Chatting with the Creator

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04-13-2012

FYI: THERE'S A TOOOOOOON OF PEOPLE DOWN THERE THANKING YOU THAT IT IS FRIDAY

Making it Easy for Folk to Chat with God



Designed by Siggy Parratt-Halbert Unlock Woodhouse Worker

Chatting with the Creator

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Introduction

There's a lot of people who say they aren't religious; that they don't believe in God; that they are agnostic or atheist. But a lot of those same people call themselves spiritual, and a lot of those people will still chuck up a quick prayer when times get hard, or when they want a parking space in a busy supermarket carpark.

There's also a lot of people, practicing Christians included, who really have little confidence about praying – even if they do know the Lord's Prayer. And there's a lot of people, still including practicing Christians, who don't like people to know they are praying, or don't like to pray in front of others.

Then there are people who love prayer, but sometimes feel their prayer life is stagnating and could really do with alternative ways in which they can pray. Day after day they feel they are praying for the same old same old, feeling they are just giving God a shopping list.

In this resource you will find different ways of giving people opportunities to pray. With the exception of the lollypop prayers, none of these were introduced directly to a specific group of people, but they were all made available to everyone using the church building, whether or not they were believers or worshippers. It was really surprising just how popular some ways of praying were.



Clearly there was an unaddressed need – in terms of people feeling they had access to God, and opportunities for prayer.

Some of these prayer ideas will work better than others. Some won't work at all. They are all dependent on your context, so if the first idea you try doesn't really catch on, fret not, and try another way. Everybody's different and so is every community.

You might find having a prayer station using one of these ideas is really useful at a time of national difficulty. You could also adapt them to become like a memorial book for a much loved famous person, or local community member. Some churches use ideas like these around All Souls Day or at Christmas to give people the opportunity to remember people they have lost.

Remember always to make your table attractive. Don't just plunk down a Gopak table and leave it at that. Get tablecloths, or even better, a selection of fabrics or pashminas from the charity shop. Perhaps fresh flowers if



you're around enough to keep them looking nice, or an electric candle (some are really lifelike). And of course, always keep it tidy.



Prayer Chain



Perhaps you remember making paperchains when you were small. This is how prayer chains work. In its original context, this idea was hugely popular.

People usually pray when something's up, so to try and encourage people to pray when life is going well, a sign was placed with the resources suggesting that when someone prayed for

help with something difficult, they also gave thanks for something joyful.

You don't need to introduce this activity. Just place a table in the room where the non-church community can access it, like the community room or café, rather than the church itself. Make sure you keep the table tidy. You'll find your pens will be left out, or lose their tops. Glue sticks might be left to dry out, your strips of paper might get scribbled on or damaged, or they might just get untidy. All of this is totally fine; just tidy up, replace lids and dried glue sticks, remove paper that can't be used.

You might find the chain getting a bit long and unwieldy, so





take it and hang it up in the room, and begin another chain.

Don't worry if children make use of your paper; if you have family groups or toddler groups using the same room, this is bound to happen. Just go with the flow. God wants to hear from them too! And their playing with your resources goes a long

their playing with your resources goes a long

way to normalising the idea of God in the minds of younger people.

When you think people are no longer using this resource, you could consider resting it for a few weeks and beginning another style of prayer – or just leave it at that. You will begin to know what works best in your context.

This activity has also worked well at an outdoor stall as part of

a community Market. It was set up under a pop-up gazebo and members of the public were happy to come and add to the prayer chain.





