

# Prayer Spaces in Schools

## Learning from a prayer space

### KS3 – 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.

## KS3 Lesson 1 of 4

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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.

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#### 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.

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### **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.

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### **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
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### **Slide 3 – for classroom use, start here.**

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

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### **Slide 4 – 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.**

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### **Slide 5 – 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.

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### **Slides 6 to 8 – Expressing your own viewpoints**

One aspect of these lessons is that they give students frequent opportunities to clarify and express their own views and ideas about prayer.

**Class activity – Read the first three statements shown on the slide.**

**Invite responses to the question shown, ‘What do you disagree with in the first three quotes you have read?’ Maybe make sure students know they will be able to express a wider range of responses at the next stage.**

Click to reveal the next three quotes.

**Give time to read the next three quotes. Invite responses and discussion about the six quotes shown. Agreement? Disagreement? Maybe questions.**

**Ask – If you were writing another statement about prayer to go with these, what would you write for yourself, from your own viewpoint?**

**You may wish to give students a few minutes to write their own statement.**

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>

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## Slide 9 – Prayer art

**Class activity – Pupils will see four pieces of artwork.**

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

**Plenary discussion – Which one do they think is the best.**

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.**

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## Slides 10 to 15 – Pupils' artwork

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

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## Slide 15 – The face of prayer

**Class activity – You may wish to use this additional writing from these 15 year olds as an opportunity for further reflection on their perspective. We suggest you read it out to the class while they look at the picture on screen.**

Additional text from the pupils who made this:

**“We came up with the words when as a group we spoke about what we thought of when we thought about prayer and what prayer might mean to us, we also thought about whether we have ever had to pray or anyone we know that has and what they prayed for. We also included actions to make changes in our lives. The 3D face has also got words on but these are examples of prayer songs and poems. Our person is praying in the most common method of prayer with both palms touching and their fingertips pointing upward towards the sky. We used a head to show how we feel we communicate via our thoughts and words. As in the quotation the words are flowing out of the person into the air around them. The eyes cannot be seen indicating that prayer can occur at any time. This is reflected in the quotation.**

**“We choose the colour gold for the lettering in our title because gold shows a sign of value and trust in God through prayer, gold is also a very auspicious colour in many religions. We chose a mixture of blues and purples for our backgrounds as they are calming colours and when you pray it is soothing and calming as it is just you communicating directly to God.”**

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## Slide 15 – CS Lewis

The CS Lewis quote is an important idea for pupils to explore in this lesson.

Prayer should make a difference to us and to our lives.

C. S. Lewis said: "I pray because I can't help myself. I pray because I'm helpless. I pray because the need flows out of me all the time, waking and sleeping. It doesn't change God, it changes me."

C. S. Lewis, the creator of Narnia

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## **Slide 16**

**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?**

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## **Slide 17 – What does the Bible offer to help us understand Christian prayer?**

This slide presents statements and questions progressively as you click through. You may wish to take each section in turn to give the class time to reflect and offer their own response to the questions.

**What do you know about prayer in the teaching of the bible?**

**Can you collect five facts round the class? Ten facts?**

**What do students think about Jesus instruction to his followers in Matthew's gospel?**

**What do students think Saint Paul's instructions about prayer means?**

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## **Slides 18 to 19 – What is a prayer space?**

**Class activity – Pupils will see two 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.**

**As you show these two slides you might like to say something like this:**

**Do you think prayer is just 'hands together, eyes closed'?**

**Do you think some people can pray with music, silence or dance or must praying use words?**

**What do you need to pray properly? Could you do that alone? Do you need a holy building? Is prayer in the open air easier?**

**In a Prayer Space, you might find you can use colour or stillness, body language or post it notes, big ideas or big questions to explore prayer. See how it works for you.**

**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.**

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## **Slide 20 – 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 ‘Thankful’ activity the response is to write onto a post it note and add it to the thankful notes of others.

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## **Slide 21 – 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.**

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## **Slide 22 – When you visit the Prayer Space in your school**

This slide represents some of the key values of a Prayer Space, especially the inclusive nature of these spaces where people of any or no faith can engage with integrity.

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

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.