

PRAYER IN THE CLASSROOM



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QUOTES ON PRAYER

"Pray without ceasing." 1 Thessalonians 5:17

When we pray to God we must be seeking nothing - nothing. ~Saint Francis of Assisi

Prayer does not change God, but it changes him who prays. ~Søren Kierkegaard

Trouble and perplexity drive me to prayer and prayer drives away perplexity and trouble. ~Philip Melancthon

We have to pray with our eyes on God, not on the difficulties. ~Oswald Chambers

The value of consistent prayer is not that He will hear us, but that we will hear Him. ~William McGill

Don't pray when it rains if you don't pray when the sun shines. ~Satchel Paige, 1974

Prayer may not change things for you, but it for sure changes you for things. ~Samuel M. Shoemaker

I prayed for twenty years but received no answer until I prayed with my legs. ~Frederick Douglass, escaped slave

Many people pray as if God were a big aspirin pill; they come only when they hurt. ~B. Graham Dienert

When at night you cannot sleep, talk to the Shepherd and stop counting sheep. ~Author Unknown

Prayer is when you talk to God; meditation is when you listen to God. ~Author Unknown

When a man is at his wits' end it is not a cowardly thing to pray, it is the only way he can get in touch with Reality. ~Oswald Chambers

Grow flowers of gratitude in the soil of prayer. ~Terri Guillemets

Prayer is not merely an occasional impulse to which we respond when we are in trouble: prayer is a life attitude. ~Walter A. Mueller

The Lord's Prayer may be committed to memory quickly, but it is slowly learnt by heart. ~Frederick Denison Maurice

Deep down in me I knowed it was a lie, and He knowed it. You can't pray a lie - I found that out. ~Mark Twain

I used to think the Lord's Prayer was a short prayer; but as I live longer, and see more of life, I begin to believe there is no such thing as getting through it. If a man, in praying that prayer, were to be stopped by every word until he had thoroughly prayed it, it would take him a lifetime. ~Henry Ward Beecher

Prayers not felt by us are seldom heard by God. ~Philip Henry

Prayer gives a man the opportunity of getting to know a gentleman he hardly ever meets. I do not mean his maker, but himself. ~William Inge

The trouble with our praying is, we just do it as a means of last resort. ~Will Rogers

If we could all hear one another's prayers, God might be relieved of some of his burdens. ~Ashleigh Brilliant

To be present is to be prayerful. ~Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh

When you pray, rather let your heart be without words than your words without heart. ~John Bunyan

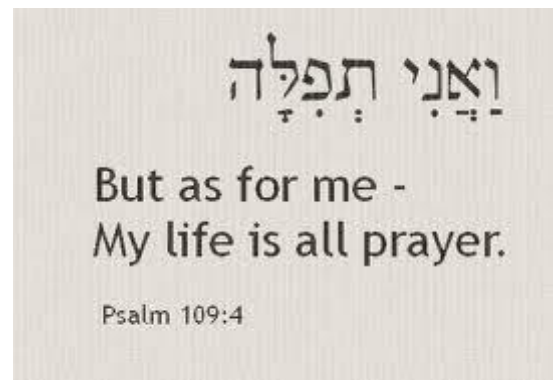
Certain thoughts are prayers. There are moments when, whatever be the attitude of the body, the soul is on its knees. ~Victor Hugo, *Les Misérables*, 1862

And help us, this and every day, to live more nearly as we pray. ~John Keble
Prayer is communication with the Divine. It can be whispered or chanted or written or expressed in the work you do. However it is expressed, it is never in vain. ~Donna Wilk Cardillo

I believe in prayer. It's the best way we have to draw strength from heaven. ~Josephine Baker

Prayer must never be answered: if it is, it ceases to be prayer and becomes correspondence. ~Oscar Wilde

Prayer is the soul's sincere desire,
Uttered or unexpressed;
The motion of a hidden fire
That trembles in the breast.
~James Montgomery, *What is Prayer?*



Planning for Prayer in the Classroom – Term Overview

This template can be a way of recording prayer experiences and can be easily adapted to suit the local context.

Prayers/ Prayer Experiences:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
Prayers of Thanksgiving – Prayer Circle											
Prayers of Praise - use photos or images as stimulus											
Prayers of intercession using set structures for starters and for response											
Prayers for forgiveness – Sorry Circle											
Lighting of candle followed by Silence											
Reflective music for relaxation and breathing											
Guided meditations											
Ignatian meditation using scripture											
Examen											
Scripture reading and response											
Prayer Dice											
Praying with Mandalas											
Praying with Labyrinths											
Sacred songs											
Lectio Divina											
Blessings											
Sign of Peace											

Prayer rituals to begin the day, end the day, celebrate birthdays etc											
Reflective Journalling											
Light a Candle website											
Reflective time using digital images											
Christian Meditation											

Traditional Prayers

Sign of the Cross											
Hail Mary											
Our Father											
Glory be											
Rosary											
Act of Contrition											
Grace											
Responses and prayers from Liturgy											

Weekly Prayer Planning Sheet

Prayers/ Prayer Experiences:		Resources
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prayers of Thanksgiving – Prayer Circle • Prayers of Praise - use photos or images as stimulus • Prayers of intercession using set structures for starters and for response. • Prayers for forgiveness – Sorry Circle • Lighting of candle followed by Silence • Reflective music for relaxation and breathing • Guided meditations • Ignatian meditation using scripture • Examen • Scripture reading and response • Prayer Dice • Praying with Mandalas • Praying with Labyrinths • Sacred songs • Lectio Divina • Blessings • Sign of Peace • Prayer rituals to begin the day, end the day, celebrate birthdays etc • Reflective Journalling • Light a Candle website • Reflective time using digital images • Christian Meditation using a mantra 	<u>Monday</u>	
	<u>Tuesday</u>	
	<u>Wednesday</u>	
	<u>Thursday</u>	
	<u>Friday</u>	

STEPS FOR CROSS MAKING WITH BEADS

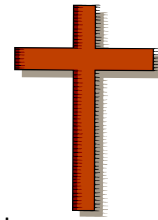
20 guage wire cut at 8cm lengths

Beads

Long nose pliers

To make the cross

1. Hold the two pieces of wire in the shape of a cross
2. Loop/wind the horizontal wire twice around the vertical wire
3. (The wire will slide up and down until the beads are all in place)
4. Place 4 beads on top part of the cross and make a small loop at the top of the wire to hold the beads in place
5. Repeat Step 4 with each side of the cross until the cross is complete.