You will need:

- Coloured paper. Rymans has a really good selection, sold in packs of 50 A4 sheets. Cut your paper into strips long ways, about 3cm wide.
- 2. Felt tips and/or coloured pencils. It really helps to encourage people to join in if these are in pencil holders rather than in their original packets. People don't like opening packets. If you use pencils, go through them all every week and sharpen them. There's nothing more annoying than being offered a pile of blunt pencils. If you don't have a pencil holder, make one from a food tin. Beware though, of the sharp edges. It's the perfect excuse to decorate your tin and make it pretty. You can do this very simply with newspaper torn into strips and glued on with PVA. Begin by sticking thin strips of newspaper over the sharp edge of the tin to protect from cuts, and continue on from there. If you leave an undecorated tin, not only does it pose a risk, but it looks like you can't be bothered. Always take the time to make things look good.
- **3. Glue sticks.** Have several, keeping some back to replace the ones that lose their lids.
- 4. sticky tape and scissors. Just in case the glue



doesn't stick.

- 5. Signage. You'll need a sign to invite people to take part, and one to explain what to do (see pages 10-12). Remember this needs to work even if you don't happen to be around; in fact some people will prefer to use it when you are not!
- 6. A few completed chain links. People need to see how it works, and they need to see that someone else has started the chain. No-one wants to be the first.
- **7. A selection of Bible Quotes (optional).** These are for people to take away (see pages 13-14)



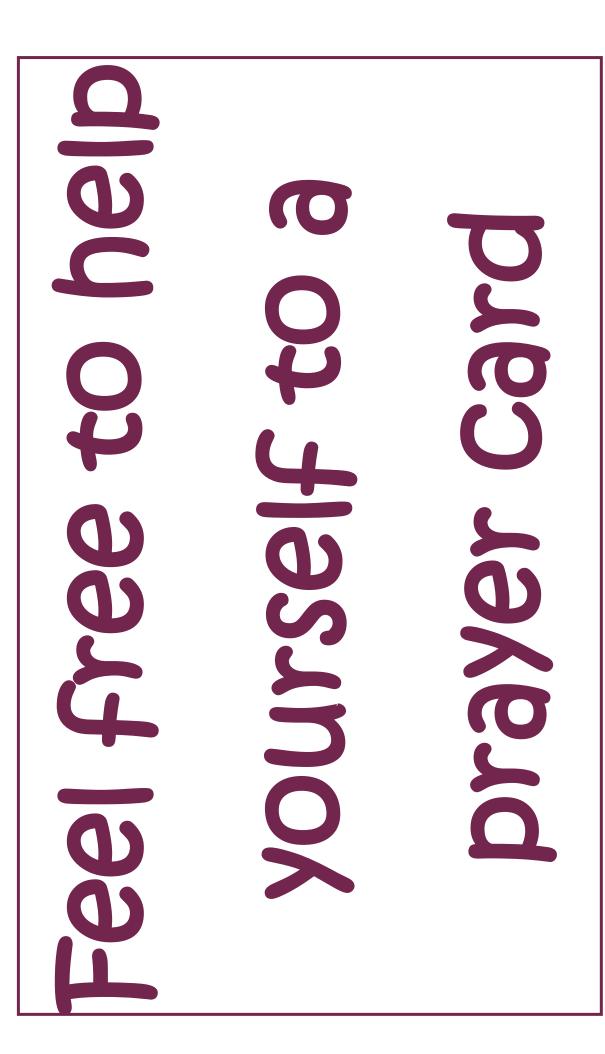






Prayer Chain

Do you have so	Do you have something to be joyful for and
something to b	something to be concerned about this week?
Why not writ	Why not write one of each on a strip of
coloured paper	coloured paper and add it to our prayer chain?
Remember - one	Remember - one piece of joy for each concern
you ha	you have! And no cheating!
	Prayer Chain Resources



Prayer Chain Resources





Job 22:27

'You will pray to Him and He will hear you...'



