

Prayer Spaces in Schools

Learning from a prayer space

KS2 – Lesson 1 of 4

What is prayer?

Learning opportunities for 7-11s on themes about prayer and reflection.

Prayer Spaces in Schools create extraordinary opportunities for children and young people to think about prayer and to consider spirituality in open-minded experiential ways.

This lesson is one of a series written by Lat Blaylock of RE Today and provided free to schools to enable learners to use critical and reflective thinking skills to learn about spirituality, prayer and reflection.



Since 2010 [Prayer Spaces in Schools](#) has been helping people to create space in schools where pupils can pause to reflect or pray.

A prayer space provides a safe place for children to be still, to think and feel, to ask questions, to reflect and to explore prayer for themselves using simple activities that are creative and interactive. Every prayer space is rooted in a Christian understanding of prayer whilst being accessible to people of any faith or belief.

These spaces make a valuable contribution to the wellbeing of pupils, and to the pastoral and spiritual life of whole school communities.

Prayer Spaces in Schools GB is an initiative of 24-7 Prayer, an international movement that helps people to pray.



[RE Today Services](#) supports teachers, schools and others involved in Religious Education by equipping and empowering them to teach about religious and non-religious worldviews with confidence. They offer training courses, professional development, consultancy and a wide range of resources to teachers in thousands of schools of every kind.



We are grateful to the [Westhill Endowment](#) for their generous support which has enabled us to create these resources and to make them available for free.

KS2 Lesson 1 of 4

What is prayer?

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Purpose

This lesson plan is written for use before pupils have experienced a Prayer Space.

There are three lesson plans that can be used following a Prayer Space to help pupils draw out further learning from their experience.

Learning objectives

- To prepare learners for a subsequent lesson where they will be engaging with a Prayer Space
 - To consider the experience of prayer as viewed through the art and writing of others
 - To create an open opportunity for learners to reflect on their own views and beliefs about prayer
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Learning outcomes

By the end of this lesson learners will:

- Be better able to articulate their own views about prayer
 - Have an appreciation for, and be able to critique with integrity, the views about prayer as expressed by others
 - Be prepared to participate in a Prayer Space with understanding about what it offers and their own agency in learning from it
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You will need...

- The accompanying presentation.
 - **Slide 9** – Pupil quotes are on the presentation. A printable version of these quotes is included with this resource pack.
 - You may wish to give pupils large sheets of paper and pens to be able to record any group discussions.
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Slide notes

Most slides have presenter notes offering supporting information.

Slide 1 – Aims

Aims of these lessons:

- To provide excellent and respected classroom resources for teachers of RVE / RME / RE to use in lessons when a Prayer Spaces visit is coming, taking place or has happened,
- To enable teachers and Prayer Spaces volunteers to deliver quality RVE / RME / RE about prayer which connects to the experiences of the Prayer Spaces provision.
- To enable pupils to think for themselves about prayer and its meanings, and access opportunities for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

Slide 2 – The learning package

This lesson is part of a larger ‘Prayer Spaces in Schools’ learning package and can be used by teachers and school visitors, especially if they are involved in supporting the school by running a Prayer Space or reflection space.

The lessons:

- Can be taught - with preparation - ‘off the shelf’ using the 4 presentation sequences provided
- Will be understood better by teachers and school visitors if you watch our training recorded webinars from Lat Blaylock of RE today
- Include examples of pupils’ work, art, writing and responses
- Are suitable for use across the UK, recognising what is distinctive about RME / RVE / RE in each of the four nations
- Reference law, guidance and inspection requirements for RE / SMSCD / School Worship
- Use some Prayer Spaces in Schools case studies

Slide 3 – Lesson overview

This slide introduces the ‘big topic’ of exploring prayer.

Slide 4 – What is prayer?

Class activity – Start with the two big questions. You could use big sheets of paper on tables for pupils to write or draw their ideas.

What is prayer?

