

The Prayers of the People At Christ Church, Dartmouth



A Guide for those Leading

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¹ This document has been adapted with special thanks from:
http://anglicanprayer.org/resources/PG-32_Readers_and_Intercessors_Handbook.pdf

Note from the Rector



Dear Friend,

I am so thankful that you have offered yourself to this lifegiving ministry—the Prayers of the People. Here at Christ Church, we see this as a valuable and important ministry, and I am so pleased that you have discerned this calling. Over the years, various people have prayed these prayers, be it the minister, a layreader, or those who sit in the pews weekly. The prayers are apart of our worship service because they are the prayers of our community and the world. Therefore, it is essential that the people—you and others lead them.

This document is a guide to help you in your preparation for the prayers of the people. If you have any difficulty or questions, ask someone who leads in this ministry, and please do not hesitate to speak with me.

Blessings to you as you pray!

In Christ,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Kyle +".

The Rev. Dr. Kyle Wagner
Rector, Christ Church, Dartmouth

INTERCESSIONS—THE PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

When we “pray for others,” we have a distinct sense that Christ is our Advocate, meaning our prayers are lifted to God, because the people collectively acknowledged the needs of the community. These prayers and praises are acceptable to God through Christ's intercession.

Introduction

A Prayer: Lord, I am ready for you to use my praying. Guide my thoughts that I will know how to pray. Guide my lips that I will ask for those things that give you glory. And remind me that you can use my requests to change the world. Amen.

The Prayers of the People are an expression of God's people gathered around Christ as their head and lord. They are joined in him and with him in offering prayer to God through him, with the world God has created and with the human family on their hearts.

It is vitally important that those who have been chosen to lead the intercessions are sensitive to the needs of those whose prayer they focus and direct. This requires reflection and preparation.

There are outlines for prayers in the *Book of Alternative Services* on pages 110-130. You may use these or adapt your prayers as you create your own. There are also great online resources, including:

- **Anglican Parish of St. Hilda**
<http://www.sthilda.ca/ministries-andgroups/worship/pages/prayers-of-the-people>
- **Anglican Church of Canada**
<http://www.anglican.ca/wpcontent/uploads/2011/01/make-preparation1.pdf>
- **New Zealand Prayer Book:**
<https://liturgy.co.nz/resources/Celebrating-Eucharist/24.pdf>

What are Intercessions?

It is important to have a clear understanding of intercessory prayer. Intercession comes from two Latin words: inter, which means “between” and cedere, which means “to go.” To intercede is to go between two people in the hope of reconciling differences or talk with someone on behalf of the other. In the context of prayer, it means we make sure we bring others into our times of conversation with God.

The Prayers of the People Gathered

In acting as an Intercessor in public worship, you are bringing before God the prayers of the people gathered together. Ideally, as the Intercessor, you express or vocalize the prayers that the people have presented to you to offer on their behalf. The challenge facing parishes is to find ways in which the Intercessor can genuinely act as the gatherer of prayers and the encourager for others in the congregation to express the prayers that are in their hearts.

There is sometimes a tendency to focus on prayers for local concerns and the healing of the sick. It is essential to look beyond the immediate local concerns and also pray for our political leaders, for business people, teachers, scientists, etc., whose decisions affect the whole human family.

The Prayers of the People Are:

1. An expression of what we are concerned about, what we are excited about, of our joy and thanksgiving.
2. About the world in which we live and concerns for the whole human family.
3. Matters both of the local and the broader church beyond the parish.
4. Representative *but brief*.
5. Intended to challenge people to continue to pray about these issues.
6. A response to the church season and theme for the day.

The Prayers of the People Are Not:

1. A sermon.
2. The announcements.
3. The occasion for promoting your personal point of view or issues.
4. Long (*they should not take over the liturgy*). Use concise words as they have greater impact. Long, rambles don't allow those in the congregation to focus.

5. A monologue in which the people have no part.

Spiritual Preparation

Pray for the guidance of the Holy Spirit is key as you prepare the prayers, remembering that prayer is a gift from God.

St. Paul says, “The Spirit helps us in our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but that very Spirit intercedes with sighs too deep for words. And God, who searches the heart, knows what is the mind of the Spirit because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.” (Romans 8:26-27 - NRSV).

Prayer is more than what we do; it is what God does through us.

Preparing the Prayers

- Check the bulletin: read through the order of service, read the appointed Scripture readings and note the prayer focus.
- Make sure you know the prayer format that has been chosen for the day. For example, what will the response be for the people? “Lord, hear our prayer,” for example, or something else? Often churches use different formats each week with seasonal emphasis appropriate to the occasion. This provides variety and is refreshing.
- Individual parishes have different ways of encouraging parishioners to put particular prayer requests into the petitions.

- At Christ Church, we will pray for our spiritual leaders, the Archbishop of Canterbury Justin Welby, Archbishop Linda Nichols (Primate), Archbishop David Edwards (Metropolitan), and Bishop Sandra Fyfe Cutler, our Bishop once a month (the first Sunday of the month). If you are not scheduled for the first Sunday, please omit these petitions. (These prayers will always be in the bulletin.)
- For the ill or in need. Sometimes it is hard to pronounce or to get through these names. It is best to pray for people in the following manner: “and we pray for those who are sick or in need of prayer, especially those listed in our bulletin today, and we pray for our loved ones at this time, aloud or in the silence of our hearts.” Please pause until names have been said aloud by the congregation. You then move onto your next petition.
- The Christ Church Cycle of Prayer is always included somewhere in your petitions; please read complete names.
- The Diocesan Prayer Cycle: is listed in the bulletin but does not need to be read aloud each week.
- Clergy in the Parish: you do not need to pray for all clergy each week. On the first Sunday of the month please include the following after you pray for the Bishops: “we pray for: Rev. Dr. Kyle our Rector, Rev. Bonnie our Pastoral Visitor, Rev. Canon Dr. Jody, Rev. Canon David, Rev. Kirby, and Rev. Cathy, and all lay-leaders who serve our Christ Church community.”

- Be creative, and be aware of current events: local, national, and international—for example, natural disasters, political and social upheaval, etc.
- When you pray for those “in authority”: If and as you pray for our Prime Minister, Premier, Mayor, or even the President of the United States, you simply pray for them. This is not a time to insert your feelings concerning specific policies or actions on their part. If you do have a concern about how to frame a particular prayer referencing a current event that a leader is involved in, please speak with the Rector.
- Check the prayers that have been written for their integrity. Check for length and for balance, being sure to include both thanksgivings, as well as petitions. Ask yourself: “What are the good things happening at Christ Church, in the local community and around the world?”
- While preparing for (and leading) the Intercessions, think of the people and situations for whom you are praying.

Leading the Prayers

1. When introducing the Prayers of the People, make clear to the congregation what the expected response is. In order to reinforce this, the Intercessor should introduce and join in the response.
2. During the prayers, provide for a moment of silence after each intercession (not too long), to offer personal and private concerns either verbally or silently. We need to

encourage people to uphold the whole human family and all of creation.