1 John 5:15

'And if we know that He hears us – whatever we ask – we know that we have what we have asked of Him'



Jeremiah 29:12

'Then you will call on Me and come and pray to Me, and I will listen to you'



1 John 5:14

'This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us'



James 5:13

'Is any of you in trouble? Let them pray. Is anyone happy? Let them sing songs of praise'



1 Chronicles 16:11 'Look to the Lord and His strength: seek His face always'





Mark 11:24

'Therefore I tell you, whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it shall be yours'



Psalm 17:6

'I will call on You, my God, for You will answer me; turn Your ear to me and hear my prayer'



Psalm 4:1

'Answer me when I call to You, my righteous God. Give me relief from my distress; have mercy on me and hear my prayer'



Matthew 5:44

'But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you'



Psalm 102:17

'He will respond to the prayer of the destitute; He will not despise their plea'



Philippians 4:6-7

'Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus'





Gladness Clouds



A variation on a theme – this idea is all about being thankful. We're a nation of whingers. We find plenty to complain about – you know how it is, we complain about

the cold then complain when it's too hot. We complain about the rain and then we complain about our poor, dry gardens when it's dry.

But in every life and in every situation there is always a glimmer of loveliness. We just need to remember to look for it and be glad that we found it.

Here's what you do:

Get the biggest piece of blue card you can, or stick several pieces together to make a really big one (use sticky-tape, making sure it's on the reverse of your card). A1 is a good size.

Cut out lots of white cloud shapes. There's a cloud template on



page 17. You can use ordinary white paper for this.

Leave out coloured pens and pencils, and glue sticks. Pen and pencils need to be in a holder, rather than in



their packets. No-one likes to open a packet.

Put your clouds in a pretty bowl or basket.

Leave everything out on a table where anyone using your church can access, including when the worship area itself is closed. This is for your community, not just your congregation, so leave it where people using your building for activities other than Sunday worship can get to it. You can have it somewhere prominent, or put it in a prayer corner. If it doesn't work in one or the other, try somewhere else.

There are signs in the resource section that you can put with your generosity prayer table.

Remember to put a few clouds up yourself first, to get things started.

Remember to check your table regularly and keep it tidy, the pencils sharpened.

When your paper is full of clouds, display it on the wall for people to see. There's a sign in the resource section for you to use if you get to this point. It's up to you if you want to put another blue sheet out and keep it going. It depends entirely on your context, and how quickly your first sheet filled up.



- Cloud shapes (below)
- Sign for your prayer table (page 12)
- Instruction card (page 18)
- Sign for your display when done (page 19)





Spholo Ssanbell	Take as many cloud shapes as you like and draw or write on each one	something that you are glad about and grateful for. Attach your	finished cloud on the blue sky sheet.	Gladness Clouds Resources
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sky is full of	Spholo Ssanbeld'.	owing things that	s are grateful for.
d sidf	Ĵ J	Show	Se and a second





Prayer Beads

This works on a similar premise to the prayer chain, where the opportunity is offered for people to pray for someone or something, and to give thanks too. It nudges those who are having a difficult time to look for the one tiny good thing that shines in the darkness.

You will need:

A good quantity of black and clear glass drops – the sort people put into glass vases to support plastic flowers. They're easily accessible at any craft store.



Two baskets, to each hold the beads.

Two big glass jars or vases for people to put their beads into. Whatever you use, make sure they are clean and attractive. If you're using old coffee jars, for example, tie ribbons around the neck to cover the threads for the lid, perhaps decorate the outside with glitter, decoupage or cover it entirely in colours torn from magazines (surprisingly effective!).



- Don't forget to label your jars (below).
- Instruction notice (page 22)
- Signs for your table (page 12)
- You could use the prayer cards too, from the prayer chain resource. You can find these cards on pages 13 & 14 (you also need the notice from page 11).



Jar of Joys



Do you have something to be joyful for and something to be concerned about this week? Take a black bead in your hand and think about what's troubling you. Place it in the Jar of Concerns.	Now take a clear bead. Think of one thing that has given you joy this week. It could be something as small as seeing an awesome sunset. Place your bead in the Jar of Joys.	Remember to acknowledge every concern with a thing of joy.	Prayer Beads Resources
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Lolly stick Prayers

This is a lovely idea for encouraging people into intercessory prayer – praying for other people, including those we don't know. The idea is for someone to write the name of someone onto a lolly stick and place it into a deep container of sand.

