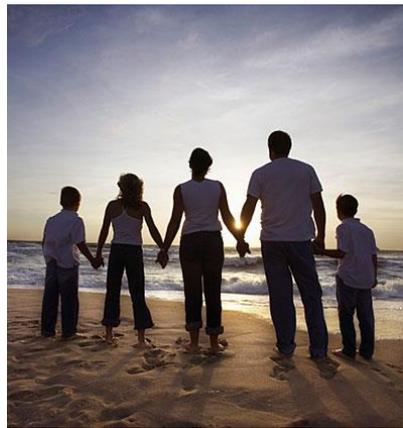


NOVENA

6-14
MAY

**NINE
DAYS OF
PRAYER
WITH PREMIER**

Children's and family prayer activities



Praying together as a family is a significant faith formation activity, and taking part in a process that thousands of others are also involved in can help your children understand the scope and breadth of the family of God. As you pray through the nine days between Ascension and Pentecost, use these prayer activities with your children to help them understand more about different people on the margins and lift them up to God.

TIPS FOR PRAYING TOGETHER AS A FAMILY

- ❖ Try to pray at the same time every day, and in the same place (around a table would be ideal). Ritual is important to children as they learn about faith and you might end up with a longer-standing practice of praying together as a family.
- ❖ Keep a record of what you pray about each day either by putting up a pin board, on which you can stick reminders of your different prayers, or by getting hold of a scrapbook, where you can record what you've prayed for and stick in examples of your prayers. This visual reminder will help keep these issues at the front of the family's mind and will facilitate prayer outside your scheduled prayer time.

NOVENA

DAY 1: 6 MAY 2016

An introduction to praying for marginalised people

Follow our fun steps



ONE. Get a large sheet of paper (A3 is ideal) and on it draw three circles, one inside the other. In the smallest, central circle, write the name of your neighbourhood or town. In the middle circle, write the name of your country. Finally, in the largest, outer circle, write 'The world'.

TWO. Give each member of your family a felt-tip pen (perhaps a different colour per person). Encourage everyone to write down the people who are sometime excluded from society, friendship groups or families in each category. For example, in your neighbourhood, there might be some homeless people or you may know of some elderly people who feel lonely. In your country, there might be refugees who struggle to be heard. In the world in general, people might be on the margins because of war, flood or famine. Your family members can be as general ('those who don't have any parents') or specific ('my friend Chloe') as they like.

THREE. Once you have finished, look at the whole sheet of paper and comment that there are lots of people who don't have the chance to be heard by others. Ask everyone to choose one person / group of people from your diagram to pray for. Go round the table and ask each family member to pray out loud for that person / group of people (it doesn't matter if people have chosen the same thing). Finish with a short prayer:

'Father, we lift up these people to you. Please help us to remember them today as we go about our daily lives. Show us how we can make a difference. Amen.'

Stick the diagram on the pin board or in your scrapbook.

NOVENA

DAY 2: 7 MAY 2016

People marginalised by their youth



ONE. Gather together some Post-it notes – try to get different colours and / or different shapes. Ask your family to think about the different issues that children and young people face. You might have to give some suggestions if your children are younger. For example, the children might talk about those who have a sad family life, who don't have many friends or are bullied. You could think about lives of orphans, both in your country and across the world, or perhaps reflect on young people in the care system.

TWO. Encourage everyone to write each different idea on a separate Post-it note, then stick them all over your table. Ask each family member to choose a Post-it note to start praying about. Give everyone ten seconds to pray quietly about the subject on their Post-it. Then they should stick that note back to the table and choose another. Repeat this ten-second prayer-and-swap activity three or four times before finishing off with a brief prayer about God listening to and caring about children and young people who feel sad or in danger, or pushed to the sides of our society. You could ask one of your family to finish.

THREE. Choose some of the Post-it notes to pin to your prayer board, or stick them all into your prayer scrapbook. Remind everyone that they can come back to their board or book at any time during the day and pray for these children and young people.

NOVENA

DAY 3: 8 MAY 2016

People marginalised by disability



ONE. Cover your table with newspaper or a wipe-clean tablecloth. Set out sheets of plain paper and put two or three different colours of poster paint into saucers. Use your hands to create pictures on the white paper. You could make handprints, or create footprints by making a fist with your hand and making a print on the paper with the bottom of the fist. Make toes by dipping your little finger in the paint and making five fingerprints around the top of the 'foot'. You could even make fingerprint people. Cover the paper with fingerprints and, after a few moments' drying time, draw arms, legs and features onto one of the fingerprints.

If painting is not an option, you could learn some of sign language. There are several signed prayers on YouTube, or you could create your own with the online British Sign Language dictionary (www.signbsl.com).