I have people who love me

**Four beads for
four people who
you love**

**“Lord thank you
for the people who
love me”**

I have gifts that make me unique

**Three beads for three gifts you
bring to the world**

For the gifts of

For the gift of

For the gift of

I thank you Lord



I have challenges that make me stronger

**Three beads for three things that
have sometimes been hard for me
or that have challenged me**

For

For

For

**Help me Lord, to use these gifts to
help others**

**Nine beads for the nine fruits of the
Holy Spirit**

**“Lord, help me to develop these
qualities in my life”**

I can make a difference

My Finger Prayer

Here is a prayer that uses the child's hand as a reminder of what to pray for.

My **thumb** is closest to my heart – pray for my family.

My **index finger** points out things we don't always see; it instructs me – pray for teachers.

My **middle finger** stands taller than the rest – remember to pray for the president and leaders around the world.

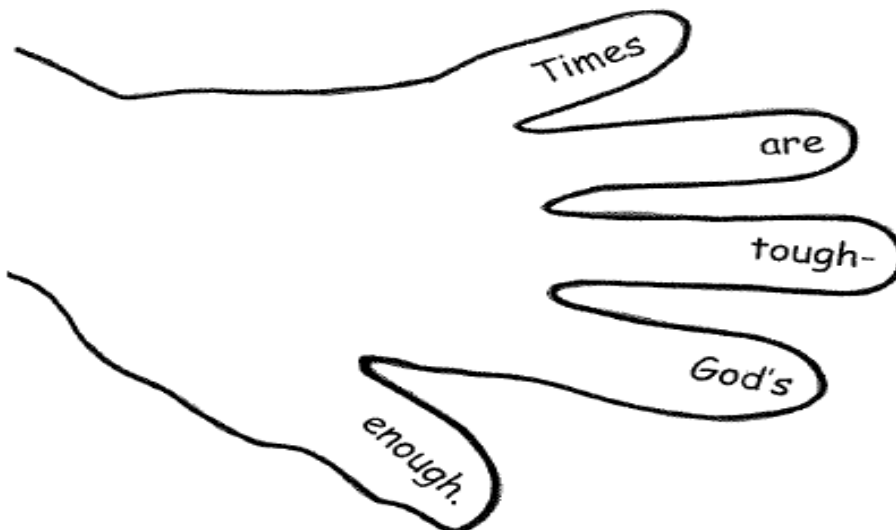
My **ring finger** is weak and cannot stand alone well – pray for the weak and the sick.

My **pinkie finger** is the smallest – remember to pray for myself.

From <http://suite101.com/article/prayers-for-young-children-a19131#ixzz2JXEkyG4>.

Five Fingers Prayer

Just five words long, these little prayers are good for reminding us of God's loving presence in times of stress or worry. Tap each finger as you say the word and remember He is always by our side.



Here are some more:

"This, too, is from me."

"Let me look after you."

"Feeling down? Try looking up."

"I am with you always."

"Love ALL God's many children."

Hopscotch Fun ☺ ALL

Hop, hop-play, play-skip, skip-pray, pray.

Play a game of hopscotch to stimulate lots of prayerful thoughts.

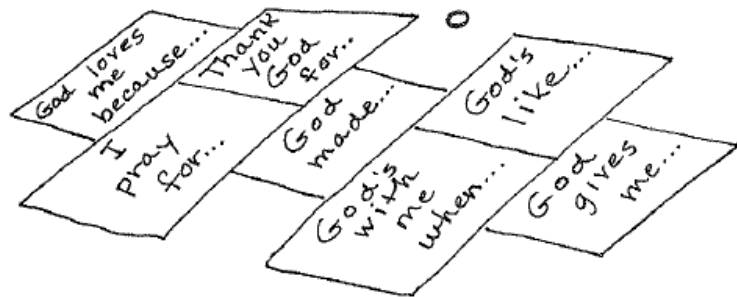
❑ **You will need:**

- Sidewalk chalk
- Large buttons

❑ **To do:**

Draw hopscotch on a sidewalk or substitute construction paper squares for indoor hopscotch. In each square write a phrase as listed below. Take turns tossing a large button on the square and the children complete the phrase the button lands on.

- God loves me because...
- Thank you, God, for...
- I pray for...
- Who prays for me?
- God made...
- God's with me when...
- God's like...
- God gives me...
- God loves...
- I like to pray when...



Prayer Dice

A Prayer Dice is a cube with words written on each side instead of numbers. Teachers can use this to capture the attention of students and to inspire them to use a variety of prayer forms. It can also be a tool to enable students to demonstrate their understanding and knowledge of prayers as well as be a support for them to actually have the words to pray with. Use of a prayer dice in a reverent setting can reinforce known prayer forms and teach new forms.

Prayer dice can be made out of cardboard, using a standard cube template or any cube shaped box. Examples of what can be added to each face of the cube include:

