# Prayer Service

Gather

God of love, prayer nurtures and deepens the gift of your spirit within us. Be with us as we explore our call to prayer and as we journey to deepen our relationship with you and your Son Jesus.

Send the gift of your Holy Spirit that we may open our hearts and minds to your Word, that through your Word we may know you more intimately. Amen.

Listen

Isaiah 55:6-12

“Seek the Lord while he may be found, call upon him while he is near; let the wicked forsake their way, and the unrighteous their thoughts; let them return to the Lord, that he may have mercy on them, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon. For my thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways my ways, says the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts. For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven, and do not return there until they have watered the earth, making it bring forth and sprout, giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater, so shall my word be that goes out from my mouth; it shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and *succeed* in the thing for which I sent it. For you shall go out in joy, and be led back in peace; the mountains and the hills before you shall burst into song, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands.”

Respond

Our path to prayer is deepened by this valuable treasure—the Word of God. May our hearts ponder and treasure its gift, as we pray:

Response: May your Word be planted in our hearts.

Our path to prayer is deepened by the stories of the many people in faith who have journeyed in prayer before us. May our hearts be open to their stories, as we pray:

 Response: May your Word be planted in our hearts.

Our path to prayer begins in baptism, when we symbolize the putting on of Christ as we are dressed in white garments. May Scripture in our prayer help us to become more like Christ, as we pray:

 Response: May your Word be planted in our hearts.

Our path to prayer changes through the many seasons of our lives and through the Scripture revealed through the seasons of the church year. May we journey in prayerful attentiveness to the gifts of the seasons, as we pray:

 Response: May your Word be planted in our hearts.

Our path of prayer often feels ordinary, and we are challenged to remember that Scripture reminds us how God speaks in an ordinary gentle breeze. May God’s word through prayer help us to see the extra ordinary in our ordinary as we live out our discipleship, as we pray:

 Response: May your Word be planted in our hearts.

Our path of prayer is gifted by the Word of God, that feeds our hearts and challenges our minds, calling us to transformation and service, as we pray:

 Response: May your Word be planted in our hearts.

Go Forth

Gracious God, we are filled with new hope

By the coming of your Word, Jesus Christ, among us.

May Scripture be a faithful part of our prayer,

That we may become all that we are called to be as your sons and daughters.

We close our prayer

In the name of the Father who brought all into being,

In the name of Jesus his Son who redeems us,

And in the name of the Spirit who sustains us.

Amen.

# Handout #1.

# Drama: I’m Ready – God, Where Are You?

Narrator:

Penelope Pray-er has decided to create a more regular prayer life for herself. Sometimes she prays grace before meals, and sometimes she remembers to talk to God for a few minutes before she goes to sleep at night, but often she just falls asleep.

(Enter Penelope)

Penelope:

Ok, I think I am ready to pray. I have a pillow to sit on. I have this great smelling candle that I got from the Dollar Store. I have a beautiful cloth to put beneath it, and I even found this Bible the church gave me when I was in Fourth Grade.

(Penelope sets up everything as she mentions them, then lights the candle and plops herself cross-legged on the pillow).

OK, now for sure I am ready to pray. I will just close my eyes, breathe a little, and I am sure God will show up.

(She does some exaggerated deep breathing then sits still with her eyes closed for about fifteen seconds. Then one eye pops open and looks around, closes, then the other eye opens and looks around. She opens both eyes and looks around the room.)

Hmm, nothing seems to be happening. I will just have to breathe harder.

(She takes some more breaths until she hears a knock at the door).

Great – an interruption while I am trying so hard to pray.

(She gets up and goes to the “door,” opens it, and sees a wrapped box. She picks it up, shows it to the audience, and then says…)

I wonder what is in it and where it came from!?

(She lifts the lid and discovers that the box is empty, but notices a note attached to the bottom of the box that she reads out loud.)

“Dear Penelope, here is an empty box. I was reading about prayer the other day and learned that prayer is God’s gift—we need to humbly open our hearts to receive it. I thought the box might be a reminder to you that you don’t control prayer; it is in God’s hands. Peace, Miss Humble.”