TWO. Whichever option you choose, as you paint or learn the signs, talk about how some people can't do certain things because they struggle physically or have learning difficulties. As you make handprints, chat about those who might have difficulties using their hands. If you make footprints, talk about those who struggle with walking. Learning sign language will lead to some discussion of people who struggle with their hearing.

THREE. If you painted together, God may well have put something on the minds and hearts of your family members as you chatted. Encourage them to pray about that now, as you use your painting as a focus. If you learnt some signs, use those to pray now, interspersing words and signs as you lift up to God those who are marginalised by the things they struggle to do.

NOVENA

DAY 4: 9 MAY 2016

People marginalised by old age



ONE. Gather some old photographs of some of your family. Include some of your older relatives as well as some which will feature the children. Compare the photos of older relatives with the more up-to-date ones. What are the differences between the two? Your children might point out the fact that some are black and white and some colour. Some may have been taken with film, while others might be digital. What about the differences in fashion and hairstyles?!

TWO. As you chat, share with the family some of the difficulties that some of the older relatives in your photos are facing now (if they are still alive, otherwise talk about issues they had to face). These might include loneliness, a feeling of not being useful any more or difficulties in getting out and about because of illness or disability. Say how these things can make older people feel. Sometimes older people can feel as if they have nothing to offer, or that they're ignored because they're old. Also, the world today can be very confusing, dominated as it is by technology that is new to them.

THREE. Spread the photos out on the table and have a time of quiet prayer for your relatives and other old people in the community – maybe there are older people in your church who feel side-lined or like no one wants to spend time with them?

FOUR. Pin some of the old photos to your prayer board or stick them in the scrapbook as a reminder to carry on praying about them during the day. If possible, call or Skype one of your older relatives to let them know you're thinking about them, or go and visit one of the older members of your church family.

NOVENA

DAY 5: 10 MAY 2016

People marginalised for being refugees



ONE. Buy a selection of newspapers and give these to the members of your family (make sure that you have removed any stories that might be unsuitable or upsetting for your children). Challenge them to go through the papers and look for stories about refugees. Encourage them to cut the stories and pictures out and stick them to an A3 sheet of paper. If you find a lot of stories, you can use more than one sheet of paper. As you cut and stick, discuss some of the stories that you have found. What has happened to make these people leave their country? What have they had to do to escape and find a new life in a different land? What do the people already living in this country think about refugees trying to move there?

Some of the headline and underlying issues around refugees are complex, but together you should be able to gain a general picture of what is happening in various parts of the world.

TWO. Give each member of the family a felt-tip pen and ask them to write or draw prayers around the headlines and photos. Encourage them to pray for the refugees themselves, the situation in their home country and the society they hope to move to.

Finish with a prayer:

‘Father, it makes us sad to know that there are people who have to leave their homes because there is war, or because they are hated by the people in charge. Help us to remember how God wants us to look after everyone and welcome them, as if we were welcoming Jesus himself.’

THREE. Stick the A3 sheets onto your pin board or in the scrapbook. At this halfway point, spend a few minutes looking at your prayer board or book and reflect on some of the things that you have already prayed about. How has God answered your prayers?

NOVENA

DAY 6: 11 MAY 2016

People marginalised by poverty



ONE. Working together, build a house out of Lego or other plastic construction bricks. Decide how many rooms and storeys it will have, what kind of facilities, how big a garden etc. Alternatively, if you don't have access to any bricks, then draw a house on a large sheet of paper, again working together do decide on design and facilities.

TWO. Once you have finished, look at your house and think about how to describe it. Is it simple or luxurious? Would it be an expensive house or an affordable one? Would the children like to live in a house such as this one? Begin to introduce the idea that some people don't have enough money to live in a suitable home, or don't have a home at all.

THREE. Ask your family if you have ever seen people who don't have their own home around your town or neighbourhood. Chat together about how you can help them – maybe raise some money and give it to a charity, donate clothes or bedding, or buy a cup of tea for someone.

Remember, it's not just homelessness that is caused by not having enough money – many people struggle to feed their family and have to go to a foodbank.

FOUR. If you have Lego (or other similar) people, put them in the house you've built, and as you do, pray for those who don't have a home, enough money or enough food to eat. Ask God to hear them as they cry out. Ask God to help politicians listen to those who don't have enough. Ask God to provide for people. Ask God to soften your hearts so that you will help others. (If you drew a picture, ask your family to draw people in the house and pray as they do so.)

Extra Tip - Perhaps today you could replace one of today's meals with something simple, such as soup and bread, and donate the balance to a charity. Or, next time you go shopping, buy something specifically to give to a foodbank.