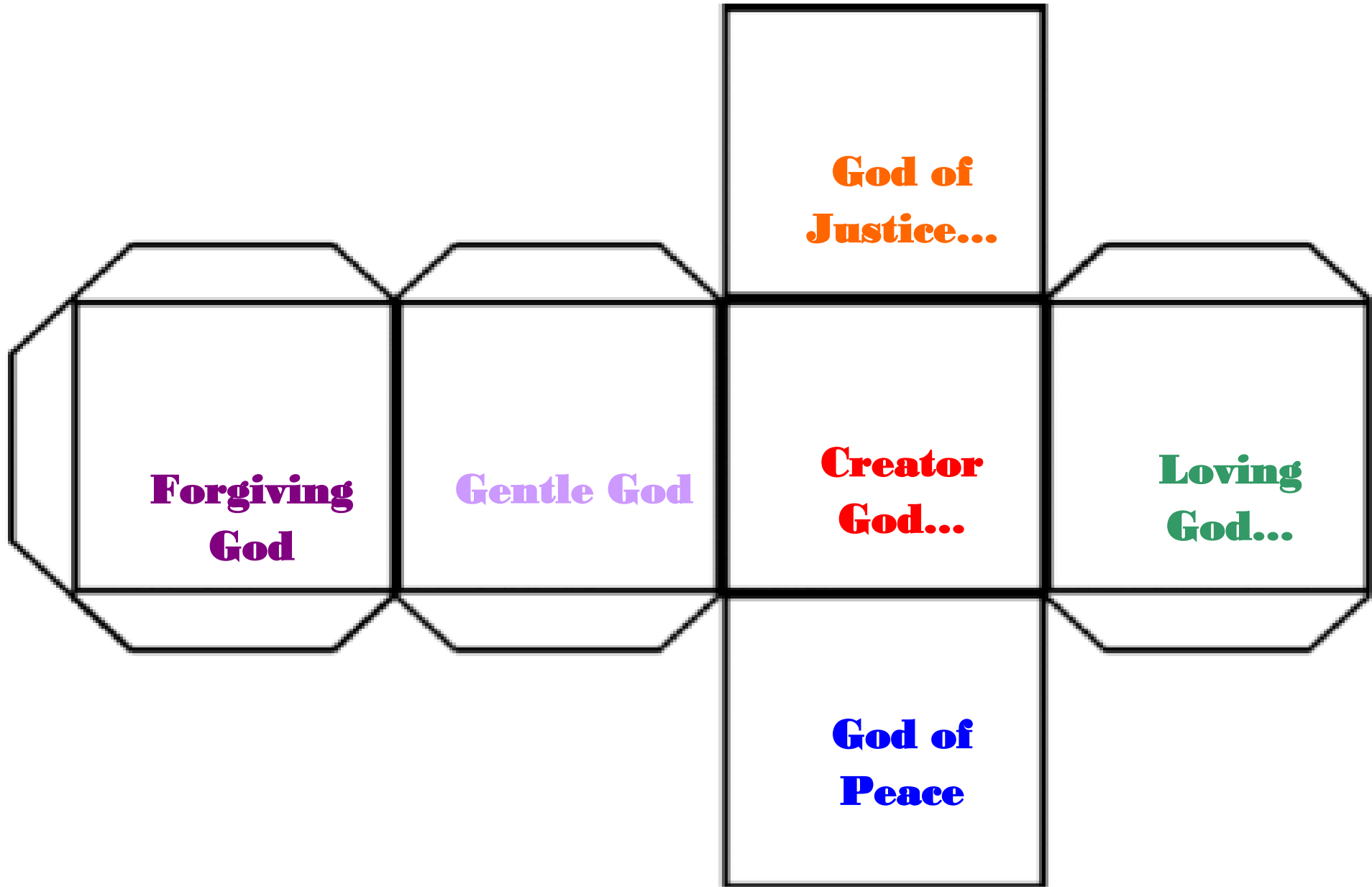
- Names for God e.g. God of Love, Creator God etc
- Prayer Starters e.g. Let us pray for....
- Images e.g. people, places, things
- Different forms of prayer e.g. thank you prayers, intercessions, meditation
- Traditional prayers e.g. Hail Mary
- Scripture quotes e.g. Be still. Be healed

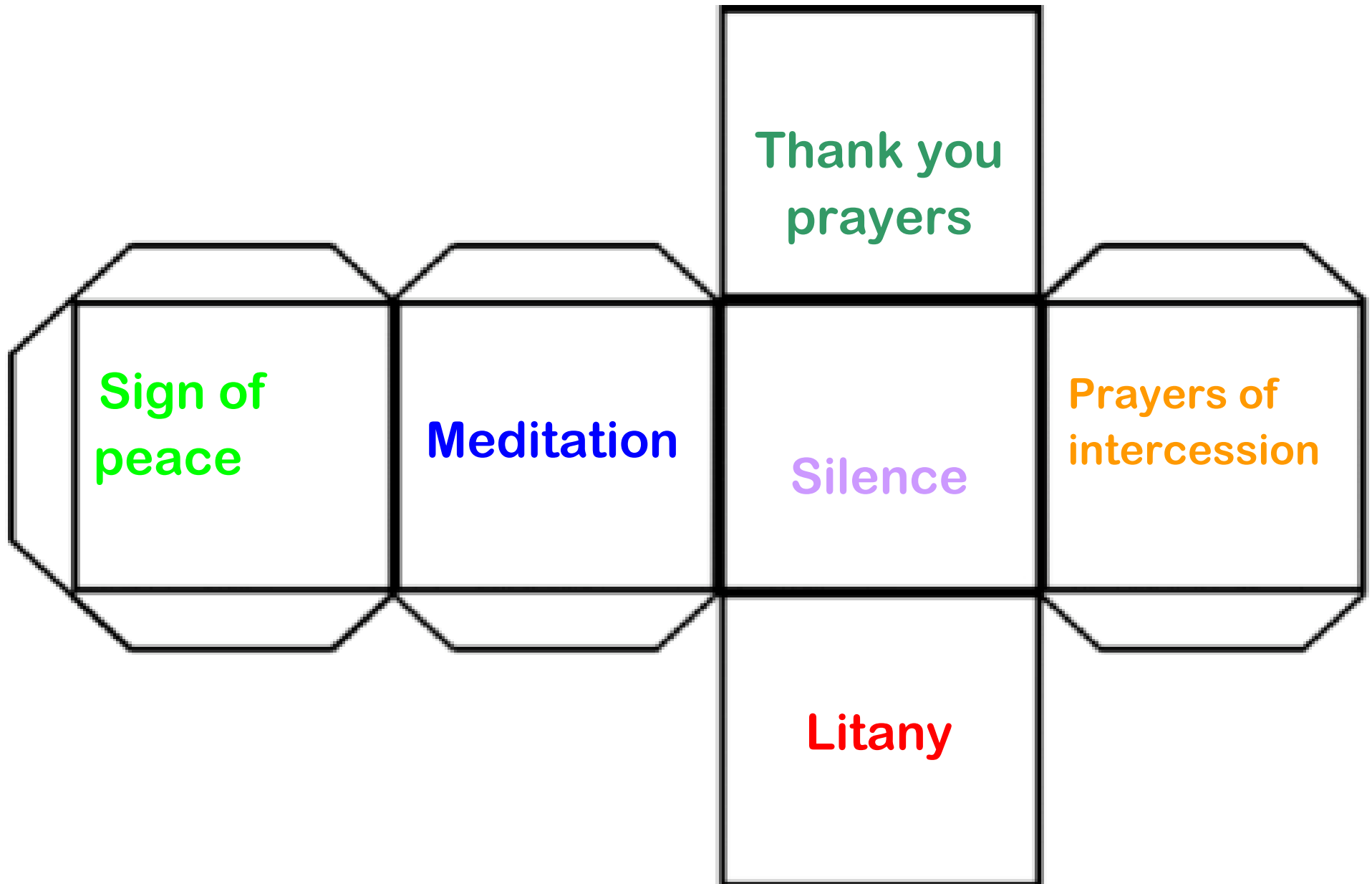
How to use a prayer Dice

1. Gather students and light candle
2. Roll the dice
3. Pray the prayer that is face up. This may involve the students praying a known prayer together or may be a time for individual students to compose their own prayer using a prayer starter or known prayer form.



