

Elders and pastoral care

A prayer for the vestry

Amazing God who is within and beyond all things; who is transcendent but is also immanent; how can we make an exclusive claim on you? How can we possess you and not let you reach others in different forms at different times?

Therefore, may our worship recognise your presence with all people. May your Spirit rule the words and thoughts of all who gather here today.

David Jonathan, North India

A simple prayer

Creator God, Father and Mother!

Who are these people you have created who look so different?

Who refuse to integrate and accept but readily agree to segregate and reject?

If they are your creation, why are they so threatening?

Is my fear a mere prejudice or a natural reaction to reality?

But what is reality?

The one they say in the news or the one they deny in Council.

As I gather courage to adore you,

In all your creation of fellow beings ...

In the Churches

In the Temples

In the Mosques

In the Synagogues

In the Street

In the Pubs

I lay beside you all my ambiguity, apprehension, suspicion and fear.

All **Amen.**

David Jonathan, North India

Just an ordinary day

Today is just an ordinary day, Lord,
nothing special is happening,
nothing startling has happened during the week,
and nothing unusual is planned for next week.
Today is just an ordinary day.

But today is Sunday,
and the congregation has come to worship you, Lord –
please help!

Pause

Thank you that you are the same yesterday, today and forever.
Thank you that you are the same now
as when you called (*name*) to preach your Word.
Please remind *them* of that call now.

Pause

Help (*name*) to share the enthusiasm and wonder of that moment
with all who come to worship you today.
And may the worship we offer you be special –
even on this ordinary day.

All **Amen.**

Ruth Sermon

In the following two prayers by Wendy White 'we' and 'us' can be substituted,
where appropriate, for 'I'

Pour out your Spirit

I want to do something
Reach out and make it alright
Calm, reassure, listen, solve
all the problems I hear.

I am very capable
Trained to deal with anything
Find nice sensible solutions
Keep everybody happy.

I return to the illusion
That I can do everything
If only I try hard enough
and pay attention.

I fall at your feet – again,
Broken, frustrated, humble
Knowing that I don't know
Empty, helpless.

You – hold out Your arms – again,
Pick me up, hold me,
Pour out Your Spirit
Creator, healer.

Wendy White

Because I am frightened

Because I am frightened you will not come again,
Because I am frightened that you will,
Because I know and don't know
and in knowledge lose all understanding

All **Lord have mercy.**

Because I am frightened that this is illusion,
Because I am frightened when I know it is real,
Because I both trust and doubt you
and am wary of loving this much

All **Lord have mercy.**

Because You have come this far for me,
Because I still run from you,
Because I turn, trembling, at
Your love aching to believe

All **Lord have mercy.**

Wendy White

Prayers when we feel distant from God

Creator of light and darkness

All **you hold us.**

When we wander in dark places

you speak to us.

When we can find no words to speak to you

All **you do not forget us.**

When life seems too bleak for hope

All **you give us strength to continue.**

When we do not hear you, when we cannot speak to you and we feel most alone

All **you touch us in the darkness, offering to travel with us.**

Elizabeth Kemp

Care of aliens

(The prayer of an Elder with responsibility for children and young people)

What aliens are these?

Loud, confident, brash

Interfacing with computers

All seeing and all knowing.

What aliens are these?

Dressed in bizarre clothing

Listening to strange rhythms

And a language all of their own.

What aliens are these?
How can I communicate with them?
How can I get to know them?
Why should they listen to me?

What aliens are these?
The babies you bless
The little children you love
The young people questioning and testing you

What aliens are these?
I was one, too
I will remember what it was like
And be as a child to stand alongside those you love.

Melanie Frew

A prayer for young people in vulnerable situations

Father of all,

We thank you that when we were still far off
You saw us and were filled with compassion.
In Christ Jesus your Son,
A new humanity was clothed with your love.

We pray for all young people on this estate
(or similar words to fit with local communities)
Even if their father and mother forsake them,
may they know that they are loved by you.
Give them strength to turn away
from things that are harmful
and courage to start again in a new way of life.

Grant us perseverance to walk with them,
discernment in maintaining boundaries,
wisdom to resist manipulation.
Grant us the humility to know
that on our own we can do nothing
and faith
to trust always in you.

Renew your broken people in the power of your Holy Spirit.
So the dead come to life, the lost are found
And the whole earth will sing your praise.

