

Prayer and worship ideas in outdoor spaces (for youth).

Throughout lockdown, churchyards and green spaces on church grounds have been important places for many people to stay connected to God. During the new term and while restrictions on indoor gatherings continue, why not think about how you, your friends or youth group could exercise your faith muscles and serve your church by planning guided prayer and worship stations around your church.

Ask your church leader or youth leader if it's possible to safely set up a prayer space. Think about how you will make the space inspiring, helping people express their thoughts and feelings to our loving God, and guiding the prayers of those who will use it.

Take a look at these ideas or come up with your own. Be careful to make sure the stations can be cleaned and safe and ask your friends what they might be up-for praying about, then make a little area in the church yard to enable this. These ideas could either be set up temporarily for a socially distanced youth meeting, or left set up for individual use.

(Make sure you have the full permission from your church and comprehensive risk assessments that are reviewed regularly.)

Where to find guidance when planning a youth meeting.

- You can find the Church of England advice page here:
<https://www.churchofengland.org/more/media-centre/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-churches>
- And specific guidance for youth and children's work here:
<https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2020-08/Guidance%20for%20church%20based%20children%20youth%20and%20family%20activities%20v%201.2%2024th%20August%202020.pdf>
- Check the Diocesan webpage here:
<https://www.stalbans.anglican.org/faith/living-gods-love-at-all-times/>
- You can find a template for a risk assessment here:
<https://youthworksupport.co.uk/>
- Get in touch with the Diocesan Youth and Children's Team for help:
yac@stalbins.anglican.org

Things to consider

- Courtesy to your neighbours
- How to contact the group if you must cancel due to bad weather
- What time it gets dark
- How to communicate your plan to the group, so everyone knows how to stay safe
- Any local restrictions or advice
- How participants will travel to church, and what happens afterwards
- Make sure everyone feels safe, including leaders
- Enough equipment so no one has to share



Graffiti prayer wall

A place for prayers of lament, anguish, pain and anger to be expressed. Some of us have suffered a lot this year, being given permission to bring our feelings and pain to the Lord can be really powerful and healing. Could a board be placed somewhere for prayers to be scribbled up with markers, inviting people to express what they are going through, lifting up to him our pain and struggles?

You could provide clean markers and ask people to post them onto a letterbox or separate pot when used, to be quarantined and sanitised later.



Crosses of hope

Consider offering a second station of hope, guiding pray-ers to focus on the hope we find in Jesus. This could be centred around a special tree or bench, with Bible verses written on postcards for people to take with them (consider how to do this in line with national and local safety guidance).

Provide materials to make a small cross (perhaps some sticks and string/wire) and invite the pray-er to build a cross and stick it in the ground (or placed in a certain area) as a marker of hope and sign that God builds a future for us even out of pain and suffering.

Photography competition and display

Get the youth group or some friends to take part in a photography challenge. Get them to send in photos, form a judging panel and print a selection to laminate and display in the church yard to guide prayers. Challenge your friends to take pictures on different themes, hope, faith, love, perseverance. Write some clear guidance of what you want and how you will use the photos (you'll need parental consent to). You'll also need a designated leader to look after the photos and designated email address to send them into.



Notice-board youth takeover

Ask your church to let you take over a section (or all!) of the church notice board. Think creatively about how you can use the space to encourage those who read it, share with them the love of Jesus in a way that's relevant to your friends and peers. You could advertise the church social media channels and ask people to get in touch with prayer requests. Make it bold and colourful and be sure to send us a photo of your creations.

Insta-prayer collage

Set up or take over the church or youth group's Instagram account. Ask people to send in their prayers to the account and organise small groups to meet in the church-yard to pray. Print any prayers and Instagram pictures to make a collage that guides the group's prayers. Ask for prayer requests in pictures, or ask questions to get a flavour of people's challenges and circumstances. I.e. 'If God was real and you could ask Him one question, what would you ask?' or 'If you could have one wish, what would it be?'

Let your followers know you are praying for them and how they can join in.

(you'll need to get written consent from your parent/carer)

Junk sculptures

Make sculptures out of plastic bottles, or another non-recyclable form of rubbish to highlight the environmental impact of our waste.

You could organise a prayer walk and litter pick, praying for the community and creation. Build a sculpture and paint banners with prayers for those who are suffering most from climate change



Mask prayers

Ask participants to make their disposable masks into prayers.

(Think carefully about how this might be done safely. Use paper cut into mask shapes as an alternative and make sure there is a sanitiser station to clean hands after adding to the station).

Invite people to pray as they carefully pin them to a board/wall/tree, using thick markers to write verses or prayers as a vivid way of inviting people to explore what it means to be completely open before God and known by him. Set up a sign to explain that we are good at hiding ourselves from others but can be honest in front of God. Read Psalm 27 together and reflect on how God sees behind our masks and loves us. Finally share ideas about what might mean to look on the face of God.



Lines in the sand

Set up a sandpit (in a big bowl, small paddling pool or borrowed from a family). Read the story of the woman caught in adultery (John 8) and reflect together about what Jesus may have written in the dirt. Invite each person to draw their own lines/words in the sand to express their own shortcomings and sins. Then guide the group/person to look up and picture Jesus standing with them, not condemning, but offering an invitation to a new life. Finish by finding your own space to pray, playing a worship song or hymn on your phone.

Pebble markers

Ask the congregation to donate stones or see if you can buy a bag of smooth stones from a garden centre. Split the stones between the group see if you can build a tower of three or four stones (if they won't stack place them in a pattern on the ground. (If you are using larger stones, you'll need to make sure they can be removed at the end of the gathering).



Look up and read the different times in the old testament when stones were put in special places as a marker to remember something important. The idea was that when the people saw the stones, they would remember how God had been with them, saved them or done something amazing. Seeing the stones gave them hope.

Sit in a circle (socially distanced) and take in turns to share a good thing that has happened in your life, how has God been there for you?

Genesis 28:10-22 Joshua 4:1-8 1Samuel 7:7:12

For a variation, think consider if you can safely provide painting equipment to paint messages of hope on the pebbles.



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