

A Week of Accompanied Prayer

For many people in our parishes, a retreat experience away from home and daily routine is not possible. A Week of Accompanied Prayer can bring such an experience to them where they are. It provides an opportunity for them to explore their faith journey in a one-to-one situation with a trained prayer guide while continuing their everyday life. There is the opportunity too, to experience new and different ways of praying.

There are several options. The first, obviously, is a week during which people commit to at least half an hour's prayer each day and meet with a Prayer Guide each day. An alternative is to take it over a seven week period, praying daily and meeting with a Prayer Guide once a week.

Who is it for?

A Week of Accompanied Prayer is for anyone who wants to develop a deeper relationship with God through prayer. Some people may want to develop their present prayer pattern or feel they may benefit from the experience of being listened to by another when talking about their prayer. During the weeks of guided prayer the person being listened to is often referred to as the Pilgrim and the listener is the Companion.

How might it help in the parish?

During a Week of Accompanied Prayer, people have the opportunity to deepen their personal prayer—which is a good thing in itself but which also enriches the prayer life of the community. There are opening and closing sessions which bring the prayers and guides together and could include others from the parish. It is also possible to have short talks on different kinds of prayer during the day or evening for those who cannot commit to the full thing but who would like to learn more about prayer.

If you think you would like to plan a Week of Accompanied Prayer locally, get in touch with the Department for Spirituality who will point you in the right direction.

I sincerely hope that every parish will take seriously the need to pray for our future work. Everything we do must be underpinned by prayer. If we put prayer at the centre of it all, I have no doubt that the Holy Spirit will guide us'
Bishop Séamus, July 2014



Diocesan Festival

Don't forget that the Diocesan Festival could offer an opportunity for people in the parish to meet up with others from around the diocese. They will hear great input—pray and socialise—and return renewed and enthused for what lies ahead!

More information from the Festival Team—festival@diocesehn.org.uk, 0191 243 3313.



CD Resources

On the CD—and on the website—you can find the original files for the resources mentioned here.

- One Night One Day—ideas and, over time, supporting resources for 24 Hours of Prayer
- Towards New Horizons—outlines for sessions reflecting on some of the issues raised during *Forward Together in Hope*
- Reflective Questions and Exodus—customisable resources for the meetings looking at the reflective questions
- Prayer for Vocations



And don't forget....

Kathryn Turner hopes to visit each of the deaneries over the course of 2015 to support local initiatives and the Department's Administrator, Karen Brown, will be getting in touch with Deans to arrange these. Where appropriate, sessions could also be offered at cluster or parish level.

If you would like a particular date, please get in touch as soon as possible to ensure that it is booked for you!

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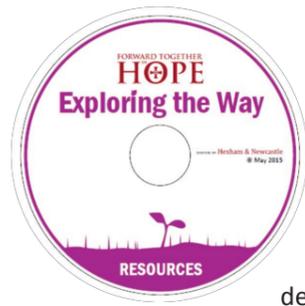
FORWARD TOGETHER
IN
HOPE

Prayer and Liturgy Resources



DIocese OF Hexham & Newcastle

Exploring the Way—Introducing the Resources



In this section of the *Forward Together in Hope* materials, you will find ideas for different kinds of prayer which will help your community to respond to Bishop Séamus' desire that the process is underpinned by prayer.

In this pack, you will find resources to accompany the filling out of the questionnaire and, more importantly, the self-review and reflection on the life of your community. During this time, there will be times when people will feel positive and confident – and other times when they will feel less sure about the future—even anxious or fearful. Materials are offered to support communities in a variety of situations – and can be adapted to suit differing circumstances.

Over coming months, more resources will become available and posted to the website. If a parish has a successful liturgy—or other event that they feel is worth sharing, it would be good to send it in to share with others.

The ideas and resources in the pack and on the CD can be downloaded from the *Forward Together in Hope* website: www.hope.rcdhn.org.uk



One Night—One Day

One idea that is being proposed as a creative way of bringing people together in prayer is that of having a 24 hour period of prayer.



The idea is simple—on the hour, every hour for 24 hours, a different form of prayer is offered. Where appropriate, this might take place in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament.

Ideas could range from using the Prayer of the Church—to something more lively for the children—to a session led by a group who meet regularly for prayer—an hour focusing on prayer for vocations—to a Songs of Praise... Prayer can be formal or draw on traditional devotions—or take in contemporary and more flexible kinds of prayer. A sample timetable is included on the CD—but the possibilities are endless.

It is a way of encouraging parishioners with different gifts to get involved. The more contemplative will be able to hold the silent adoration—young people may have the energy to meet the challenge of an overnight vigil—intercessors will hold the needs of the community and the world—people who have a ministry in sacramental preparation might come up with ideas that the groups they work with could come along to.

It is not just in the prayer, though. Praying takes energy and a tea or coffee break can give a boost at any time of day. For the overnight people—particularly the young—a fish and chip supper in the late evening session—or pizza at 2am can be fun and bring the group together. Remember, Jesus often combined meals, teaching and prayer! There will be people in the parish who would like to pop in for short times of prayer but whose greater prayer might be the loving preparation of refreshments and encouragement for those taking on longer shifts.

Fr Jim O'Keefe is willing to try to come along as part of a 24 hour prayer to explore how the community takes *Forward Together in Hope* further forward.

Note: Between the idea being developed and the beginning of the preparation of materials, Pope Francis announced the Year of Mercy and asks that dioceses look at holding a "24 Hours with the Lord" in Lent 2016. A "One Night One Day" time of prayer could be your parish's practice-run—or you could plan for it to be part of it.

Towards New Horizons



Forward Together in Hope offers challenges but also opportunities to look honestly at ourselves. It is a time to be realistic about who we are—and to give time and space to see and hear how the Holy Spirit is guiding us at a local and diocesan level.

Most of the work involved will happen within the parish—but it can be good to get away to try to see things in a different way—find new perspectives.

On the CD, you will find outlines for three sessions devoted to this. Put simply, it includes a session that happens locally where the key issues are brought forward. These are then taken into a day of reflection at a retreat house or place of pilgrimage (such as Holy Island) where the group can give them a more specific focus. At the end of the day, any conclusions or insights are recorded and form the basis of a meeting to start looking at how things might be taken forward.

Many groups already use these ways of making decisions—others will feel that they are long-winded! Their strength is that they work—ensuring that the Holy Spirit is listened to at a very deep level and that any decisions reached are likely to be received and accepted with greater grace than things that feel imposed.

Consider giving them a try! If you would like support or encouragement, please get in touch. There are highly experienced people who can be of assistance and guide you through the process.

Reflective Questions and Exodus

Different places will tackle the questionnaires and reflective questions differently. This is to be expected given the great diversity of our communities.

As we know, the desire is that all of this should happen in the context of prayer and, again, how this works will vary from place to place.

One idea, though, is included on the CD and outlined in a leaflet. It takes the journey we are on and taps into something from our Jewish heritage: the Book of Exodus. The events may have happened a very long time ago—and the things that faced the Israelites look very different from the challenges that face us. But human nature has not changed hugely—and the situations they had to tackle can be paralleled in our own.

As with all the materials prepared for *Forward Together*, they are designed to be flexible. To make them easier to follow, though, they are divided into four sessions. A parish might use them all, basically as they stand—or pick-and-mix to suit their own circumstances. They could form the basis of four parish meetings or "highlights" chosen to build a day of prayer around.

The reflective questions that form part of the pack are split between the various sections. The idea is that by reminding ourselves of God at work in the lives of other people, we become more aware of God at work in ours—and tune in to how God is calling us to work with him in the various reflections and recommendations that lie before us.

