

Children

Prayers and worship resources on the theme of 'Children' – updated November 2013



Praying for Children

A Prayer Activity to help us to understand that God speaks to us - and judges the world - through the voices - and cries - of children

Depending on the age of the children you are working with, you may wish to check with their parents whether it is OK for them to be included.

Beforehand

If your church is lucky enough to own a manger, get it down from the attic. Otherwise borrow a pram, small cot or Moses basket.

You will need a cross which fits in the manger/ pram and some Blu-tac. This could be a largish wooden one, or you could make one out of cardboard/ wallpaper

Buy a variety of newspapers during the week - do remember that some 'newspapers' publish images you might not want to include in worship!

A good choice is *First News*, (<http://www.firstnews.co.uk/>) but this is not available in all newsagents, so you may need to shop around or order it well in advance.

On the day

Put the Manger/ pram at the front of church, clearly on display with the cross/ blu-tac hidden inside

Give out newspapers so that everyone has at least one between three people. Invite everyone to look through the paper to find stories about, or which relate to, children. Warn folk that some of the stories might be distressing.

When they have found stories, ask them to tear them out and bring them to the front - any children present could collect them for those who are less mobile.

As the stories arrive, stick them onto the cross using the blu-tac. It doesn't matter whether they cover one another up.

God who spoke to us through Samuel
We offer to you the voices of children throughout your world.
So often silenced.
So often ignored.
You call us to bring the little children to you.

We offer you their voices this morning/evening
We offer you their pain
We offer you their joy
We offer you their innocence
We offer you their suffering
[Silently lift the cross so everyone can see it]

God, you hear the voices of children
Even when we don't.
Teach us to listen
and hear our prayers for the sake of your Son,
who was born a child
and lives forever to challenge us into action.
Amen

You may wish to display the cross in church, or in the entrance, or another room where activities take place during the week.

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The God who welcomes children

Heavenly Father, whose Son welcomed little children, help us to come to you as children.

When we neglect to praise you, remind us of our utter dependence upon you.

When we use you as a means to our own ends, remind us simply to enjoy your company.

When we are plagued with guilt, remind us of your great love for us.

Heavenly Father, help us to come to you as children.

In a world that squeezes us into its mould, help us to recognise our Father's voice.

In a world of poverty and injustice, help us to feel this unfairness in our bones.

In a world that we want to change for the better, help our love for you to remain our priority.

Heavenly Father, help us to come to you as children.

As pride and dignity prevent us from righteous living, teach us to be messy.

As arrogance and pride convince us that we are right, teach us to be humble.

As selfishness quietly sinks its roots into our lifestyle, teach us to share.

Heavenly Father, help us to come to you as children.

Revive in us a sense of wonder at your creation, at your love for the world, at your presence with us. By your grace, make us like children in your presence.

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Children and the Church

God of great glory and great humility, we worship you as the high King of heaven, born to a peasant family to grow as a child.

And so we pray for children in our community. We thank you for the message you bring to us from the mouths of the young people who are part of our church. May these children have a real voice in our fellowship: may we hear their insights and share their concerns. May they have space to embody and radiate your presence, and may we have the courage to listen to the Christ who speaks to us through them.

We pray for the countless young people in our world who have been taken from their families. For those vulnerable children who are being turned into soldiers or sex-objects, bring the light and peace of Jesus Christ. For the thousands of children in our world who by this morning, have not eaten for several days, we pray for daily bread and real hope. For the children who for any tragic reason have been fast-tracked to adulthood, we pray for innocence and joy and support.

Open our hearts

to the Christ whose hands and feet are the limbs of the child,

to the Christ whose insight is the piercing glance of the child,

to the Christ whose wisdom is the question of a child,

to the Christ whose judgement is the protest of a child,

to the Christ whose challenge is the teardrop of a child.

Teach us to listen properly to children, in order that we might listen properly to you.

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Additionally, the Children's Society has a selection of prayers for children in various situations. See their website for more details:

<http://www.childrenssociety.org.uk/what-you-can-do/your-church/prayer-and-reflection-materials/topical-prayers>