OK, I guess I need to try again, this time reminding myself that prayer is a gift and I just need to receive whatever God has in mind for me today.

(She sits back on her pillow with the empty box in her hands as she once again does some exaggerated breathing.)

OK, God, your gifts can come anytime now…Hmm, this waiting for God’s gifts is a lot of work.

(Doorbell rings.)

Great, just when I am trying to get the hang of being patient I get interrupted again. Okay, what is it this time?

(She goes to the door again and there is a giant heart waiting for her.)

Hmm, what does this mean? Prayer takes heart? Prayer has heart? Prayer is about love?

(Phone rings, Penelope reaches to answer it.)

Hello?

Phone says:

Hello, this is a recorded message for Penelope Pray-er. We are from the Church’s Official Office on Prayer and want to remind you that prayer celebrates the covenant relationship you have with God. Scripture says that it is the heart that prays, and the heart as the place of encounter and covenant. Pay attention to your heart, for it is there that you will find God. Prayer is about relationship, faithful relationship with God and living out his invitation to be people of love and service.

Penelope: (Hangs up phone)

Wow. I have never gotten a call from the church before. How do they know what’s going on here?

So it is the heart that prays. It is the heart in which we encounter the faithful love of God. Prayer is about relationship, but not just with God, but also with the world around me.

Okay. Enough of these interruptions. Back to praying.

(She sits down and once again begins to breathe and to get herself still. Doorbell rings again.)

Oh for Pete’s sake, just when I finally heard my heart beating there goes the door again. What is up today?

(She goes to the door and finds someone standing there, holding a large calendar.)

Penelope: Who are you?

Christian Calendar Company Representative:

I am from the Christian Calendar Company. We heard that you were actually scheduling prayer into your life and wanted to know which block of time to allot you. We schedule pray-ers all over the world and wanted to know how committed you are to being one. After all, prayer should be habitual. You want to be in the presence of God all the time, right? So, since you are starting this habit and seeking communion with God, I am here to schedule you in. You haven’t been on our calendar for a long time now so I will give you some time to think about it. Expect me back here next week.

Penelope:

Uh, sure. I think I better get back to praying and figure this all out.

(She goes and plops down on her pillow, and simply sits there with her eyes closed and her hands open in her lap.)

Penelope:

God, I am not sure about all this prayer stuff. I thought if I had all the right tools – you know, a candle, and pillow, and so on—it would just happen. But now I know that I need to be still so that you can gift me with what I need. I know that I need to open my heart to love and be loved by you, and I need to be faithful as I seek communion with you and my brothers and sisters everywhere. I don’t know how this will work out, but it is in your hands and that is good.

Thank you for the surprises of today, and keep me open to your presence in every moment of my life. Amen.

Narrator:

The End

# Handout #2.


# Creating a Space for Prayer

Create a circle diagram, filling one page as close to the edge of the page as possible in order to make the circle as large as possible.

In the center of the large circle is a small circle on which is written the word “God.” and the rest of the circle is sliced into five pie-shaped pieces.

Place one of the words below on each piece of the pie, allowing space beside the word inside its piece of pie for other words or a picture to be drawn)

Place

Posture

Preparation

Process

Profession


#  Handout #3


# Psalm 8, 137, and 71

Psalm 8

O Lord, our Sovereign,
   how majestic is your name in all the earth!

You have set your glory above the heavens.
   Out of the mouths of babes and infants
you have founded a bulwark because of your foes,
   to silence the enemy and the avenger.

When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers,
   the moon and the stars that you have established;
what are human beings that you are mindful of them,
   mortals that you care for them?

Yet you have made them a little lower than God,
   and crowned them with glory and honor.
You have given them dominion over the works of your hands;
   you have put all things under their feet,
all sheep and oxen,
   and also the beasts of the field,
the birds of the air, and the fish of the sea,
   whatever passes along the paths of the seas.

O Lord, our Sovereign,
   how majestic is your name in all the earth!

