

EXAMPLE Intercessions *a form for use in ordinary time on Sunday mornings*

Leader The response to the words, "Lord, in your mercy" is **Hear our prayer**.
Lord, in your mercy
hear our prayer.

Leader In the power of the Spirit and in union with Christ, let us pray to our loving God:
Almighty and ever-living God,
you promised through your Son Jesus Christ to hear us when we pray in faith.
Strengthen Helen, our Bishop, and all your Church in the service of Christ,
that those who confess your name may be united in your truth,
live together in your love, and reveal your glory in the world...*(other prayers may be added by you)*
A brief moment of silent personal prayer is kept
Lord, in your mercy
hear our prayer.

Leader God of peace, bless and guide all who lead and govern,
and give wisdom to all in authority;
direct this and every nation in the ways of justice and of peace;
that we may honour one another, and seek the common good...*(other prayers may be added)*
A brief moment of silent personal prayer is kept
Lord, in your mercy
hear our prayer.

Leader God of love, give grace to us, our families and friends, and to all our neighbours,
that we may serve Christ in one another, and love as he loves us...*(other prayers may be added)*
A brief moment of silent personal prayer is kept
Lord, in your mercy
hear our prayer.

Leader God of healing, comfort and heal all who suffer in body, mind or spirit;
especially we pray for *[here you may refer to the names of the sick listed in the Bulletin]*;
give them courage and hope in their troubles
that they may hold to you through good and ill, and trust in your unfailing love...
...(other prayers may be added)
A brief moment of silent personal prayer is kept
Lord, in your mercy
hear our prayer.

Leader Lord of life, hear us as we remember those who have recently died,
especially ... *[here add the names of any recently departed, if any]*;
may they, and us, come to know the promises of heaven, and the gift of eternal life.
A brief moment of silent personal prayer is kept
Lord, in your mercy
hear our prayer.

Leader Let us offer to God our own personal prayers, either silently or aloud,
bringing to God all those things which another person cannot say for us...
A brief moment of silent or open prayer is kept

Leader God of hope, rejoicing in the fellowship of all your saints,
we commend ourselves and the whole creation to your unfailing love.

Leader Merciful Father,
Accept these prayers for the sake of your Son, our Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.



Guidelines for leading the Prayers of the People (Intercessions)

- Guidance from the BAS (p176-177) states clearly:

The Prayers of the People—The work of the Church is not only to praise God but also to pray for the Church and for the world. The Prayers of the People are an integral part of liturgy. Thanksgiving and intercessions may take an extempore form following the headings given, or one of the forms provided may be used. Whichever form is used, opportunity should be given to those assembled to add their own petitions and thanksgivings to the prayers of the community.

A deacon or a lay person, rather than the priest, is the appropriate minister to lead the Prayers of the People. If the penitential rite has been used before the eucharist or if the Prayers of Penitence are to follow, the penitential petition is omitted from the intercession.

Forms for the Prayers of the People are found on pp. 110–128 of the BAS. These forms are, however, **only suggested models**. They ought not to become the standard forms used in a parish, but should be adapted with imagination to meet the needs of the local Church.

- Ask for the guidance of the Holy Spirit as you prepare your prayers.
- When preparing prayers, **look at the readings and themes for the day**. If possible ask the preacher what the sermon will be about. Look ahead to see what events in the life of the church are coming up, and offer them to God in prayer.
- **Select** from all the above, and your **local knowledge** and awareness of **what is happening in the world**, what you want to pray for; and remember that intercessions should not be doom-laden: **REMEMBER TO GIVE THANKS FOR THINGS TOO!**
- Look at some of the available books for ideas - you may discover helpful ways of saying things. **Forms I–V** in the BCP are helpful but *you do not have to stick slavishly to them*. You have gifts and skills which will enable you to write prayers in your own words too! An alternative basic framework is included in this guidance.
- Remember how your sentences begin, and keep the pattern consistent: Eg God of Healing, we pray for.....
- Keep the prayers brief - let people have **time for their own thoughts and prayers**: a few seconds silence between each set of prayers (but before the responses) can be very useful.
- On the day, have a pen handy so that you can put in last minute requests, or respond to something the preacher has said - but don't re-preach the sermon!
- When the time comes, anticipate the prayers and **be in your place BEFORE the end of the previous part of the liturgy (the Creed)**; wait for the congregation to settle physically, and leave a space for people to gather their thoughts before you speak.
- **Speak slowly** - feel that your pace is slow: when it feels slow, you know you are at the right speed!
- Pause - let spaces develop between sentences - give people time to respond inwardly to what you have said.
- If you want to use a different response than the one in the service booklet, make sure people know what they have to say. Always do this by saying, before the prayers start, 'The response to the words xyz is abc.' Then say, 'xyz' and everyone will say, 'abc'. Now you are ready to begin.
- **Leading prayers is your offering to God.** You don't have to worry about whether you are as good as other people - this week it is your turn. You may feel nervous, but breathing deeply as people settle down will help you to settle too. People in the congregation value the freshness and variety of different offerings. So enjoy taking your turn.
- **Incorporating birthdays and anniversaries:** you might like to use the prayer at the end of this resource.

Other things to think about

Know the congregation: what is likely to be on people's minds and hearts? What concerns might they have about their lives outside church?

Pray about the real world, not a narrowly religious one: faith and real life need to connect; **prayer must be relevant to the 167 hours people do not spend at church**. Good intercessions help people to live out their faith with more confidence during the rest of the week because it can then be seen that God is Lord of 'real life' as well as church life.

Be particular: relate to the news (but do not become a news-announcer!); paint pictures in words; use images—be in touch with what's happening in the world.

Use vivid language: memorable phrases and well-crafted ideas are a joy to listen to and trigger thoughts and personal prayers—but don't go over the top!

Have a clear structure: order and familiarity help people to stay focused and centred.

Address prayers to God, and biddings to the congregation: and don't mix the two up. "We pray for people in Sudan that God will...." is not addressed to God and is therefore not a prayer. "O God, we pray that those who lead and govern in Sudan may...." is clearly addressed to God, and is therefore prayer.

Pray; don't read lots of notes from different slips of paper and 4 different books that you've taken with you to the lectern! People can tell the difference between read prayers gathered from books, and prayers delivered from the heart, addressed to God, which books may have helped to shape.

Please try to avoid the prayers becoming a news bulletin: Eg "we pray for Mrs Z as she prepares to begin her work at the local thrift store – for which she has been preparing for many weeks and she is hoping that many other people will join her. She is happy to speak to anyone after worship about the opportunities to serve. Lord, in your mercy...."

Look for feedback: the church expends much energy on training and maturing people in faith—but very little on how to actually pray! Look for help when you need to. Use people you trust to give you feedback (but, of course, not only from people who will tell you how wonderful and perfect you are!).

Birthdays and anniversaries prayer:

Please try to resist the temptation to 'announce the news of birthdays' in the middle of the intercessions!

Instead, try using this form of prayer:

Lord of all time,
the seasons of life come and go, and we note their passing.
While we do not know what lies ahead,
we bless you for another year with those who are celebrating birthdays
especially.....

And those marking anniversaries
especially.....

Gird them with your strength and grace and draw them ever closer to you.
May your love surround them and us, all our days.

[V Lord, in your mercy
R **Hear our prayer]**