The same person then takes a lolly stick that has already been written on, in return. S/he keeps the stick in a pocket so that whenever s/he feels it in his/her pocket, he/she is reminded to throw up a quick prayer. After a week, the person returns the lolly stick to the sand, and writes another name on another stick (if they have a name to think of), and takes a fresh stick away.

In this way, the sand is constantly replenished with people who are being prayed for. It is a really easy way to pray for someone, and it feels really life affirming and comforting to know that someone somewhere may have a lolly stick with your name on it.



It doesn't matter if the same name crops up on lolly sticks more than once. There is no way of knowing whether they are all for the same



person, and even if they were, then that person is thought to be in great need of prayer, so just go with it.

Because this prayer activity needs to begin with a lot of named sticks in the sand, it's best to launch this prayer with your congregation or your group, otherwise the first person to offer prayer won't have any sticks to take away. Once your group has populated the sand, it should be able to continue on its own after that.

This activity gets scruffy pretty quickly, so you need to keep an eye on it and tidy up regularly. Small people love to join in, which will often mean scattered sand, so shake your tablecloth out regularly, and top up the sand. Check your felt tips; bin off those that have lost their lids, check that others' lids are on properly, and collect them back into their pot. Check your blank lolly sticks – make sure they are still clear of any felt tip markings. Conversely, don't worry if there are blank sticks in your sand. Some folk don't like to be public about who they are praying for, so leave them in place.





You will need:

- **Lolly sticks.** You can buy plain ones, or coloured ones, it's your shout, really. They're readily available from craft outlets or online.
- A tin, jar or basket for your lolly sticks. Remember your tin/jar needs to be attractive, so decorate it with ribbon, lace or decoupage.
- Felt tips and a tin to put them in. Again, make your tin pretty.
- A container for your sand. A biscuit tin, or sweets tin, or a wide, shallow planter/plant pot will do fine. If you're using an old tin, make it pretty.
- Sand. You could use builders' sand, but then you'd end up with a lot left over, so try out your local pet shop for budgie sand (it comes in kg bags) or craft sand. The latter comes in different colours – how fortunate!

Signs for the table

Use the ones on pages 12 & 26

Is there someone you would like to be remembered in prayers? Write their name on a lolly stick and plant it in the sand. In return, take one of the lolly sticks already in the sand, place it in your pocket and pray for or think of, that person whenever you feel the stick in your pocket. It doesn't matter if you don't know them.	Next time you're here, replace your pocket stick with another. And perhaps there is someone else you'd like to leave a stick for. You can do this as many times as you like – leave a stick, take a stick, replace it later with another.	Lolly stick Prayers Resources
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Prayer Rocks!

This activity was designed to inspire people to think about gifts they have been blessed with that they have been able to share with others. This is an opportunity to give thanks, which we don't do all that often. Most opportunities for prayer offered to non-church people especially (think about prayer trees for example), are usually centred on prayer requests. This one is different in that it is an opportunity for thanksgiving, a positive activity that encourages people to ponder on what's good.

It can be difficult for people to think of the positive and to give thanks, especially if they are in a dark place. So people may need help in thinking in this way. People usually think it must be something big and obvious, but often it's the tiny things that have made a difference to someone. Perhaps they're good at baking, and were able to offer someone homemade cake; or they have spare time that enables them to help a friend or relative with childcare; maybe they're good with their hands that meant they could knit for a new baby or repair a fence for an older person. You get the gist.



Prayer Rocks!





Be aware though, that typical English -born people might feel this is a bit like bragging. But it isn't – it's about being grateful for the little things we

have been graced with, and you may need to encourage people to think like this.