Psalm 137

By the rivers of Babylon—
   there we sat down and there we wept
   when we remembered Zion.
On the willows there
   we hung up our harps.
For there our captors
   asked us for songs,
and our tormentors asked for mirth, saying,
   ‘Sing us one of the songs of Zion!’

How could we sing the Lord’s song
   in a foreign land?
If I forget you, O Jerusalem,
   let my right hand wither!
Let my tongue cling to the roof of my mouth,
   if I do not remember you,
if I do not set Jerusalem
   above my highest joy.

Remember, O Lord, against the Edomites
   the day of Jerusalem’s fall,
how they said, ‘Tear it down! Tear it down!
   Down to its foundations!’
O daughter Babylon, you devastator!
   Happy shall they be who pay you back
   what you have done to us!
Happy shall they be who take your little ones
   and dash them against the rock!

Psalm 71

In you, O Lord I take refuge; let me never be put to shame.

In your righteousness deliver me and rescue me; incline your ear to me and save me.

Be to me a rock of refuge, a strong fortress, to save me, for you are my rock and my fortress.

Rescue me, O my God, from the hand of the wicked, from the grasp of the unjust and cruel.

For you, O Lord, are my hope, my trust, O Lord, from my youth.

Upon you I have leaned from my birth; it was you who took me from my mother's womb. My praise is continually of you.

I have been like a portent to many, but you are my strong refuge.

My mouth is filled with your praise, and with your glory all day long.

Do not cast me off in the time of old age; do not forsake me when my strength is spent.

For my enemies speak concerning me, and those who watch for my life consult together.

They say, "Pursue and seize that person whom God has forsaken, for there is no one to deliver."

O God, do not be far from me; O my God, make haste to help me!

Let my accusers be put to shame and consumed; let those who seek to hurt me be covered with scorn and disgrace.

But I will hope continually, and will praise you yet more and more.

My mouth will tell of your righteous acts, of your deeds of salvation all day long, though their number is past my knowledge.

I will come praising the mighty deeds of the Lord God, I will praise your righteousness, yours alone.

O God, from my youth you have taught me, and I still proclaim your wondrous deeds.

So even to old age and gray hairs, O God, do not forsake me, until I proclaim your might to all the generations to come.

Your power and your righteousness, O God, reach the high heavens. You who have done great things, O God, who is like you?

You who have made me see many troubles and calamities will revive me again; from the depths of the earth you will bring me up again.

You will increase my honor, and comfort me once again.

I will also praise you with the harp for your faithfulness, O my God; I will sing praises to you with the lyre, O Holy One of Israel.

My lips will shout for joy when I sing praises to you; my soul also, which you have rescued.

All day long my tongue will talk of your righteous help, for those who tried to do me harm have been put to shame and disgraced.

# Prayer Service

Gather

Father, may we be nourished through prayer to be faithful in our relationship with you.

May our prayer challenge us to be people of faith, hope, and love in our world.

Amen.

Listen

Jeremiah 29:13-14

“When you search for me, you will find me; if you seek me with all your heart, I will let you find me, says the Lord, and I will restore your fortunes and gather you from all the nations and all the places where I have driven you, says the Lord, and I will bring you back to the place from which I sent you into exile.”

Respond

 And so, we pray:

 Placing our hands over our hearts, we pray:

 For an open heart, to know God’s love and to love others as God has loved us.

 Response: Bless Us, O Lord!

 Placing a hand on our forehead, we pray:

For an open mind, to know God as he reveals himself to us in all the moments of our lives.

 Response: Bless Us, O Lord!

 Opening our hands, as if to receive a gift, we pray:

 For open hands, to receive all that God wishes to bless us with.

 Response: Bless Us, O Lord!

 Raising our hands to the heavens, we pray:

 For a grateful heart for the beauty of all that surrounds us.

 Response: Bless Us, O Lord!

 In the name of the Father, who called us into being,

 In the name of Jesus, who loves us into being,

 In the name of the Holy Spirit, who sustains our being,

 Response: Bless Us, O Lord!

Go Forth

Select an appropriate song to conclude the prayer.