

The following is an example of how a session within the prayer space may look. Throughout the session always use the language of *'Many Christians believe...'* or *'As a Christian I believe...'* when talking to students.

### **Welcome**

- Meet and welcome the children as they arrive with their class teacher or teaching assistant to the session.
- Guide the children to sit down with you somewhere suitable within the prayer and reflection space.

### **Introduction** (Approx. 1 - 2 minutes)

- Introduce yourself, and perhaps what church you attend/your connection to the school.
- Ask the other volunteers to introduce themselves and the church they attend/what connection they have to the school.

### **Explanation** (Approx. 5 - 6 minutes)

- Ask the children if they know what the room is called for this week and what they have been told by their teachers about it.
- Explain that the Prayer and Reflection Space is a place where they can have the opportunity to learn about Christian prayer and have the opportunity to pray or reflect **if** they would like to, using the activities to do so **if** they wish.
- **It is important that no-one feels forced to pray against their will.**

We would suggest that the introduction will touch on some, if not all, of the following points. As you can see, following each suggestion there is an example of something the Prayer Space Leader **might** say.

### **What is prayer and reflection?**

*"Yes, prayer is talking to God. But it's not only talking - what are all of you doing as I'm talking? That's right, listening. In the same way, often when people pray to God, they talk and then they spend time listening to what they think God might be saying to them. Many Christians believe it is like getting to know a friend- it wouldn't be much good if you just talked at each other! Many Christians also believe that they can talk to God about anything, like a really close friend. They might say thank you for what He has done in their lives or say sorry for something they've done wrong. They might tell Him their worries or their hopes and dreams and ask for His help with something, or for someone that they know.*

*What about reflection? Yes, it can help us to be calm, to spend time thinking about our day and what went well or what we would like to make better tomorrow. Reflecting might help us think about how to solve a problem, or think about what is important to us, such as special people or goals we want to achieve."*

### **Where do people pray or reflect?**

*"That's right, Christians might pray in churches and yes, people from other religions might go to other special buildings to pray. Do you know what? Many Christians believe that you can actually pray anywhere! As a Christian, I believe that God's always ready to listen to me and that He wants to talk with me, so I might pray at home, or at work when I need His help; when I'm on holiday I might pray whilst sitting on the beach to say thank you to God, or when I go for a walk to help me think. We can also reflect in different places too, often people find places that help them think. Can you think of a place where you don't know if people can pray or reflect there? Even if it is a really unusual place, Christians believe that you can pray anywhere!"*

### **When do people pray or reflect?**

*"In the same way that I believe you can pray anywhere, I also believe you can pray or reflect at any time you like! Sometimes people find it helpful to do that at the start or end of the day, but it could be anytime. Over the next half an hour, you will all have the opportunity to pray or reflect if you would like to. It's good to remember, though, that being in a Prayer and Reflection Space isn't the only time when you can pray or reflect, but that you can do it whenever you want!"*

### **How do people pray or reflect?**

*"If I asked you to draw a picture of someone praying, how would they look? Yes, they might be kneeling, with the hands together and eyes closed. Now, that can be a really useful way to pray as it means people won't get distracted by what's going on around them. But do you know what? There are lots of ways people can communicate with God! It doesn't have to be talking. It might be by drawing, or writing, or even making something! This is the same for reflecting. Some people like to do something as they reflect, others like to be still and calm. Let's have a look at the activities you can do today to explore prayer and reflection."*

## Explanation for Nursery/Reception and extending Year 6

- As the younger children enter, ask their teacher if they are used to working in groups or whether flowing between the stations would be more appropriate. Use a short explanation, just a minute or two, perhaps asking them if they have heard the word 'prayer' before and if they can show you how people pray or think. You could ask them what they like to do with their friends or where they go and then link this to how Christians believe that they can be friends with God, spending time with Him by talking with and listening to Him, in many different places, just like them and their friends. Then mention that they will have a go at some fun activities to help them pray or think. Let each volunteer briefly explain their activity in their area. At the end, the children might find it helpful to sit in a circle and verbally share what they liked best about the prayer space.
- For Year 6's, you could go deeper with your questioning, asking 'Why?' when they have answered a question, or what they personally think about that, as well as building on their responses and helping them to consider how prayer or reflection affects peoples' lives and what benefits they may have, whether there is a difference between prayer and reflection or how these could weave well together. You also may be able to draw out some themes from their responses e.g. finding safe places to pray or reflect can help, rather than typically quiet places.

## Explain the Activities (Approx. 2 - 3 minutes)

- Next explain each of the activities in the room, the type of prayer or opportunities to reflect (e.g. When many Christians pray they say please, asking for God's help...), and what the activity involves (e.g. In this area you can think about anything you would like help with. You can write or draw it as a prayer or reflection and stick it to the bubble tube).
- Explain if they forget anything there is an adult in each area to help them that they can speak to if they wish to.
- **Remember to use language that states the children have the opportunity to respond as a reflective thought or as a prayer. It is up to the children how they respond to each activity and they don't have to share their thoughts or prayer with the volunteers if they don't wish to.**

## Setting behaviour Expectations (Approx. 1 - 2 minutes)

- Nine times out of ten we have found behaviour is not an issue at all. However, it is good to set expectations.
- One way that this can be done is by asking them if Christians *have* to use quiet voices to pray. Once you have clarified that sometimes prayer can be loud and noisy, or it can be totally silent as people pray in their heads, or quietly when Christians pray in small groups, make it clear that we will use quiet indoor voices so that everyone has a chance to pray or reflect if they wish to, showing respect to all.
- This should also affect how we move around the space, so therefore we all need to walk between the prayer and reflection areas, not running, so that we are taking care of the prayer and reflection space and each other.

## Groups (Approx. 25 minutes)

- The children will then need to be split into groups of three or four and be sent to different activities where the volunteers will greet them and, if necessary, again explain the activity. Each group will spend about five minutes at each activity.
- As you approach the fourth minute of the activity, go around to each group and give a minute warning, this will help them get ready to move onto the next activity.
- Just before 5 minutes is up, go back to each group and ask them to quietly move onto the next activity. We tend to do this instead of announcing this to the whole class in a louder voice as this is a more seamless and quiet way to move the children around the prayer space.

## Conclusion (Approx. 5 minutes)

Once each group has been to each station, and you have given the last minutes warning, the children should be brought back together quietly, perhaps a group at a time.

- The whole group should then be given a chance to consider what they did or didn't like or how they felt about the Prayer and Reflection Space and why.
- Older children (from Year 3 and older) can write down their thoughts anonymously on post it notes, noting what they have enjoyed and why, what they've learnt about prayer/reflection or God, how it made them feel and why or an idea to improve the prayer space. Younger children might prefer to discuss their thoughts with you. If possible, it is good to type up the comments and a selection of post it notes from some of the zones to give to the school, as this will provide evidence of spiritual development for OFSTED and SIAMS (an inspection for Church Schools). We have a report template that you can use for this.
- Finish off by reminding the children that they can **pray or reflect** anywhere and at any time and in lots of different ways, there is no right or wrong way, it is about finding the best way for them. You could challenge them to find some time each day to reflect on or pray about things in a way that works for them.
- Before the children leave, the Prayer Space Leader should, if applicable, invite everyone to the Prayer and Reflection Space during lunch time and/or after school.

- Finally, as the group leave, the adults in the room should make sure that they say goodbye as the children go to ensure that even as they leave, they feel welcome in the space.