Creator Mundi





**Sign of
peace**

Meditation

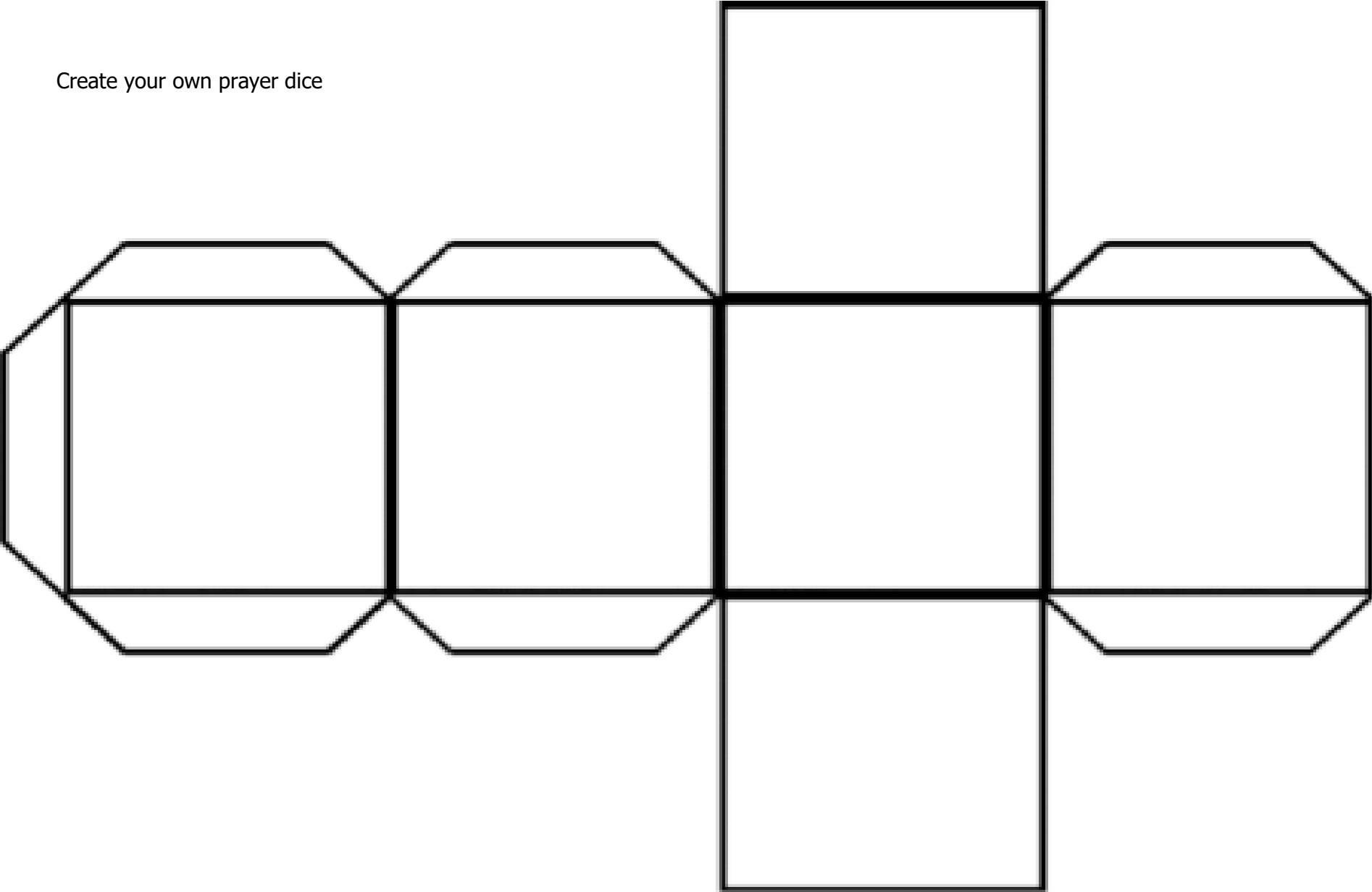
Silence

**Prayers of
intercession**

**Thank you
prayers**

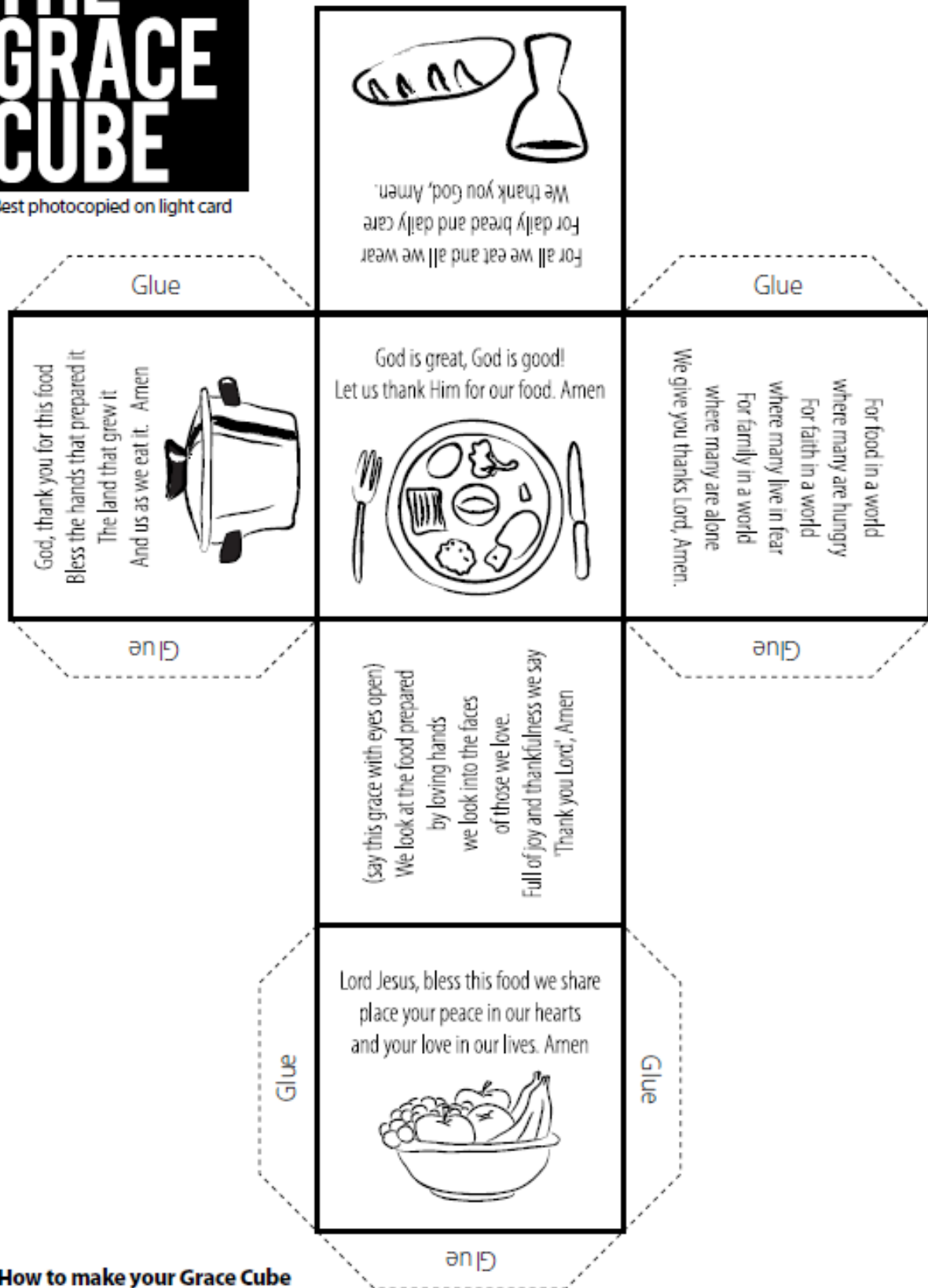
Litany

Create your own prayer dice



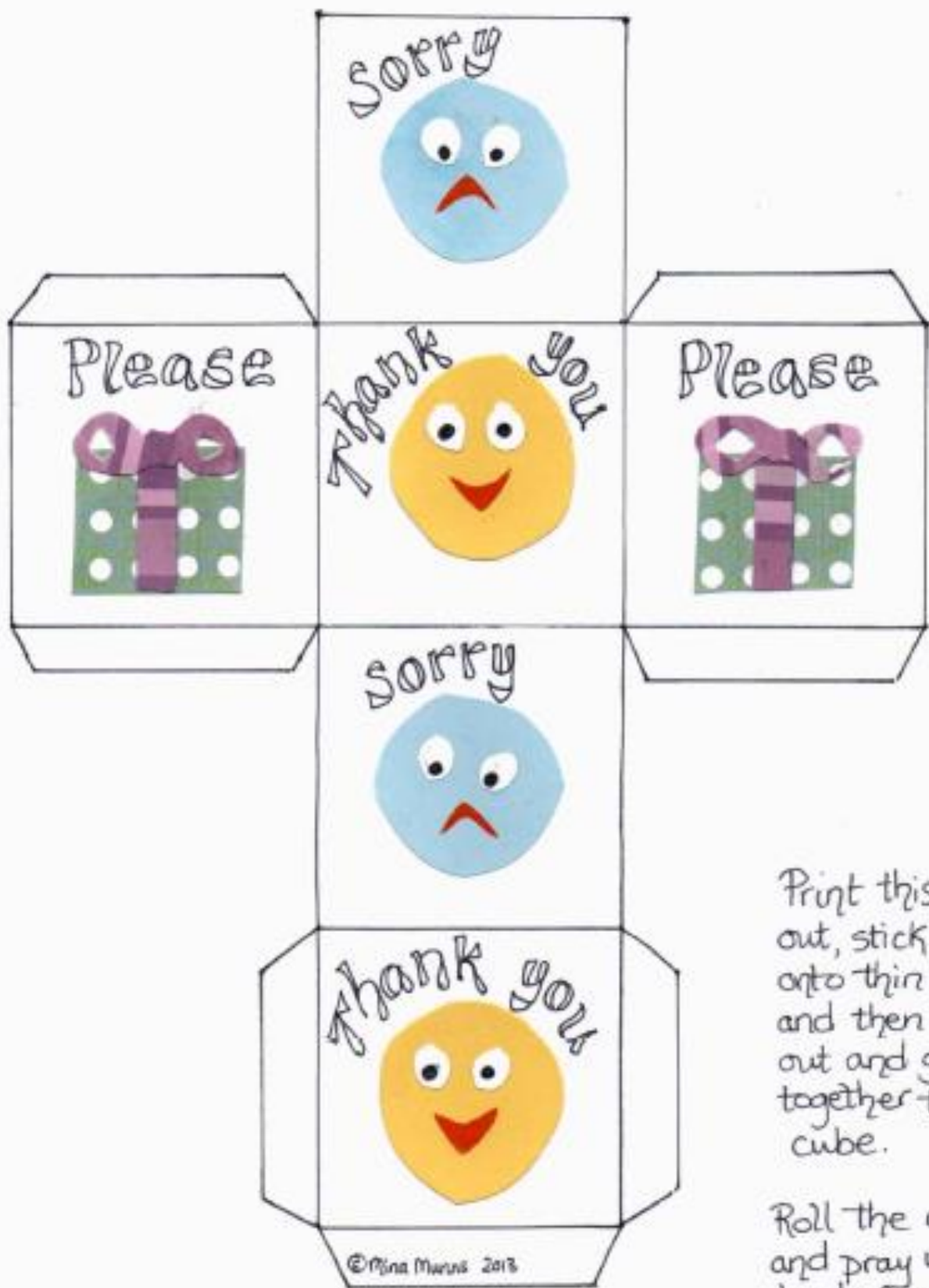
THE GRACE CUBE

Best photocopied on light card



How to make your Grace Cube

1. Cut around the outside lines
2. Fold along the lines to make a cube shape
3. Fold the Glue flaps then glue them inside the cube
4. Once dry, take it in turns around the family to toss the cube and say the grace that comes out on top



Print this out, stick it onto thin card and then cut out and glue together the cube.

Roll the cube and pray whatever lands face up!

Prayer cube

Teaching Students to pray through silence

Provide students with a focus for their prayer time. This may often lead students into meditation, but if they stay focused they can enter into the phase of contemplation. Ensure that students are in a suitable place and posture for prayer and explain to them that this is a time of prayer through silence, which means they must take care not to distract anyone else. Try following the following activities to provide a focus for prayer time:



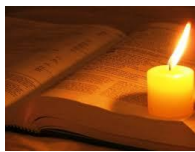
- Light a candle and place it in the centre of the room. Invite the students to focus on the flame as being the light of Christ shining in our world today.



- Place some leaves, or something else from our natural environment, in the centre of the room or on a prayer table. Ask the students to reflect on the leaves and the uniqueness of each part of creation that God has given us.