What’s your biggest question about prayer? We won’t be answering this, but it helps to stimulate the thinking process about prayer right at the start of the lesson.

Tip – Keep this fast moving - push the pace along if your class will take it.

Slide 5 – Thinking about praying

This begins to open up the idea that people pray in many ways and in many different places.

You might say something like this:

Some people have a narrow idea about prayer: “It happens in a holy building, with your eyes shut...”

But praying is also seen by millions as much broader. People can pray in a dance or a song. On a mountain or by a river. In huge crowds, or alone. Full of hope, or in despair. In your own words, or from ancient words written by others.

Class activity – Maybe invite learners to think about the place where they feel most at peace, whether that’s at home or a moment they remember when they’ve been somewhere else.

Slide 6 – Thinking about praying

Here we take a wider view and reference research about prayer. This contribution to classroom RE / RVE / RME recognises the value of rich knowledge about prayer for pupils, and also encourages the deployment of that knowledge as pupils handle big questions and issues thoughtfully. This contributes to providing opportunities through the learning for spiritual development.

Slide 7 – Statements about prayer by learners

The statements on this slide are available as A6 printouts.

One aspect of these lessons (which can also be used as assembly outlines with simple adaptation) is that they give pupils frequent opportunities to clarify and express their own views and ideas about prayer.

Class activity – Read the statements from the slide, or distribute them as printed cards for pupils to read and discuss in groups. Which statements do they agree with, which do they disagree with?

Pupils write their own opinion about praying. You may want to set your own word limit as a challenge to efficient writing or to take into account the ability of the class.

We welcome the contested nature of this conversation. From different religions and worldviews there are many varied perspectives from which to learn.

Look at thousands of searchable answers to this question here:

<https://old.natre.org.uk/db/profile2a.php>

Slide 8 – Prayer art

Class activity – Pupils will see four pieces of artwork.

Read the artists comments to the class.

As they look at the pictures ask them to give each one a mark out of ten for the art, and for the writing.

We work from the view that there is a close frontier between spiritual learning and creativity: the experience of using a prayer space often feels highly creative, and prompts creativity for pupils.

For each of the pieces of art invite pupils to give a score out of ten for the art, and for the writing. Then discuss their views.

What is prayer? Invite pupils to discuss this in small or table groups. Then ask for their ideas in plenary feedback.

Slides 9 to 12 – Pupils' artwork

Pupil's artwork and writing that expresses their belief about prayer.

Slide 13

Class activity – Which of these four did you like best? Why?

Which ideas do you agree with about prayer, and which do you disagree with?

If you made an artwork to show your ideas about prayer, what would you picture?

Slide 14 – Inclusive

These spaces use activities which engage with happiness and sorrow, success and failure, strength and weakness, faith and doubt. The activities are often and by turns responsive, provocative, creative, imaginative, focused on the human spirit. They make space for the spiritual.

No two prayer spaces are the same, and each individual's experience of the Space will be unique. These Spaces are never coercive – we don't think there is any such thing as 'forced prayer'. Instead, the Prayer Spaces open up new horizons of imagination, possibility and faith.

A Prayer Space is a place to explore and express spiritual experience, ideas and values.

Every person entering a Prayer Space is welcomed for who they are. Whether they would describe themselves as having a strong faith, no faith, or are still thinking about what they believe, a Prayer Space allows them to engage with integrity and to make their own meaning from the activities.

The Prayer Space reflects a Christian understanding of prayer yet in a way that is intentionally inclusive and that invites responses from any or no faith perspective.

As you click through the 5 images you might say something like this:

Prayer Spaces engage with many spiritual values. Think of peace, joy, forgiveness or resilience. Prayer Spaces give you spiritual space to respond for yourself.

Prayer Spaces are designed by Christian educators so that anyone can join in, whether they have a faith, no faith or are just curious. These are free, welcoming, safe spaces.

