**A Methodist Way of Life service outlines**

**Before using this service outline,
read the notes on** [**how to use the sessions**](https://www.methodist.org.uk/mwoloutlines)**.**

**Our Calling: Worship**

The umbrella term ‘Worship’ in Our Calling has three different dimensions: as well as worship in the traditional sense, there are also prayer and noticing God. These practices might be called ‘breathing in’ God; they are intentional in connecting us to God and inform how we live in the world.

**Pray**

**“We pray daily”**

**Key themes**

* God loves spending time with you.
* There are many ways to pray and it’s good to experiment to find ways that suit you.
* Prayer is simply a name for communicating with God. It’s not a daily tick box exercise but should be a way we build relationship with Jesus.
* Daily prayer should be an invitation to spend time with God, not a burden that needs to be completed.

**Relevant Bible passages**

Matthew 6: 5-15; Ephesians 6:18; Philippians 4:6-7; 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18

**Background reflection**

Two common understandings of how to pray are carving out specific times (alone or in groups, aloud or in silence, following patterns or freewheeling); and praying ‘like breathing’ – every second of every day you are in God’s presence.

*Ask the group how they pray and whether they find prayer easy or hard. Rather than a discussion, this might be a good moment to use the ‘burdens’ creative activity.*

Let’s look at some of the ‘daily’ patterns we see in the Bible *(see further notes for more details)*. Daily labour may suggest weariness – prayer may sometimes feel like weary work. But daily listening is a liberating joy of attending to God, and daily asking is a counter-cultural reliance on God – an unburdening of ourselves to rely on God, rather than taking everything on ourselves.

*Ask the group to think about rhythms in their own life. Which are wearying? Which are unburdening? Discuss the voices they hear daily, and how they could be more attentive to God’s voice.*

The purpose of prayer is not to tick a box every day, but to live in communication with God. It’s not about technique or accomplishment, it’s about opening channels to listen and to ask for what we need. We all do this differently. Perhaps we need to learn how to listen more and ask more. Such communication is not a chore, but a delight. Praying daily may begin with regularly reminding ourselves that God wants to communicate with us at every moment, because of God’s great love for us.

**Further notes**

* [*Sunshine and showers*](https://www.methodist.org.uk/sunshine)is a six-session prayer course from the Methodist Church with lots of helpful information and activities around prayer. As well as incorporating some of the material into this service, it may also be a great way for some members of the community to continue exploring prayer after the service.
* Use of the word ‘daily’ throughout the Bible – daily labourers (Exodus 5) are oppressed by the demand for the same levels of daily productivity, daily offerings (eg Exodus 29:38-46; Numbers 28:3; Ezra 3:4; Ezekiel 43:25), daily wages/providing daily needs (eg Deuteronomy 24:15). Daily prayer may similarly seem like an impossible target that results in weariness and feelings of failure.
* Daily listening (Proverbs 8:32-36) – God describes the happiness of those who are attentive to God. This sort of living, or praying, is a liberating listening to and seeking after God, not about a system. In a contribution to BBC Radio 2’s *Pause for Thought* in October 2005, Rowan Williams used the image of sunbathing to illustrate how we encounter God in prayer: just relax and let it happen.
* Daily asking (Luke 11:1-14) – our culture promotes self-sufficiency and independence; it moves us away from the habit of expressing need and asking for help. But prayer is for the tough times too. Jesus turned to God when drained (Matthew 14:23; Luke 5:16), when making hard decisions (Luke 6:12), in Gethsemane (Matthew 26:36), in bereavement (John 11:41). Daily bread in the Lord’s prayer (Matthew 6:11; Luke 3) can stand for a range of needs; whatever we need for strength for the day. Just as in the wilderness when manna was given (Exodus 16), God’s grace comes in small packages that are soon exhausted – precisely so that we will go back and ask for more. What do you need today?
* Daily unburdening: Prayer is not meant to be a burden, rather an unburdening. It invites us to lay down our heavy packs. In many parts of the world, it is common to see people – mainly women – carrying enormous baskets on their heads. They may be setting off to work in their farmlands, carrying their tools, food and water for the day – or returning at the end of the day with produce to feed a family. Their poise is remarkable, and they negotiate obstacles or rough terrain with grace and ease. But sometimes, if you happen to be looking when the basket is taken from the head and put down, you can sense a palpable relief at the unburdening. Is that not what prayer can be? The daily unburdening of loads too great to carry?