To get this off the ground it helps to have a few completed cobbles to encourage others outside your congregation to take part. If you are working with an established community group, begin here. Be prepared to move round gathered people with this; they won't come to you, and they are unlikely to approach the prayer table if there are no completed examples – no-one wants to be first.

Once people have written the gift or blessing they have been able to share with others, or are just grateful to have, onto a pebble, varnish it (or given them opportunity to do it themselves) and place it on a tray to dry. It will help if you line your tray with kitchen foil. This makes your display look a little prettier and helps prevent varnish getting onto it. Leave the cobbles on display in the church or the room where you have been working. After a few weeks, if you have access to a church garden, place them around the garden or make a small cairn. You could invite people to make this with you, if you have enough decorated cobbles. Children especially will like doing



this. With the exception of the varnish, leave your resources out for other people/groups to take part. You will find a sign and instructions in the Resources section on page 48, along with some starter questions to get people thinking.

Being Thankful to Others

An alternative to this thanksgiving, is to ask people to write or draw something onto a pebble with a view to giving it away to someone else to raise their spirits or to give thanks for something they have done. This can go down really well, especially if you decide to hand them out around your community. It could be just one word, like 'hope' for example; it might be a phrase, religious or not, that might make someone smile; or it might be a picture. It's not strictly a prayer; rather it is a way of giving encouragement to others. Families and children especially are better able to join in with this alternative because of the picture element.

You may have heard of people leaving decorated cobbles around to be found by others, but this runs the risk of the less



savoury characters in your community (or just bored teens!) finding them and using them as very handy missiles. If you decide to give out these cobbles, it's recommended you (and



anyone else who wants to take part) give them directly to adults. You could be totally random and just pick a day when you and a couple of willing volunteers could do the rounds in your local community and give them away, or you could give them to all the people who use your church building – including those who took part.

Good Friday is a fantastic opportunity to give cobbles away. As part of your walk of witness, give one to every person who is working in your local shops that day. If you think you might use your cobbles in this way, why not involve other churches in your community? You might have to get the materials for them, but it's worth it for the number of cobbles it will generate, as well as the community spirit that may grow between the churches. It has been known, that where churches' young people's groups have decorated the cobbles, it has generated a simple opportunity to talk about Jesus and Easter. It's also recognised that keeping hands busy and eyes concentrating on what they are doing allows a safe space for people to explore faith.





You will need:

- Cobbles, which are easily found anywhere selling garden goods, like B&Q or Wickes for example. Buy them by the sack; with a bit of luck, you will get through them pretty quickly. Before you use them, wash them, as they are dusty and will ruin your pens
- Permanent markers (like Sharpies). Get different colours, although darker colours work best, even on dark cobbles.
- All purpose varnish (optional, but it will mean the text on the cobbles will last longer if you choose to leave them outside)
 - Sign and instructions. (For either writing the gifts shared, or for blessing others) to leave out if you choose to make this activity available to others using your building. Prayer table notice on page 12, instruction notice on page 32.

If people struggle to come up with blessings or gifts they have shared with others, and especially if you decide to leave this activity out for others to take part in, there is a set of questions on pages 33-35 you could use to encourage a response.



What are the gifts you have been blessed with? Maybe you were able to share your gift, and make someone's day. Perhaps you're a great baker and baked a cake for someone; or you have time, so took your grandchildren on a day out, or a friend for coffee. Take a look at our suggestions if you're a bit stuck. Why not write it onto one of these pebbles and add it to the prayer table to say thankyou.	Prayer Rocks Resources
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One time you made something for someone One time you repaired something for someone

Prayer Rocks Resource



One time you Cooked or baked for someone else

The time when you gave your spare time to help someone out



One time you listened when someone needed to talk

One time you kept someone Company when they were sad or siCk







Put Christmas into God's Hands

This activity was originally offered at Christmas, a particularly emotive time for many people. But with a bit of imagination you could adapt it for any time of the year. It follows the premise of a simple prayer tree, but offers different opportunities for prayer that will become the decorations for a Christmas tree. It's a lovely idea. We don't think much about anything, really, when decorating our Christmas trees – a bauble is a bauble is a bauble. But for this tree, every decoration is someone's prayer. It's suitable for all ages, so please do encourage young people and small people to take part too.