A person who is Muslim or Christian, Agnostic or Atheist can use a Prayer Space from their own position with integrity.

Slides 15 to 18 – What is a prayer space

Class activity – Pupils will see four slides with photos from prayer spaces in other schools.

As they look at the pictures ask them to come up with one word that sums up what they think people will experience in the space.

Plenary – invite pupils to share their word out loud.

You may prefer to delete the text from slides 15 to 18 and use it to explain how a prayer space works, saying something like this:

Slide 15: We will make an area of your school look a bit different by turning it into what we call a 'Prayer Space'. It might be in your hall, a classroom or even outside.

Slide 16: If it's inside, the space might not be as bright as usual and will feel peaceful, with coloured lights and calm music. You might see tables, tents, teepees, mats, cushions and chairs. When you arrive we will start by gathering together to chat about what we will be doing.

Slide 17: You don't have to be religious to like this. It's a chance to think really deeply or to feel really fully. You can ponder some big issues and questions, or find calm, or peace. Lots more too.

Slide 18: It's about you, your relationships, our earth and ideas about God or the 'Big Beyond'.

Prayer Spaces are hugely varied. They use a broad understanding of prayer.

Activities in a Prayer Space in School may enable pupils to reflect deeply or profoundly on:

- **themselves**
- their relationships with **others**
- their place on the **earth**
- and their connection with '**the big beyond**' – God, as many say.

Slide 19 – What is a prayer activity

This is an example of a prayer space activity. (Make it clear that this specific activity may, or may not, be in the Prayer Space the pupils experience following this lesson.)

The process for engaging with each prayer activity follows a standard pattern

Consider – engaging learners in the theme of the activity; in this case worries.

Reflect – encouraging personal reflection on the theme. In this case, '...write or draw the thing that's causing you to worry or feel stressed. How would it feel to let go of this worry?'

Respond – depending on the prayer activity this can be write/draw, perform an action or to engage in a moment of contemplation. For the worries activity the response is to shred the paper that has your worry written on it.

Slide 20 – Broad views

Prayer is a controversial topic, and in writing these lessons we are pleased to present some activities that ask pupils to use their critical thinking skills.

Ideas and materials from different religions and from atheist and agnostic perspectives enrich the learning, which has mind-opening intentions.

Class activity – you might like to give pupils time in groups to discuss any questions they may have about the prayer space and then to allow some Q&A time.

Slides 21 & 22 – How the Bible informs an understanding of Christian prayer

You might like to say something like this:

Christians learn about prayer from what Jesus said, and from what the Bible teaches them. Here are two quotes from the Bible. What do you think?

Class activity – Read the quote out (or ask a learner to do this). Then ask small groups to discuss:

Why do you think Jesus told his followers to do this?

How might people follow this teaching today?

These lessons enable pupils to learn a lot specifically about Christian prayer, and use Biblical quotations, examples and texts to enrich pupils' understanding.

Slide 23 to 26 – Who prays and when?

Class activity – pupils use their own imagination to speculate about what the child in the photo might be praying. There are 4 to choose from and it will probably be enough to use just one and to explore the ideas generated.

This activity is useful but be selective - be aware of children in the class for whom any of these scenarios may be troubling.

The aim is to invite pupils to write prayers 'as if' from the child's POV, engaging imagination so believers in prayer or non-believers can have a go – there are no correct answers.

Slide 27 – When you visit the Prayer Space in your school...

This slide tries to offer pupils a reassuring description of the ways the Prayer Space might work for them.

If the slide looks too words heavy for your class you might prefer not to show it but to explain each of these points briefly.

Teachers will do well to familiarise themselves with the particular activities and ideas in the Prayer Space at their school and refer to them with pupils.

The website has hundreds of examples of prayer activities and stories from many kinds of school, but each Prayer Space is unique.

Slide 28

This lesson will set up some pupils for their experience of a Prayer Space.

It also enables them to think critically about their own big ideas about prayer – and God.