

HOW TO NURTURE A FAITH-SHARING CULTURE

PRACTICE 3 – REFOCUS THE INTERCESSIONS

SUMMARY

As part of the prayers of intercession each week, include prayers for those whom we long to come to know the life-transforming love of Jesus.

EXPLANATION

Many of us have a point in our gatherings when we intercede for (amongst other things) the world, our country, the community around us, those we know and the Church. It is a good discipline in our corporate worship, as it reminds us we exist to serve and bless others, and one way we do that is by praying for them. Often in these prayers of intercession we pray for those we know who are unwell. We may even have a moment of quiet for each person to pray for specific people they know.

In the same way, add an additional element to the intercessions by inviting people to pray for those they know who aren't yet Christians. This communicates that, as a church or congregation, we not only have a pastoral concern for those who are struggling, but also an evangelistic concern for those without Christ. We can also ensure that any other evangelism-related activity is prayed for (for example each week during an enquirer's course like Pilgrim or Hope Explored, or leading up to a carol service). Do this every time you gather and the culture begins to shift.

TIPS

Here are some tips for introducing this practice:

- If you are the leader, model how to do this well.
- If you have others on rotas who lead the intercessions,

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‘Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful. And pray for us too, that God may open a door for our message.’

Colossians 4:2-3

gather them (online or onsite) for a training session on leading intercessions well, and include this as part of it.

- Be sensitive to the fact that visitors may be present, some of whom may not yet be disciples of Jesus. Help people find ways of introducing this into the intercessions that respect visitors. Praying for ‘non-Christians to come to repentance and faith’ may not be very sensitive. Instead, how about, ‘Let’s take a moment to pray for those we have contact with during our week whom Christ loves and longs to come to him.’
- If you have established Pray for Five, connect with this as a way of encouraging people to focus their prayers: ‘Let’s take a moment to pray for our five.’
- Keep an eye on the evangelists who might be on the intercessors’ rota. Sometimes, in their enthusiasm, they may lead public prayers in a way that alienates any visiting non-Christians or makes Christians feel a little inferior or annoyed.
- There is an interesting relationship between pattern and variety. A pattern helps people relax into what becomes familiar, and to fully inhabit what is happening or simply be carried by it. Variety engages people in a fresh way and stimulates new thoughts and actions. Both are helpful. The pattern is that we do this every time we gather in our prayers of intercessions, and often use a similar format. Here are a few ideas to add variety to the ways we pray for evangelism.
 - If you have the facility to show pictures, pray for the streets of your community and show pictures of the relevant street. Or make a short video on your phone of key places in your parishes to pray for – then show it in the service.

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LEAD ON

- If you are familiar with the language of frontlines (the places where people spend most of their daytimes), show pictures of church members' frontlines and pray for people in those places to come to know Christ.
- Stand and face north, east, south and west as you pray for people within your community to come to know Christ.



RESOURCES

- Gloucester diocese have a guide for leading intercessions with links to useful resources, www.gloucester.anglican.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/Leading-Intercessions-Guide.pdf.
- The Church Of England also has a page on its website with a link to Leading Common Worship Intercessions, Doug Chaplin (CHP) for those who would like a more comprehensive introduction, www.churchofengland.org/prayer-and-worship/topical-prayers/leading-prayer-through-intercessions.
- John Truscott has a helpful download called 'Breathing Life into the Intercessions' available on his website, www.john-truscott.co.uk/Resources/Training-Notes-index/Breathing-life-into-the-intercessions.