



Praying at Home for the week of 21st November



The Archbishops of Canterbury and York have called for the month of lockdown to be a month of prayer. You can join in worship online, and pray privately in the Cathedral building when it is open, but here are some additional resources.

Personal prayer is a key part of living a Christian life. So whether you are confident in praying, or less sure, we would like to help you find a pattern of regular prayer at home which lasts for your whole life, and not just while public worship is suspended.

Personal prayer often feels private, and so we don't always talk about it with other people. That means that we don't always know how other people pray, or how we might find new ways of praying. We might even worry about whether we are praying 'properly'.

There isn't really any such thing as praying 'properly', but over the next few weeks we will suggest some different techniques for praying, and some issues which you might like to make the subject of your prayers.

Very deliberately, this booklet can be used by anyone of any age. There are some techniques which might appeal more naturally to different age groups, but give them a try and see what you think!

The Archbishops of Canterbury and York have called for the month of lockdown to be a month of prayer. We will aim to produce resources each Thursday which can be the focus of your prayer on Saturday.

Please join us for online worship on Sunday, and whenever you can during the week.

There are two major questions about prayer:

1. What do we think is happening when we pray?
2. How can we pray?

What do we think is happening when we pray?

Last week we asked why it might be important to include thanksgiving, penitence (saying sorry) and praise in our prayers? Prayer is time spent building our relationship with God, not a shopping list! Think this week about how listening comes into that relationship. How can we listen to God and understand how we are being called by him?

Some practical tasks for Saturday 21st November: Praying every day during the day

Write a grace to use before meals

Whether you live on your own or with others, mealtimes are a good opportunity to pray. Some people are used to sitting down at a table to eat with other family members, whereas others may have very different experiences of eating on their own, or grabbing a snack to eat while doing something else.

However and wherever you eat, it is always possible to give thanks to God, but if you do eat with other people, it can very naturally and helpfully develop into a time of praying together.

In my household of four people (*writes the Vice Dean and Canon Missioner*) we take it in turns to say grace before our evening meal. Whoever is leading will always thank God for the food and for the hands which made it. They will also always pray for people who don't have enough to eat. But very quickly, this becomes a chance to:

- thank God for food and other things that have happened during the day:
- pray for people who don't have enough to eat or who are in need for another reason:
- mention anything else which feels important or relevant.

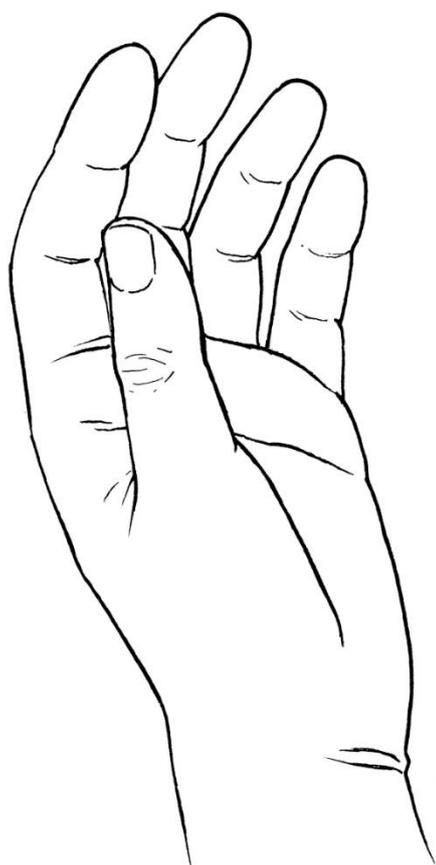
Sometimes the prayers in my household feel a little eccentric, but if that's what matters to the person praying, they should be able to pray it! If the Jesuit priest and poet Gerard Manley Hopkins (1844-1889) could say 'Glory be to God for dappled things' then so can we!

Whatever age you are, write a short prayer to use before meals so that you get into the habit of praying at that time. But as soon as you become confident in using it, try branching out in praying about other things before you eat.

One way of praying this week

Praying before meals is so 'ordinary' that it can really help us to engage with the importance of praying at any time and anywhere. Below isn't a new way of praying, but it is another *tool* for praying, quite literally, 'on the hoof! At some point during each day, when you wouldn't normally think of praying, give it a try. You can pray in your head while you are on the bus, or peeling potatoes, or sitting having a cup of tea.

Use your hand as a model for a prayer



1. **Thumb**

This is the strongest digit on your hand. Give thanks for all the strong things in your life, and the relationships and activities which support and sustain you by giving you joy.

2. **Index finger**

This is the pointing finger. Pray for all those people and things in your life who guide and help you: friends, teachers, key workers and so on.

3. **Middle finger**

This is the tallest finger. Pray for all those who have power in the world, such as world leaders and their governments.

4. **Ring finger**

This is the weakest finger on your hand, and can't do much by itself. Remember those who are in need: the hungry, the sick, the ill and the bereaved.

5. **Little finger**

This is the smallest and the last finger on your hand. Pray for yourself.

**We are praying for you every day
at Blackburn Cathedral.**