- Place a crucifix on a prayer table or in the centre of the room. Invite the students to reflect on this symbol and what it means to all Christian people.



- Place a Bible in a prominent position in the room. Ask the students to reflect on the significance of this symbol for all Christians.



- Place a school symbol in the centre of the room or in a prominent position. Invite the students to reflect on what the symbol means to them and the person that god is calling them to be in this particular place.



- Place some birthday cards in the centre of the room or on a prayer table. Ask the students to reflect on the day they were born and on qualities they have that are unique.

The list of possibilities is endless.

It is important to provide students with strategies to use silence for prayer.

When asking them to focus on a particular object or symbol, encourage them to reflect on the object first and allow that reflection to lead them into prayer.

Ensure that all students know that they do not have to use any words for prayer.

For example, through reflecting on birthday cards they may begin think about the day they were born and the family into which they were born. They may begin to think about the qualities they have inherited from their parents, or the gifts with which they have been blessed. This can lead them to spending time being aware of God's presence in their lives even from the time before they were born, to recognising that god's presence is still with them today.

- Invite the students to close their eyes and to imagine that God's love is like an invisible blanket that covers their whole body. Encourage them to feel the warmth of God's love and to spend time soaking up this love and drawing it into their whole being.
- Take the students outside on a warm day. Find a quiet spot to sit in the sun for five minutes. Ask them to close their eyes and feel the warmth of the sun, imagining that the sun is God's love for them shining into them and entering into a place deep within them.
- Ask the students to close their eyes and imagine they are immersed in a cloud that is invisible to everyone else: 'Imagine the cloud all around you... breathe it in... imagine it is God's presence with you, protecting you, loving you and guiding you.' Allow silent time.

Meditation



Meditation involves listening to the heart and getting in touch with one's inner self. Meditation engages one's imagination and emotions. It can take place in a variety of ways through imaginative prayer and the use of stories, poetry, scripture and art.

What happens in meditative prayer is beyond one's control if the person praying is willing to enter fully into the process. Imagination is a powerful tool that can enable things to be seen from a totally different perspective, or can create new awareness of life.

Prayer through meditation can be a powerful experience but it can also be frustrating. Sometimes it is easy to enter into prayer through imagination, but at other times it is hard to imagine anything. Our ability to engage in meditative prayer can be affected by many different factors such as the time of day, how we are feeling both physically and emotionally, and events occurring in our lives. Perhaps the only guarantee one can give with prayer through meditation is that we never know what will take place within us until we reach the end of prayer time.

How to cope with interruptions during meditation is an issue that requires serious consideration. What will you do if someone knocks on the door just when you have begun to lead students into the world of imagination? Talk with students about what could be appropriate action if this happens, or the strategies that could be implemented to prevent disruptions.

There are certain steps involved in leading people through a meditation exercise. Put into a basic framework these steps are:

- 1. Relaxation** – entering into the activity – introductory phase
- 2. Meditation**
- 3. Prayer**
- 4. Withdrawing from the meditation** – finishing the activity and returning to the present moment.

Mandalas



A mandala is a tool for prayer. It is usually characterised by a circular shape with a centre point, filled with many different colours. The circular shape symbolises all things being encompassed by God ; the centre point symbolises that God is in the centre of our lives.

No mandala is ever the same as another. Combined, mandalas make a great display and students really value them. Prayer is an inner journey and often there is nothing concrete from our prayer time to show others. By completing mandalas students can gain a great sense of achievement; they have something to show others that is their own unique piece of work. If mandalas are used correctly, they have the potential to make prayer a highly meaningful and enjoyable experience for both students and adults.

Using mandalas with students

There are two different ways of using mandalas for prayer. The first is to fill the mandala using colours that symbolise how you are feeling at a particular time. For example, a student who is feeling really angry about something may fill a large part of the mandala in red. When the mandala is completed students can then talk about what each colour represents to them and reflect on the fact that God is with them through all their feelings.

The second is to complete a mandala using any colours that appeal to you so that you fill in the mandala without thinking too much about what you are doing. At the end of the time you can then look at the mandala and ask, 'What does this mandala reveal about me?'

Explain the concept of a mandala to students. Show examples of mandalas. Provide each student with an outline of a circle and ask them to fill in the mandala with colours that represent how they are feeling at the moment. Explain that the mandala needs a centre point, but other than that it is up to each student to fill their mandala with colours and shapes that represent how they are feeling. Encourage the students not to leave any white spaces in their mandala unless the white represents something to them. Ask them to complete their mandalas in silence, and to respect the fact that each mandala will tell each person's story when it is finished. When they have completed the task ask them to share the story of their mandala in small groups.

You can use whatever colours you like to make your design. The colours may be special for you:

They may be “your” colours

They may be colours to represent various moods you experience

They may be special “holy” or “spiritual” colours

They may represent the state of your feelings/faith/emotions at this time.

The pattern/s you create may also represent your personality, your feelings, your dreams, your beliefs, your search for meaning in life.

Above all, what you do with your mandala is personal and might just be a chance to slow down; to be quiet; to have some time for yourself; to be creative- with some help-; or just to remember the joys of colouring in.

For that reason, the mandalas are completed in a quiet, reflective time. Quiet music is played. We do not interrupt others and we do not share what we are doing.

We never rush colouring in our mandala: there is no competition to finish first: we are meant to do it slowly and mindfully.

Before we begin, let’s centre ourselves with centred breathing and relaxing our bodies. Then we will be ready to begin.

After the session is over:

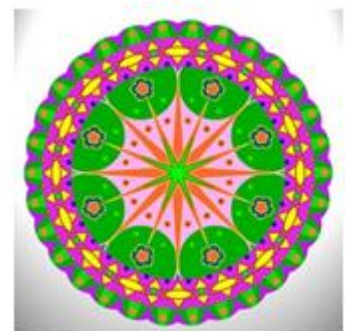
Sit with your completed mandala. Look at what you have created and recall the things you thought about while competing it. Run a finger over it if you wish.

Are there any actions you must take as a result of your reflections?

Are there any decisions you need to take?

Are you ready now to go on with other things, quiet, relaxed, refreshed?

What is one sentence you would use to describe your experience of creating the mandala?



Using mandalas for prayer

When students have completed their mandalas, invite them to try one of the following activities:



Contemplative prayer

Ask students to spend some time in silence reflecting on their mandala.

Encourage students to think about how God is present with us in everything, in every moment, even though we often forget.



