

CONVERSATIONS IN PRAYER

How do our everyday lives shape the way we meet God in prayer?





“Like *Conversations in Worship*, this is a lovely opportunity for people to respond to easily accessible questions and have an open and honest discussion.

There is something very non-judgemental, gentle and helpful in the way the conversations and questions are offered.”

Conversations in Prayer leader



CONVERSATIONS IN PRAYER

Planning and preparing:

The session should last around 90 minutes. There are six conversations with a question to begin each one and the leader(s) should invite people to share their stories in response.

Read the questions clearly, more than once, so people can fully consider what is being asked of them. Don't be overly concerned if there are periods of silence as people may want time to reflect before speaking. Everyone should have a copy of the opening and closing prayers, but it is best not to give people the questions in advance or to have them while they converse as they could become a distraction. Depending on the number of participants, smaller groups of about 3 - 5 people work well, allowing enough time for everyone to share their stories. Choose how you will close each conversation. Some groups have found the following methods helpful:

- lighting a candle (ensure there are enough candles and matches to light after each conversation)
- saying the Lord's Prayer (ensure people have a copy of the agreed version that you will use)
- singing a short song, chorus or Taizé-style chant (there are a number of short songs in CH4)

Welcome and instructions

Once everyone has arrived give them a short time to get some refreshments, settle and say hello to one another. Welcome people and invite them to reflect in silence for a couple of minutes on this question, which is simply a chance for them to reflect on the many different ways of praying before beginning the conversations:

Thinking about your own experiences of praying, what words or phrases would you use to describe them?

The following paragraph may be a helpful way to explain the process to the participants:

"These conversations invite us to tell stories from our own life experience, and reflect on them together, so there are no right or wrong answers. We will allow 10 - 15 minutes for each conversation. Share as openly as you choose, and listen to what others choose to share. After each time of sharing, we will close each conversation by [describe chosen method]."

OPENING PRAYER

Invite everyone to join in an opening prayer.

A printable copy of this prayer can be found in the Conversations in Prayer section of the website:

www.churchofscotland.org.uk/worship

We recommend that you print a copy for each participant.

Open with prayer

Leader: You are here
with us now, God,
listening,
waiting,
hoping –
help us to do the same.

In our thoughts, may we hear Your voice.
In our silence, may we know Your peace.
In our words, may we speak Your love.

**ALL: Sharpen our minds,
open our hearts,
soften our will
and tune our ears
as we gather in this place of prayer.**

AMEN

CONVERSATIONS

1. Share one or two stories from your experiences of praying.

Give people an agreed length of time to share in their groups.

When it feels appropriate, use the chosen method to close the conversation.

Allow a brief silence before moving on to each question.

2. Share a story about a time when you were taught, or discovered, something about prayer, that you found meaningful.

As above, give time to talk and begin to close the conversation when appropriate.

3. When has praying felt like a struggle or a disappointment?

As above, give time to talk and begin to close the conversation when appropriate.

4. How have the ways that you pray changed?

As above, give time to talk and begin to close the conversation when appropriate.

5. What helps you to pray in the ordinary times of life?

As above, give time to talk and begin to close the conversation when appropriate.

6. What have you found important or what have you valued, from this time together?

If you are in small groups, you may wish to bring everyone together for this final conversation.

You may want to use the same method to close your conversation or move straight on to the closing blessing found on the next page.

CLOSING BLESSING

Invite everyone to join in a closing blessing.

A printable copy of this blessing can be found in the Conversations in Prayer section of the website:

www.churchofscotland.org.uk/worship

We recommend that you print a copy for each participant.

Close with a blessing

Leader: God of our living

All: Help us to know that You hear us
even when we can't find the words.
Help us to recognise Your voice
in our stillness and in our busyness.
May we know Your presence,
now as we leave this place
and in each and every step of the journey.

AMEN

WHAT NEXT?

What happens next will largely be guided by who took part and how the conversation unfolded, but there are a number of possibilities that may feel like the natural next steps.

It may be worth noting anything that has emerged from your conversations that could be followed up. For example, some people may reflect on what they are thankful for, what they find difficult to pray about or prayers that seem to go unanswered.

Are there other conversations that could help us explore prayer together?

You may find it helpful to host 'Conversations in Prayer' more than once. Perhaps one or two people from this conversation might like to lead, or co-lead. You could invite specific groups to take part – are there groups that already meet that would find this conversation helpful? Would this process allow them to get to know one another in a different way?

Consider running the conversations at different times – evening, lunch groups and prayer breakfasts – or as part of a training day or retreat.

Think creatively too – the conversations have had a profound effect on Kirk Sessions and Committee meetings, but they could also be used in more social gatherings such as house groups or prayer meetings.

This resource is for you to use in any way that you find helpful.

We would be delighted to hear about your 'Conversations in Prayer', what has been valuable, how we can support you in your 'what next' and what other conversations you would find valuable.

Email: mandd@churchofscotland.org.uk

‘Everyone felt they had something to share and were encouraged by knowing that there were no wrong answers.’

‘The questions opened up a really fruitful and lively conversation. It was great to hear other voices speaking from the heart about what prayer means for them.’

For some, praying can feel natural, relaxed or energising – for others, praying can feel like a struggle, a duty or a puzzling activity.

Have you ever wondered how other people pray and how they have experienced or heard God through their praying?

What if there were a few good questions to enable us to share more openly and talk more deeply about God, prayer and our journeys of faith?

How can our experiences of praying inform our rhythms and patterns of prayer?

How might our stories shape our practices of personal and corporate prayer?

Mission and Discipleship Council,
Church of Scotland,
121 George Street,
Edinburgh, EH2 4YN

Tel: 0131 225 5722

Email: mandd@churchofscotland.org.uk

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