This is how it works:

It's up to you whether you use a quiet corner or a prominent position, it depends on your own context. Either way, it's wise to have this available to all those using your church building, not just the congregation. People who are not churchgoers still like the opportunity to pray, so don't shut it up in your worship room, put it somewhere public.

Suggested colours for your card:

- Green for Christmas hopes
- Red for things to celebrate
- Blue for the things about Christmas that make people sad or worried
- Gold for the things about Christmas people might want to give thanks for

Have angel shapes on white card for people to write the names of people they want praying for onto it's skirt. Give the option for angels to go onto the tree blank; not everyone likes to make public the names of people needing prayer.

This is a prayer activity that can get untidy pretty quickly, so



revisit your table often to make sure the pens and pencils are in their pots; and that the different card shapes aren't mixed up (putting them in pretty bowls will help with this). Make sure you haven't run out of shapes or ribbon.



You will need :

A Christmas tree, or you could make a tree using bare branches. There are instructions for making a bare-branch tree further down.

Green, red, gold, blue and white card, cut into shapes.

Felt tips and pens, with pretty tins or jars to put them in. Remember to decorate whatever you put your pens and pencils into. It's important for potential participants to feel what they are doing is respected and thought well of. A scruffy, or undecorated jam jar won't cut it.

Pretty ribbon. You can either get thin ribbon from a haberdashery, or shiny parcel ribbon from a stationers.



The latter can be difficult to tie into knots, however, so the ribbon from the haberdasher is recommended.

Scissors to cut the ribbon with. Or leave it out pre-cut to make sure the lengths are long enough to tie the 'bauble' to the tree without wasting it.



Bare tree. If you'd like to make a bare tree, you can either gather lots of bare branches and display them undecorated in a tall vase, or you can make a more permanent fixture by gathering your branches and setting them in ready-mix cement in a large flowerpot. This will give them a firm base, and are less likely to be knocked over than the bare branches in a vase. Once your cement is set, you can paint your branches if you want. Just use white primer followed by white emulsion. You can scatter glitter into the last coat of paint while still wet.

Handy hint: use apple tree branches, they're really knobbly with lots of bobbles to hang baubles from. There's a picture on page 37 to show you what it might look like: This one isn't painted, but imagine if it were!

Adaptations: - using ribbons instead of cardboard



baubles you can do this in the churchyard where the whole community can access it, and to the left you can see it done using a net instead of a tree.



- 1. Prayer table sign (page 12)
- 2. Instructions (page 42)
- 3. Signs for your bauble bowls (page 40-41)
- 4. Bauble templates (pages 43-44)
- 5. Angel template (page 45)