Prayer writing

Ask students to choose a name for God that seems appropriate for them at this point in their lives. Invite students to write their own prayer, beginning with this name for God. When the prayer is completed, each person can cut out the mandala and write the prayer underneath.



Mantra

Encourage students to create their own mantra that reflects their mandala. This may be a quote from scripture or a short personal prayer, for example,

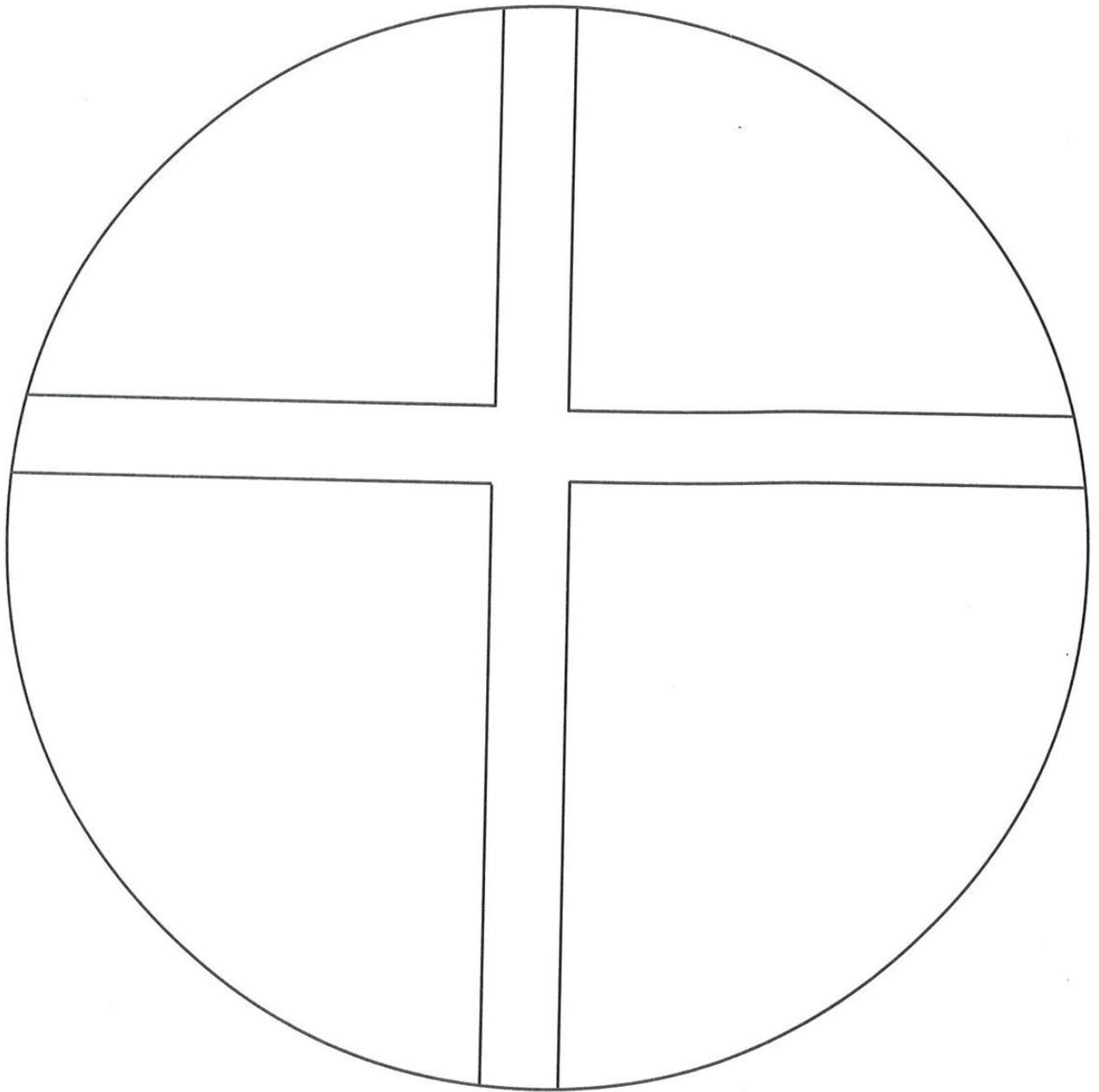
God you are always with me

Students should write the mantra under the mandala and have some quiet time to pray the mantra in silence.



Scripture

Invite students to read Psalm 136 several times and then rewrite it in their own words.



Labyrinths

Labyrinths are an ancient, symbolic form which go back to ancient Egypt. Many religions, including Christianity, have taken them into their spiritual and prayer lives. There are labyrinths in some of the great Cathedrals of Europe, the earliest dating from the 11th century at Chartres.

A labyrinth is a guided symbolic, meditative "journey" into the "centre" of ourselves. Labyrinths can be "walked", or the journey can be traced with a finger or coloured pen, or traced in sand. It can even be travelled mentally, with no body movement.

Labyrinths are complex, geometric designs which are one long path which always leads one to the centre and always leads one back out to the beginning. They are not like a maze, which intends to trick and confuse and get us lost. There is no wrong way in a labyrinth, no going back!

Labyrinths consist of a complex pathway which leads us on a meandering journey, causing us to stop the daily routine and to slow down and walk unfamiliar ways and changing directions so that we can think about who we really are and what life is about.

In "life size" labyrinths, there are often "stations" placed along the way to guide us to think about life and ourselves and our search for meaning in life. They are something nice to "stroll" in- like a well laid out garden.

We can trust labyrinths: they are there to guide us to the centre, not to get us lost. And when we get to the centre, we stop and ponder the great mysteries of the universe: it is a still point in our turning world. It is a quiet moment when all the complex paths of life are "out there" and we have "time out" to rest awhile. Then we re-enter the fray and make our way out again!

We never rush labyrinths: there is no hurry: they are meant to be walked slowly and meditatively.



Before we begin, let's centre ourselves with centred breathing and relaxing our bodies. Then we will be ready to begin.

After going through our labyrinth and returning to the start (with our finger and then a coloured text), we stop and reflect on the experience.

How calming an experience was it? Would you like to actually walk a large labyrinth? Could you imagine the stillness of being stopped at the centre, surrounded by the long and winding path?

Praying with Prayer Stones

Creating Prayer Stones

Students might collect smooth stones or they can be easily purchased. Choose ones that are light in colour and use an oil based marking pen to write a word or short phrase on each stone e.g peace.

The prayer stones might be stored in a decorative box or an organza bag.