Through Jesus Christ, our Lord,

All **Amen.**

For those affected by drug abuse

All **Blessed be God who delivers us from death,
despair turns to hope in your great goodness.**

Lord, we pray for those who are afraid
of ever-increasing addiction to drugs;
whose families live with stigma;
who steal and mug and lie
to feed their habit;
who lose all track of life
and human dignity;
who feel trapped.

All In your mercy, Lord, heal us
in your tender love remake us.

Lord, we pray for those who are afraid
of being robbed;
who are suspicious of their neighbours;
who hate the noise and smells
of people desperate for drugs;
who envy dealers with expensive cars and clothes;
who dread their children finding sharps
in parks or gardens;
who feel angry.

All In your mercy, Lord, heal us
in your tender love remake us.

Lord, we pray for those who work
with users and their families;
those who seek to guard communities
from anti-social and criminal behaviour;
those who teach young people
to resist substance abuse.

All **Blessed be God who delivers us from death,
despair turns to hope in your great goodness.**

All Through Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen.

The ministry of flowers (1)

God, our beloved,
we breathe your fragrance
and we are drawn to your radiant beauty.
You make flowers appear upon the earth,
the time of singing has come.

What flowers we have, what scent,
what delicacy of tone and shape!
In loveliness, they raise our hearts you.

And so with joy and gladness
we thank you for the skill and patience
of those who beautify our worship
as ministers of flowers.

Spring and flowers fear the frost
but you bloom for ever.
In you we live, we breathe, we love,
you are our all, our praise
and all our good.

All **Amen.**

Fleur Houston

The ministry of flowers (2)

As we come to worship we cannot help
but see the flowers which adorn this place
and our thoughts are drawn to you and your creation.
For they reveal the multitude of
colours and textures in your creation.

They speak to us of the intricate detail
and great magnitude of your creation,
from the smallest microbe to the largest mammal.

So as we look upon their beauty,
we give you thanks for those
who week by week ensure that there are flowers
to remind us of your creative power.

We thank you for the skill and creative talents
of those who week by week create such wonderful displays.

Lord God we also ask,
that as these flowers are sent to
those with something to celebrate or who are in need,
that they may speak of our love for them,
and dear God of your loving creative power.

All **Amen.**

David Coote

The ministry of flowers (3)

The lily reaching to heaven, architectural, pure
More perfect than Solomon's finest garb
We thank you for the flowers of the field.

Our churches of plain bricks and mortar
In cities bereft of beauty
We thank you for the flowers of hope.

For those that bring us your roses
Cut and gathered with care
We thank you for the flowers of love.

Melanie Frew

The ministry of music

Living God,
Composer of the universe,
In tumult you began your work,
Your symphony took shape;
Earth, sea and air and life in all its forms;
Each movement had its place.

And we were free to play, to sing,
to improvise its themes.
But we forgot the score.

And so in time, you sent your Son
to teach and to inspire a music
of contrapuntal harmony
fusing your melody with ours.
And in our worship we remember him.

Today we give thanks
for ministers of music,
organise, pianist, choir, band, orchestra, music group,
praising you for the skill and creativity
with which they enrich our worship,
looking ever to that glorious day
when all the voices of our world
resound as one
and in a rising crescendo of love and praise
all will be Amen and Alleluia.

Through Jesus Christ our Lord.

All **Amen.**

Fleur Houston

Baking cakes – again!

Do I *have* to, Lord?
Not *ANOTHER* cake!
Yes, I know I like baking –
and I find it therapeutic,
and it's very satisfying to see people enjoying my handiwork.
But I don't feel like it today –
and I haven't time,
and I'm on a diet,
and ...

Where does cake baking come in the Bible, Lord?
I never heard Jesus or Paul talk about it.
I never knew it was part of the Christian life –
it isn't in the membership promises,
or the eldership service,
so why are we expected to produce cakes so faithfully?

Pause

I'm sorry, Lord, I'm giving in to ungenerous thoughts.
Please help me,
I do want to be generous.
I want to see people come together in your name as they eat –
in imitation of the meal you had with your disciples.

It may not be bread and wine,
and I may not be ordained,
but I am part of the priesthood of all believers.
Please use my offering
to bless your people.

All **Amen.**

Ruth Sermon

Prayers before visiting pastoral care/difficult situations

Compassionate Christ, you always had time, even for your enemies.
Grant me the gift of seeing those who are difficult, those who make me feel
uncomfortable and those who disturb me, through your eyes; that I may listen
to them with love and commend them to you.
Help me to understand that silent presence is often a more powerful gift than
many words.
And if, in spite of my efforts, my ministry is rejected – give me the wisdom
to let go of contentious problems and leave them with you.

