

Leading Intercessions

A practical guide to the ministry of leading prayers in worship



What Is Intercession?

Intercession is the most natural and instinctive kind of prayer. Jesus himself prayed for others throughout his ministry, and the Old Testament contains many examples of people praying for families, communities, and even enemies.

In intercessory prayer, we bring the world with all its joys and sorrows before God the Creator, looking at it through His eyes and aligning ourselves with His will for its salvation and wholeness.



Intercession has always been part of Christian worship, from the earliest descriptions of the Eucharist to modern services including Morning and Evening Prayer, All-Age Services, and Family Services.

The Ministry of Leading Prayer

Leading the prayers of a congregation means **enabling other people to pray**—not simply praying your own personal prayers in public or sharing favorite prayers or hobby-horses.



Called and Equipped

All effective ministry depends on the combined sense of being both called and equipped by God to discharge it.



Representative Leadership

Develop a sense of leadership that is representative rather than individual—be in touch with those for whom we pray.



Personal Growth

Depend on and seek personal growth in your own prayer life, developing spirituality and sensitivity.



Team Ministry

Remember you are part of a team—work alongside others in worship leadership. Communication is vital.

"When the time comes, the words you will need will be given you; for it is not you who will be speaking; it will be the Spirit of your Father speaking in you."

— Matthew 10:19b-20



Understanding Prayer

Intercession is one aspect of the **pleasure of being in God's company**. When we enjoy being in God's company, dialogue can happen—"let your requests be made known unto God," says St. Paul.

St. Augustine

"God does not ask us to tell him our needs that we may learn about them, but in order that we may be capable of receiving what he is preparing to give."

St. Basil the Great

"God does indeed know what things we need, and with generosity provides all we need. But faith, and the power of virtue, and the Kingdom of Heaven, these you will not receive unless you ask for them in labouring and steadfastness."

Do Our Intercessions Really Work?

Prayers for others are not static—they are **dynamic**. At the very least, intercession is genuine conversation with God with give-and-take on either side. It is also dynamic because it is a form of participation in the divine activity itself.

Not Magic or Manipulation

Intercession is not magic or manipulation by the one who prays. Neither is it a last resort. Asking God for things is not panic or desperation.

Based on Trust

All requests we make should be based on regular, continuous activity of growing trust in God, whose purposes we believe are being worked out every day.

God's Will, Not Ours

Our prayers of asking are held firmly within this framework—God's agenda, not ours; His will, not ours. We must pray in the light of "Thy will be done."

Jesus taught that whatever God gives will indeed be what we require, rather than something inappropriate or harmful. However much our prayers are answered, there always remains within them, for the present, that which will remain "unanswered."

How God Speaks to Us



Through the Bible

The Bible is God's living Word. When we read a passage, something often jumps out that is particularly relevant to our situation. Hebrews 4:12 reminds us that "the word of God is living and active" and "sharper than any double-edged sword."



In Our Hearts

When God speaks to us as we pray, it can be similar to the voice of our conscience. Over time we come to recognize God speaking in our thoughts and placing things onto our minds.



Through Others

God can use others in unremarkable ways such that they themselves are often unaware they are being used. We can recognize significance in their words, actions, or timing. A series of coincidences becomes God-incidences!



Through Words and Pictures

Through the Holy Spirit, God can give us certain pictures, visions, or words. We may understand their meaning immediately, or they may require sharing with others for interpretation.

Three Types of Prayer

The Rev'd Sam Wells, Vicar of St. Martin-in-the-Fields, offers insight into three types of prayer that can guide our intercessions:

Prayer of Resurrection

"Please make Diedre better again, take away her illness and restore her to health."

Resurrection prayers seek the **miracle**—it is the prayer of faithful risk.

Prayer of Transfiguration

"Lord, help us, in all our sufferings, to see life in new ways that we might have grateful hearts for the care given and received."

It is the prayer that seeks a **deeper truth** to life's experiences.

Prayer of Incarnation

"Despite the struggles Diedre faces we know, Lord, you are alongside her, always; give her the assurance of your presence."

It acknowledges that Christ **shares in our pain** and goes with us through it.

Practical Frameworks for Intercession

Traditional Anglican Structure

01

The Church

Pray for the universal Church, local congregations, and church leaders

02

Creation, World, Society

Pray for nations, governments, and global concerns

03

The Local Community

Pray for neighbors, local leaders, and community needs

04

Those Who Suffer

Pray for the sick, bereaved, and those in any kind of need

05

The Communion of Saints

Remember the departed and give thanks for faithful witnesses

Five Marks of Mission

- **Proclaim Good News** - outreach and evangelism
- **Teach, Baptize, Nurture** - preparing for baptism, welcome, inclusivity
- **Respond to Human Need** - aid agencies, political action, care
- **Justice for All** - prophetic role of the Church, decision-makers
- **Integrity of Creation** - environment, public policy, political leaders

Based on the Collect for Purity

- Openness - receiving - longing
- Cleanse - forgiveness - healing - wholeness
- Inspiration - vision - hope
- Love and praise - adoration

Essential Guidelines

1

Address Prayers to God

Intercessions should normally be addressed to God rather than to the congregation. When using biddings ("Let us pray for..."), always follow with a period of silent prayer.

2

Respect Confidentiality

Always seek permission before praying publicly for individuals by name. Respect confidentiality—intercessions are not the time for news casts or gossip.

3

Be Creative and Varied

Avoid falling into the trap of always using the same formulas. The Spirit calls us to be vibrant, fruitful, and creative. Don't try to pray for everything every week.

4

Prepare Thoughtfully

Look at the readings and themes for the day. If possible, ask the preacher about the sermon. Consider events in the life of the church and awareness of world happenings.

5

Balance Content

Remember to give thanks for things too! Intercessions should not be doom-laden. Keep prayers brief and allow time for people's own thoughts and prayers.

6

Speak Slowly and Clearly

Breathe deeply, hold your head up, and look toward the end of the space. Speak slowly—when it feels slow, you're at the right speed. Pause between sentences.

Your Offering to God

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 settle too.

167

Hours Per Week

Prayer must be relevant to the 167 hours people don't spend at church—connecting faith with real life.

5

Key Areas

Traditional Anglican intercessions cover five main areas: Church, World, Community, Suffering, and Departed.

3

Types of Prayer

Resurrection (miracle), Transfiguration (deeper truth), and Incarnation (God's presence) prayers.

People in the congregation value the freshness and variety of different offerings. So enjoy taking your turn.

Be open to feedback from the congregation. Pray about the real world, not a narrowly religious one. Use vivid language and memorable phrases. Have a clear structure. Most importantly, **pray from the heart**—people can tell the difference between read prayers and prayers delivered from the heart, addressed to God.