

## Creative learning about prayer: Essential Core Knowledge

When learning about Christianity, it is all too easy for the topic of prayer to be learned in formal and rather old fashioned ways: what does the Lord's Prayer say? What liturgy do Christians use? It is better if the practice of prayer is set in Christian community life, and explored in the light of the learners' own experiences of praying. Note that the practice of prayer is very widespread – maybe ten times more common than church attendance. Lots of people pray, even though they feel agnostic about whether their prayer is answered. Lots of children find prayer a calming or comforting activity. RE should make space for this with sensitivity.

**For the teacher** This section of the book uses 9 Christian prayer cards in a sorting, ranking and thinking skills approach to learning about Christian prayer and community life. The work aims to enable pupils 8-11 years old to think carefully for themselves about praying and about the beliefs and community living that make sense of Christian practices of prayer. This leads to some possibilities of some 'learning from religion' (AT2 work), in which pupils think about their own lives, considering questions of meaning and truth about prayer.

The prayer cards are treated as very simple (and cheap) religious artefacts: real materials made within the religion to nurture faith. Page 28 gives a more general set of ideas for using artefacts in RE.

There is an adaptation of the work for younger children aged 5-7 on the last page.

### See also:

You might show pupils some video prayers from the web. Here's a Christian prayer of thanksgiving:  
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZMvo5fWJRzE&feature=related>

A well illustrated version of Islamic prayer, in Arabic, lasting 4 minutes can be seen at:  
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mUHDYIJHaOQ&feature=related>

### Achievements and outcomes:

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| <p><b>Pupils working at step 2</b></p> | <p>I can...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use religious words to identify some different times when Christians might pray (e.g. at Church, at a Christening, in a time of trouble);</li> <li>• Retell a story about how a Christian minister helps people during one week;</li> <li>• Ask lots of questions about praying, and look for some answers for myself;</li> <li>• Respond sensitively to questions about prayer for myself.</li> </ul> |
| <p><b>Pupils working at step 3</b></p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify and describe some Christian beliefs and teachings about prayer;</li> <li>• Describe how prayer might be used in some different aspects of Christian community life;</li> <li>• List some similarities and differences between different occasions when prayer is used;</li> <li>• Make links between their own ideas about praying and Christian practice.</li> </ul>   |
| <p><b>Pupils working at step 4</b></p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use the right words to show that I understand how and why a Christian minister prays for different people;</li> <li>• Apply the idea of praying as a way of caring for myself;</li> <li>• Enquire into the reasons why Christian people pray;</li> <li>• Respond thoughtfully to questions about the meaning and purpose of prayer.</li> </ul>   |

## Activity 1: **Prayer cards and images for meditation**

Make a collection of prayer and meditation cards and some 'image cards' from Christianity and other religions. Or create some of your own, or use some made by your pupils. It's a cheap way of gathering 'artefacts' – and leads to loads of learning. Use 9 the images for group and class discussion about spiritual questions – give them to each group in an envelope. Groups of three or four are fine. The story here sets up the learning nicely.

On Monday morning, the Christian minister Rev Lynne Coles sits down at her desk and gets out her diary. It says:

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| <b>Monday PM:</b>    | <b>Take the Infants assembly</b>                          |
| <b>Tuesday AM:</b>   | <b>Meet John and Diana about Christening for baby Joe</b> |
| <b>Wednesday PM:</b> | <b>Meet Evie and Jonathan: Wedding planning</b>           |
| <b>Thursday 1pm:</b> | <b>Mr Stringer's funeral.</b>                             |

She looks in her desk drawer, and finds the nine cards of images and prayers. Which should she take to each of her four appointments? What would she write into each card?

At the primary school, the assembly is great. Then the teacher says 'It's really nice of you to take the Year 6 lesson. We're all looking forward to it, especially because you're doing such a tricky topic: 'Images of God.' The minister screams inside: she has forgotten all about this. But she goes to the lesson, says a quick silent prayer for help and puts the nine cards on the floor in circle time. She asks the pupils: organise these into a diamond nine. Which are most to do with God and which are least to do with God? The lesson goes well.

She meets the couple having the baby Christened, and does the wedding planning. At the funeral, she gives Mrs Stringer the card she chose for her. Ask pupils: what would you write in these three cards? You could give them some Bible verses to choose from for this part of the task.

Back at home she checks the diary again.

### **Friday Evening:**

Interfaith service. Lead prayers. Muslims, Buddhists Jews and Christians will be praying together.