Elizabeth Kemp

Hospital visiting

Lord Jesus, you spent so much of your time with those who were in pain, concerned about the future and feeling worried about their loved-ones. Be with ... A ... at this time. Whatever the future brings, may *they* know your constant love and not feel alone. Thank you for family, loved-ones and friends, for their concern and prayers. Thank you health care workers and all those who daily attend to patients' comfort and well-being; thank you for their skill, patience and care, may they never feel undervalued or taken for granted. Whatever the future brings, may we be enabled to face it with peace and in the assurance of your love.

Elizabeth Kemp

The whole armour of God for Christian Aid collectors

Take up the whole armour of God, so that you may knock at each door. Stand, therefore and fasten the money bag around your waist, and put on the badge of identification. As for your feet, put on whatever will make you comfortable on the tarmac, gravel and slabs. With all these, take the information leaflet, with which you will be able to answer all questions. Take the umbrella to save you from rain (*or sun block to save you from burning*) and the message of charity, which is the word of God. Pray at all times. Grace be with you all as you go out to collect this Christian Aid Week. [\(With apologies to Ephesians 6:13-17\)](#)

Melanie Frew

For those in our care

Help us to stand with those in our care,
To make the coffee and hold the hand
To offer the handkerchief and provide the shoulder
To listen, to love, to laugh, to let be.
Help us to stand with those in our care.

Help us to comfort those who are ill,
To do the shopping and take the post
To bring some flowers and wear a smile
To plump the pillow and pour the water.
Help us to comfort those who are ill.

Help us to understand the needs of others,
The time to talk, the time for silence
The time to pray, the time to cry
The time to hug, the time to leave.
Help us to understand the needs of others.

Help us to ask for your help, Lord,
To find the time and to use it well
To ask for advice and to seek support
To stay strong, to be sensitive, to care, to be a friend.
Help us to ask for your help, Lord.

Melanie Frew

Make room

They pick him up on his stretcher.
Carry him in the sun.
Straining as they carry him up on to the roof.
Family members caring for a disabled family member.
Disabled people longing for independence.
Neighbours who allow someone to stay in their home
because they shop and pop round.

They cannot get in.
There are too many people.
No way through.
Churches designed to keep you, Jesus, for themselves,
to keep strangers out.
Churches that are clubs of the like-minded.
Making those needy feel humiliated
and thinking somehow of God as a pet.

Your sins are forgiven.
Many cannot hear these words.
People burdened by guilt.

Get up and walk.

Those who find movement too demanding want to stay where they are.

Lord Jesus may you be at home with us
and may we make room in our structures
and personalities for you.

Lesley Charlton

Outside

The kid in my class – **outside** – because he says stupid things, has dull clothes.

Outside because she works too hard and shows off.

Outside because they move around;
travelling people, refugee people, people who are trafficked.

Outside because they behave oddly;
socially challenged people,
not able to cope with the complexity of all the information.

Outside because they do not want to be inside;
those who do not need us,
do not want the message we bring,
know all the answers.

Outside because they are in hospital,
residential home/school;
those who are forced to wear the label 'patient'.

Lord enfold us all in your love and at the end welcome us home.

Lesley Charlton

Lord of the upside down

Lord of the upside down
your ways are not our ways.
In our world the middle aged have the power
yet you come with a child as an example of the kingdom.

For children exploited and neglected.
For those not heard.

For the elderly whose power was once.
Move in those coming to terms with the changes old age brings.

We look for a leader to provide quick, stock answers.
You expect that we will work together beyond barriers of religion and race.

We value doers, the proactive, the achievers.
You show us the value of being,
of praying,
of silence,
of rest.
Prophetic people whose lives point in new directions.

We value strength,
military might.
You hang on a cross.
There are those countries at war

(name situations currently in the news)

Places beginning to build the peace

(name situations currently in the news)

Relationships with one another:

listeners to the quiet voice;

a gentle approach as well as strident noise,

Lord we wrestle with these issues every day.

Cheapest or fairly traded

quickest or best

me or us

In Jesus' name

Lesley Charlton

Season of mists and holiday returns

The time to celebrate the fruitfulness of the earth
and to abhor the weight of the lives we have built for ourselves.

This is the time when the leaves fall
and the leavers are now joiners
at university and big school.

This is the time to get back to the ordinary

This is the time to resume meetings;
the clubs and activities.

Be our light as it gets darker
be a present guide in our fogs
be a hand to hold in our lostness
be peace to those at war for they crave the ordinary that we disparage.

In Jesus' name we pray

Lesley Charlton