NOVENA

DAY 7: 12 MAY 2016

People marginalised by poor mental health



ONE. Set out some candles on your table. Try to get a variety of different ones – a tea light, a taller candle, one that looks like an ecclesiastical candle, perhaps a scented candle. Whatever you choose, make sure everything is safe and all the candles are stable. (If you're in doubt, you can buy battery operated candles).

TWO. Light the candles and ask your family to focus on one of the flames. Sit quietly for a few moments (or however long the children are able to). Ask everyone to breathe in and out slowly and to tell God about what is worrying them at the moment. This could be something at school, a problem with their friends or something at home that they're not happy about.

THREE. After a minute or two, say that God listens to us when we tell him the things that bother us. But sometimes, these things can seem too much for us to cope with. Things start to get on top of us and become more serious. (Blow out the candles as you explain this.) Lots of people struggle with their mental health, but feel like they can't talk to anyone. They might feel like no one will listen or, if they tell someone, that they'll appear to be a failure for not being able to cope. Sometimes, this affects people's physical health too.

FOUR. If you have a story about a time when you or someone you know has struggled with mental health, tell it now, being sensitive to the children in your family and what they can cope with. Talking about when an adult has struggled will help children see that it's OK to talk about these things.

QUIET MOMENT. Have another moment of quiet and ask the children to ask God to help those people who struggle with their mental health. As your family is praying, relight the candles as a sign of God's light in what for many people can be a dark and difficult situation. Read out Psalm 23 once you have relit all the candles.

FIVE. Finally, pin a picture of a candle to your board or in your scrapbook, or you can stand an unlit candle beneath the board.

NOVENA

DAY 8: 13 MAY 2016

People marginalised by military service



ONE. Look for some videos of soldiers marching on YouTube or another video-sharing website. Choose one of them to watch together. You can find parades of soldiers returning from fighting in wars far away. Ask your family what they see in the video. Everything is very unified and regimented. Everyone has to depend on everyone else, otherwise people are in danger. It is the same when soldiers fight in wars.

TWO. Find some toy soldiers or play figures (such as Duplo) and give one to each member of the family. Say that when soldiers return home and leave the army, they often feel alone, just like the man or woman each family member is holding. They might have been injured, they could be suffering from something called 'post-traumatic stress disorder', where they find it hard to switch off from the fighting and the dangerous situations they were fighting in, even though they are safely at home.

THREE. Ask the family to hold the play figure in their hand. Say this prayer as the family holds their soldiers:

'Father God. We thank you for the people who go away to fight. Thank you for their willingness to defend us, and others. We pray for them as they come home, that people would help them, listen to them and that they will get all the help that they need. Please show us what we can do to help too.'

FOUR. Group your play figures together and take a picture of them. Print this off and stick it into your book or pin it to your board. Write a caption that fits what you have been praying about.

NOVENA

DAY 9: 14 MAY 2016

Children marginalised by trafficking and war



ONE. Spread a large world map out on the table and look at it. What countries do the members of your family recognise? Why is that? What do they know about these countries? Go online to a website such as www.warchild.org.uk to discover where wars are affecting children today. Mark the countries with Post-it notes. Point out that wars are decided on by adults, but children suffer a great deal because of those decisions.

TWO. Use a tablet or smart phone to discover more about the situation in one of the countries you have marked on your map. Put together and print out what is happening in that country, or write out some of the headlines on a piece of paper.

THREE. If you have time and you have older children, go to www.stophetraffik.org/uk to discover more about human trafficking, what it is and who is affected. Can you find any of the countries mentioned on your map? Where are children and young people taken from and where to?

FOUR. Using the map as a prompt, encourage each family member to pray out loud for one of the countries you have marked on the map. Once everyone has prayed, finish by saying:

‘Father God, please help the children living in...’ Then ask your family to say the name of the country they prayed for. Continue with: ‘Keep them safe from harm and safe from those who would want to exploit them.’

FIVE. Pin your info sheet onto your board or stick it in your scrapbook. You could also stick in / on the Post-its you used to mark countries on the map.

NOVENA

PENTECOST: 16 MAY 2016

Novena Summary

On Pentecost, look at your prayer pin board or prayer scrapbook to remind you of all the things that you have prayed about during the Novena. Has God answered any of those prayers yet? If so, how? Chat about whether any members of your group have carried on praying for anything. Why have they done so?

Keep the pin board or scrapbook out for a few days after Pentecost, so that you can carry on thinking about praying together about some of the issues raised. If this practice of daily family prayer has been a good experience, why not carry on praying together, and add to the pin board or scrapbook? There are lots of creative prayer activities available on the *Premier Childrenswork* website (www.premierchildrenswork.com).



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