.

Schaffran and Kozak

More than Words, Prayer and Ritual for Inclusive Communities.

Megner Stone Books, 1988.

A great collection of prayers and prayer services.