The ANGEL

Write the name/s of the person or people you want to pray for, or draw them

The GOLD bauble

Write or draw the things you want to give THANKS for this for this Christmas



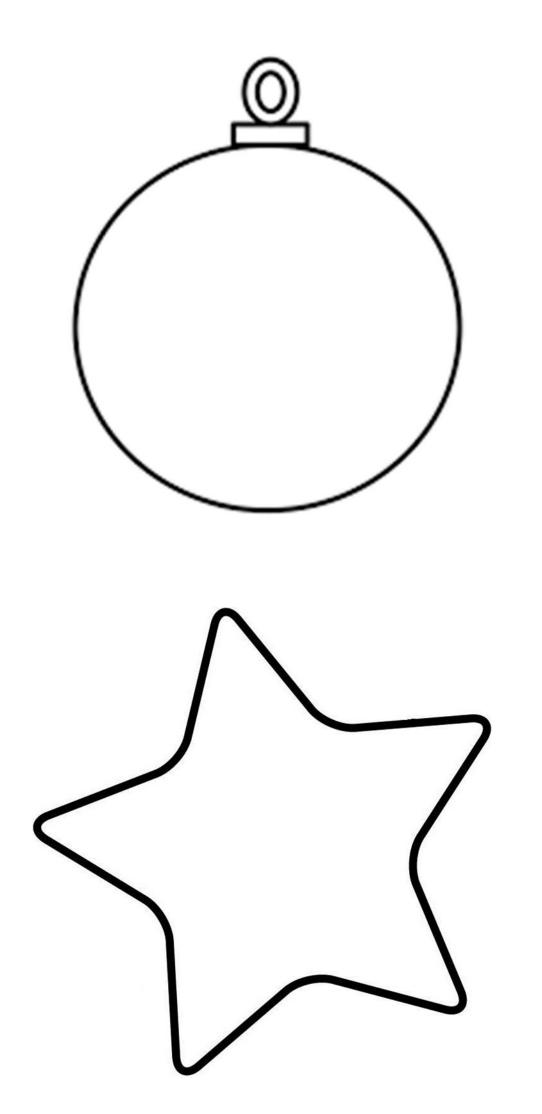
The GREEN bauble Write or draw your Christmas HOPES

The RED bauble Write or draw the things about Christmas you want to CELEBRATE

The BLUE bauble Write or draw the things about Christmas that make you SAD or WORRIED

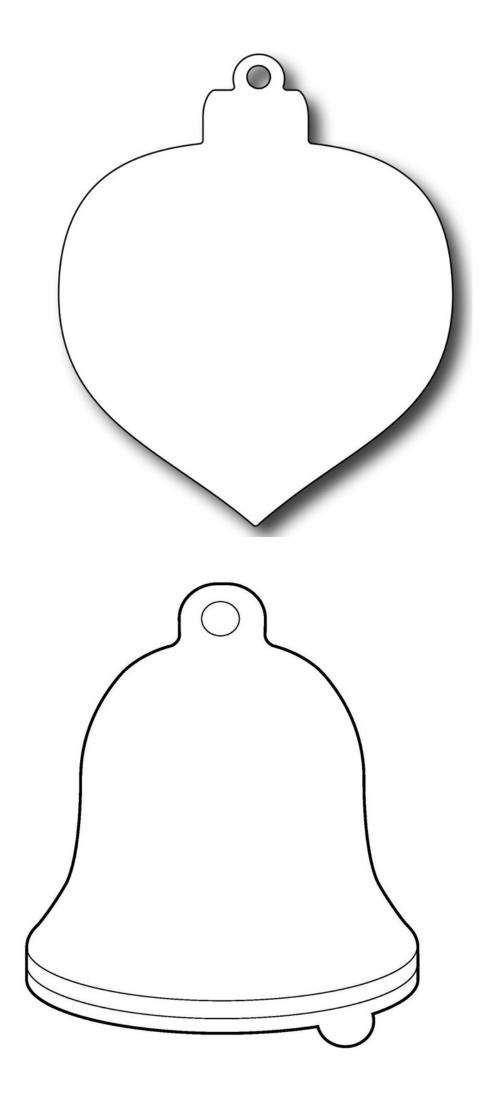


Christmas Resources	
Add a ribbon to your cards and hang them in the tree. You don't have to use all the different baubles, or you could use more than one of any colour, it's up to you.	Add a ribbon to you different baubles,
On the ANGEL: write the name/s of the person or people you want to pray for.	On the ANGEL: write
On the GOLD bauble: write or draw the things you want to give THANKS for this for this	On the GOLD bauble
On the BLUE bauble: write or draw the things about Christmas that make you SAD or WORRIED	On the BLUE bauble: WORRIED
On the GREEN bauble: write or draw your Christmas HOPES On the RED bauble: write or draw the things about Christmas you want to CELEBRATE	On the GREEN baub On the RED bauble: v
moughts, realings and concerns to God tins officialities. Not everyone enjoys official, many of us get bowed down with stress and cares. Why not join in, and give your Christmas to God?	many of us get bowed of Christmas to God?
There are different coloured baubles for different prayers, as a way of giving different	There are different colo
Why not take part in decorating our Christmas tree with prayers?	Why not take part in de