She decides to choose three of the nine cards, scan them, and use them as images for prayer and reflection. Choose her three images and write the prayers she might say at an interfaith celebration, where members of different religions join together to pray.

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| <p><b>Diamond 9 (A)</b><br/>         Arrange the cards in rows of 1-2-3-2-1 with the most child friendly at the top, the least child friendly at the bottom. Do words or images make them child friendly?</p>   | <p><b>Creative stimulus</b><br/>         You work for a card making company, and they have a brief from a client to devise a new range of spiritual cards that might sell well to people in different religions. What would your designs be like?</p>  | <p><b>Ranking:</b><br/>         If you opened an envelope and found one of these cards in it to you, sent today by a person who cares for you, which would you most like to find? Least like to find? Why? Which would you send to the person you care for most? What would you write in it?</p> |
| <p><b>Which for whom?</b><br/>         Suggest which of the nine cards you might choose to send to a person getting married, with a new baby, or going to a funeral. Which would you give to an infant school assembly?</p>   | <p><b>Eight things to do with prayer cards and images in RE</b></p>  | <p><b>Diamond 9 (B)</b><br/>         Which of the nine cards are more to do with God and which are the least to do with God? use the 1-2-3-2-1 pattern to show your views. (What would an atheist do with this task?)</p>  |
| <p><b>Prayers for peace between religions</b><br/>         You are writing prayers for the interfaith week of prayer for peace. Which image would you use, and what prayer would you say to go with the image? Can you write three prayers, one for children ages 5-7, one for teenagers, and one to use in a service where people from 6 religions will be joining together?</p> | <p><b>Calendar creation</b><br/>         Your group are asked to design 3 spiritual calendars, with 12 well chosen and fitting images in each for each month of the year, one Christian, one Muslim, one Jewish. Find out lots about the calendars of the different religions – for example, does the Muslim one need 13 months? To save money, the boss wants to use some images the same in each. Choose and justify them.</p> | <p><b>Interfaith Expression</b><br/>         Look at the cards and choose the three which could be related to more than one religion most easily. Why did you choose these?</p>  |



God, you give us each other  
Mother, father, sister, brother  
Teach us always to show that we care  
Help us always generously to share



We remember Jesus who gave his life for us.  
We remember all our happy days and our sad days too  
We remember those who have loved us  
We remember those we have loved



Thank you God for laughter, fun and play  
Give me the chance today to make other people's lives happy as well as my own life.  
And give me the love to take that chance and spread laughter, fun and play  
Today and everyday.



Reflections of the deep  
In our deepest thoughts we find our true selves.  
In our deepest friendships we find our chance to love  
In our deepest troubles we find our true light  
In our deepest love we may find God.

May our hands work for justice and peace



MAY THE GOD OF  
GRACE BE  
HELPING YOUR  
RIGHT HAND  
NOW AND  
FOR EVER  
TILL YOUR  
RESURRECTION  
DAY!



GO'S GRAIL from the Gaelic

GOD be in my head  
And in my understanding;

GOD be in mine eyes,  
And in my looking;

GOD be in my mouth,  
And in my speaking;

GOD be in my heart,  
And in my thinking;

GOD be at mine end,  
And at my departing.

## Four letters to Reverend Lynne

The following week, Lynne receives four letters from the people she met. Each one of them asks her to help in some way. Ask pupils in groups of 4 to reply to these letters, as if from Reverend Lynne

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| <p><b>Dear Lynne</b><br/> <b>Thank you so much for coming to our school last week, we liked your lesson about image of God. In our next RE lesson we are doing: what d Christians believe about God, Jesus and the Holy Spirit? Please can you tell us what you believe about these three important Christian ideas?</b><br/> <b>Thank you.</b><br/> <b>Class 6</b></p>   | <p><b>Hi Lynn</b><br/> <b>We're just writing to tell you how thankful we were for your lovely wedding service last week. It was a special day and everything went really well. We haven't been to your church much, but getting married there was lovely, and we are wondering if we might come along more often. Please tell us what joining the church really means, and how we could get involved.</b><br/> <b>Thanks</b><br/> <b>Evie and Jonathan</b></p> |
| <p><b>Dear Lynne</b><br/> <b>Thanks very much for all you care in planning Baby Joe's welcome to the church last week. It was a great occasion for us, with all the family saying what a lovely service it was. We specially liked the way you made it fun. Now, of course, we have to bring up the lovely little boy to follow Jesus. Do you have any suggestions for us about how we could do this?</b><br/> <b>Love</b><br/> <b>John and Diana</b></p> | <p><b>Dear Lynne</b><br/> <b>Thank you for all your help with the funeral. It was such a comfort to have such a well attended service for my dear husband, and thank you for your kind card, and all your support. Of course I miss him terribly, and have been very sad. I really don't know how I will go on.</b><br/> <b>Please keep in touch, and pray for me, in the sad days ahead.</b><br/> <b>Yours</b><br/> <b>Betty Stringer</b></p>                 |