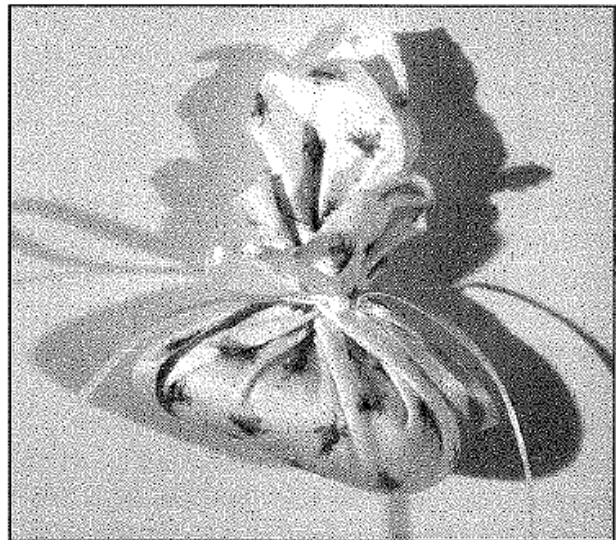
Using Prayer Stones

- Each student could make a prayer stone to place on their individual prayer mat. They could hold this prayer stone as they meditate.
- Students could take turns in selecting a prayer stone from the box at random. They hold the stone in the palm of their hand and sit in silence for a short period seeking God's help in developing the virtue written on the stone. Some students find it helpful if the teacher announces at the beginning the length of the period of silence (e.g. 2 minutes) and then rings a small bell every 30 seconds during the time.

Prayer Rock PRI

This little prayer rock is a great reminder to pray. Have the children make them to take home and share.

I'm a little prayer rock,
And this is what I'll do:
Put me on your pillow,
Until the day is through.
Then turn back the covers,
And climb into bed;
Whack! Your little prayer rock,
Will hit you in the head!
You will then remember
To fold your hands in prayer.
Ask that God will bless you,
And keep you in God's care.
(Author unknown)



- ❑ **You will need:**
 - 8" squares of cloth
 - 1" x 2" rocks found on a nature walk
 - Ribbon
 - Copies of the prayer rock poem printed on card stock

- ❑ **To do:**

Take the children on a rock hunt. Tell them that that they are looking for a very special rock about 1"-2" wide. After everyone finds his rock have the children wrap their rock in a piece of fabric. Gather the edges and tie with a ribbon. Attach the prayer rock poem. Be sure to read the poem together a couple of times and discuss the importance of daily prayer.

Prayer

Walks/Pilgrimages

Take a walk around your school and/or church grounds with the kids. Stop every 50 steps and invite the children to look around for:

- something to praise God for creating;
- someone who has a need, and;
- something that reminds them of a blessing God has given them.

Allow 30 seconds for children to look around and 30 seconds to pray silently before resuming your walk. When you return to your meeting area, discuss the most surprising thing that each child found to pray about as they walked during the kids prayer walk.

OR

Think about special places within the school / parish grounds that could be sacred places for a prayer pilgrimage.

Some possibilities might include the foyer of the school, beside the school motto or Vision and Mission Statement; a place in the school grounds, the school Chapel or the parish Church.

For each place along your pilgrimage path decide on a particular prayer focus such as:

1. Start in school Chapel – pray for hope for the world. (Hope)
2. Near school Motto on wall – pray for love in our hearts. (Love)
3. Quiet place in the school grounds – pray for peace. (Peace)
4. Corner of the library – pray for the gift of wisdom (Wisdom)
5. In the playground – pray for forgiveness in our world and in our own hearts. (Forgiveness)

Teach students how to pray a mantra prayer. Examples of words for mantras are listed above e.g. Hope. Love. Peace. Wisdom. Forgiveness Then ask students to say the mantra as they walk

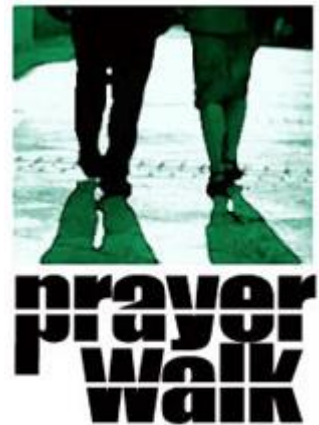
Ask students to focus their breathing and to imagine breathing God's love into the world with every breath.

Mediation beads could be a useful tool for keeping students on track with the reciting of the mantra.

MY PRAYER WALK

Place of prayer	Prayer focus/prayer

Notes:



DIFFERENT WAYS TO PRAY WITH JUNIORS!



Into a large gold gift bag we have put:
Smiley and sad faces on paper plates, duplo bricks, playdough pots, bubbles, balloons, prayer grab bag, birthday cake candles, and a children's Bible. Most of these things were found at the Red Dot shop, so putting it together was not expensive!

Inside the bag will also be instructions on how to use each item to pray with children.

Prayer Grab Bag

Shake the tin, close your eyes and pull a card out.

Homes- say thank you for your house

School- ask God to bless a teacher or thank Him for your favourite thing at school

Friends- thank God for a friend

Thank You- Say thank you for something of your choice!

Family- ask God to bless someone in your family

Food- thank God for your Favourite food

Healing- ask God to make someone better

I'm sorry- say sorry to God for something you wish you hadn't done

Lego Thank You Tower

Build a lego tower. Each person who adds a block has to say thank you for something God has given them.

Bubble prayers

Blow some bubbles. Say thank you to God for something or ask him to help someone. Pop a bubble for each thing you pray. Or

If you feel worried about something, tell God about it and watch the bubbles float away or pop them to show that you have given that worry to God.

Playdough prayers

Shape the playdough into something you'd like to thank God for- especially something in creation.

Happy and sad faces.

Use the sad face to tell God about the things that make you sad. Ask him to help you.

Use the happy face to tell God about the things that make you happy. Say Thank you to Him

Balloon prayers.

Blow up 3 balloons and write or draw on them things you want to say Thank You to God for. Play some music and bat the balloons around. When the music stops say 'thank you God!'. Start again!

Candle Prayers.

Stick the birthday candles into something firm such as an orange. Light the candles. Give a blow. Count how many candles are still burning. Thank God for that many things! Or

Light a candle for each person in your family. Say their names and ask God to bless them. Blow out the candles!

Adapted from <http://flamecreativekids.blogspot.com.au/2012/02/pray-at-home-bag-for-under-5s.html>

USEFUL PRAYER WEBSITES

www.margdteachingposters.weebly.com/gallery-prayers.html – for prayer posters for different occasions and needs to display in the classroom.

<http://margdteachingposters.weebly.com/prayer-centres.html> – for ideas for prayer focus tables.