Christmas Resources













For Group Leaders

Resource name: Chatting with the Creator

Authors / Facilitator: Siggy Parratt Halbert (Unlock Woodhouse)

Aims: To enable participants to become more comfortable with the idea of approaching God informally and creatively with all kinds of matters, both for themselves and for others. To dispel the notions that prayer needs to be clever, or complicated, wordy, or formulaic, or even that there are right and wrong ways to do it. To create opportunities to explore creative approaches to prayer and ways of engaging those who would not usually feel able to talk about praying with any confidence.

Outcomes: The participants will be more able to pray, for themselves and for others, and to talk about talking with God. All those sharing the spaces used will be able to see that prayer is happening in accessible ways.

Session Content: - This resource is not session based but relies on 'passing trade'. The activities need to be set up for several weeks in spaces where lots of people come and go for other things. They need to be looked after and kept looking inviting.

Unlocking Real Life Experience

The activities are designed to enable participants to bring their own real stories into their 'chatting with the Creator'.

Ice Breakers: The decorative and creative approaches provide a 'way in'.

Revealing the Good News of the Down to Earth Christ

Bible: The Bible references on the prayer cards provided on pages 13 & 14, could be provided alongside any of the activities in this pack. They include: - Job 22:27, 1 John 5:15, Jeremiah 29:12, James 5:13, 1 John 5:14, 1 Chronicles 16:11, Mark 11:24, Matthew 5:44, Psalm 17:6, Psalm 102:17, Psalm 4:1, Philippians 4:6-7

Releasing Life Changing Skills and Confidence

Knowing how easily we can bring matters to God will resource us for our day to day lives.

Reflective Activities

Creative activities provide an engaging way for people to spend some time reflecting on the issues that they want to bring to God.

Unlock, by various names, has been around since 1972, trying to help (mainly) urban Christians to understand and share their faith appropriately. Our life experience matters; our stories; our joys and sorrows. The Bible has plenty to say, more than we'll ever know, about our lives, if we know how to read it and apply it - if we know how to **UNLOCK** it!

Unlock uses an approach to engaging with the Bible that is different to traditional Bible studies (see page 48). Unlock's approach starts from the stories and experiences of group members, whereas a more traditional approach starts from the Biblical text. Unlock's approach has been found to work well with small groups of urban, oral learners from outside of the church. There are many free resources on the Unlock website designed for use with such groups. However, because each of these resources was designed for a particular group in a particular time and place they are unlikely be a perfect fit for your group as they stand. They are offered more as inspiration to you to design your own materials along the same lines, rather than as ready to use packages.

Unlock usually works with people outside of church who may be interested in finding out a bit more about faith but perhaps are not attracted to the formal methods of learning often associated with church. Our work is based on a reflective learning cycle and is a tried and tested way of introducing people to the Bible in a non-threatening way. Many churches have activities that draw in members of their surrounding community but then struggle with how to move on from those relationships into exploring faith, especially in urban environments where anything formal might be treated with suspicion.

This resource has been developed by an Unlock worker in Woodhouse, Sheffield to address the needs of a specific community.

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ock Learning Cycle	Leading to more Eading to more experience What we learn now is learnt for life and changes us. We also learn to keep reflecting!	Revealing Good News of the Down to Earth Christ the Down to Earth Christ the Down to Earth Christ The real life stories are connected to and compared with similar situations in the Bible.
The Unlock	Unlocking real life stories of urban people Start with the group telling stories from their real life experience.	Releasing life changing skills and confidence Change happens as a result of linking real life experience with the Bible. This change often leads to action among others.

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