## Adapting the learning for younger pupils

With 6-8 year olds, you could use the prayer cards in circle time. Make larger sized copies! Lay them out on the floor, looking at each one together as you do.

Tell the story of Reverend Lynne simply. At each point, ask the children which card she might choose for each occasion, and why. Hear several different views. Suggest what she might write in the card, and talk about alternatives.

Ask the children why praying for somebody is like a gift. A prayer is generous, some people find it helps them, it is kind.

The interfaith prayer activity is too difficult for these pupils: leave it for Year 5 or 6.

You could extend the story by having her open three 'thank you' emails the following week from the parents after the baptism, the couple after the wedding and the widow after the funeral. Or you could ask pupils to write these emails – or letters - in role.

You could ask the children to make a prayer card for themselves, and one to give to someone they care for. Make sure the activity is open, rather than assuming any belief – for example, tell them it can be a reflection or a prayer, addressed to no one in particular or to God.

## Using Religious Artefacts Creatively

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| <p><b>Why use religious artefacts in the classroom?</b></p> <p>Religious artefacts bring colour, life and realism to RE. Pupils can see and handle at first hand objects of importance to people in practising their religion. They are 'put in touch' (literally) with the faith community. Artefacts can...</p> <p>Stimulate genuine curiosity<br/>Add authenticity<br/>Provide a display<br/>Illustrate symbolic use of objects in religion<br/>Foster reverence and respect</p>   | <p><b>Sacred or Secular?</b></p> <p>The artefacts we use in RE need not solely be religious objects. Much creative work can be done in RE lessons by using everyday items imaginatively, as a means to provoke children to share their own ideas, experiences and questions.</p> <p>Religious articles can also be used in combination with other objects to stimulate discussion about what makes things special, how the items might relate to each other, what stories might be told about each, which item might be the 'odd one out' depending on how one is sorting .<br/>Ask: Which of these three might be holy or sacred? To whom?<br/>With some particular artefacts, teachers do well to model and illustrate what respect from an outsider looks like.</p>  |
| <p><b>Handle with care!</b></p> <p>Religious objects in the classroom are used for education not devotion, however, they should be treated with respect and care. In this regard, teachers' actions speak louder than words in demonstrating these attitudes. These tips might be useful:</p> <p>Use your empathic imagination. Imagine a member of the faith community concerned is present.</p> <p>Swot up. Know your facts and background information, (especially the religious significance of the object, how to handle it and why).</p> <p>Make links to children. Always relate the object to the child's own experience</p> <p>Raise questions. Investigate; give pupils lots of opportunities for questions and observations: feely bags are useful for this purpose.</p> <p>Use sparingly. Limit the number of artefacts used at one time to allow for maximum use of suspense and questioning.</p> <p>Aim deep. Choose articles that will lead to reflection in depth</p> <p>Tell stories, use pictures. Relate the article to pictures or stories where it is in use to give the children some idea of context.</p> <p>Clear aims. Be clear what learning outcome you intend</p> <p>Model respect. Store and display the artefacts carefully, replacing any which become so damaged that a community would not use them.</p> | <p><b>Be Creative!</b></p> <p>What role might these elements play in creative RE learning with artefacts?</p> <p>Exploring: 'Play' with the objects. Handle and examine: use feely bags, blindfolds, description games, mystery boxes. Use all the senses and think and feel as well.</p> <p>Questioning: How many questions can you ask about the objects? Can you find any answers for yourself? Guess answers to all the questions.</p> <p>Reflecting: On the different reasons why objects are special or significant to themselves and others in different situations. Think about how and why the object is used – e.g. in worship.</p> <p>Responding: Do something active to express and develop your thoughts and questions about these objects and the issues they have provoked, (e.g. design a 'questions and answers' sheet, create a story about it, make a container to hold it).</p> |