**Song and hymn suggestions**

See you again – Wiz Khalifa ft Charlie Puth

Breathe on me, breath of God (*StF* 370)

Give to me, Lord, a thankful heart (*StF* 520)

God in my living, there in my breathing (*StF* 497)

Here as we kneel, here as we pray (*StF* 521)

Merciful Lord, in your loving kindness (*StF* 761)

Our Father in heaven (*StF* 763)

Prayer is the soul’s sincere desire (*StF* 529)

Take time to be holy (*MP* 625)

**Creative activity suggestions**

* Ask the group to name things that make it difficult to pray. Each time they name something, add something heavy to a basket or rucksack (like stones or cans). Ask a volunteer to carry it around the room. Then ask another volunteer to go round the room with them, helping them carry it. As they go around the room, the second volunteer should slowly take out stones from the bag, demonstrating that God has heard their frustrations and fears, and is inviting them to be unburdened.
* Create stations around the room where people can pray in different ways (eg some paints and a canvas; pens and blank paper to write poetry; a music player). Ask people to reflect on the experience.Encourage people to teach one another different ways to pray. Ask someone to lead a meditation, breathe prayer, silent prayer, or take turns to pray out loud in a ‘round robin’.

Other ideas can be found at [methodist.org.uk/prayer](http://www.methodist.org.uk/prayer)

**Discussion questions**

* How do you pray?
* Think of your own daily, weekly or other rhythms. What is the value of such rhythms?
* Has prayer been easy or hard?
* What are the voices you hear daily? Are there ways in which you could, on a daily basis, be more attentive to God’s voice?
* How do we hear God’s voice in prayers, in other people, and in the world?
* How do we distinguish between asking God daily for our bread (what we need) and the kind of ‘shopping list prayers’ that make a mockery of what true prayer is?

**Prayer ideas**

* Practise a form of breathing prayer: breathe in thinking of a word for God. Breathe out asking for your ‘daily bread’.
* Pray The Lord’s Prayer as a group. Recite a line at a time, pausing at the end of each line and asking the group to reflect, in silence, on what this means for them today (or ask one or two people to share aloud each time). If necessary, you could ask the questions below to help prompt people in their response.

***Our father in Heaven, hallowed be your name*** *– What words or names help you praise God today?*

***Your kingdom come, your will be done*** *– What would the Kingdom of God on earth look like for you today?*

***On earth as in heaven.***

***Give us today our daily bread*** *– What is the ‘bread’ we need today (ie strength, time, energy, finances, a new job)?*

***Forgive us our sins*** *– Confess and ask for forgiveness.*

***As we forgive those who sin against us*** *– Express your forgiveness towards others; or ask for a spirit of forgiveness to come, if you cannot feel it now.*

***Save us from the time of trial and deliver us from evil*** *– Ask God’s protection against the things that have tempted you into different paths this week.*

***For the kingdom, the power and the glory are yours*** *– Take a moment to reflect on God’s sovereignty.*

***Now and forever***

***Amen***

*Explore creative ways to pray with all ages, using the Methodist prayer cards, available as*[*a printed pack*](https://www.methodistpublishing.org.uk/books/EGIPC22/intergenerational-prayer-cards)*for meetings and events,*[*a PowerPoint*](https://www.methodist.org.uk/media/28465/intergenerationalprayercards-smaller.pptx)*for church services and meetings or*[*as a PDF*](https://www.methodist.org.uk/media/28466/digital-prayer-cards-131222.pdf)*for digital use.*

**Ways to respond**

* Use the [Sunshine and Showers prayer course](http://www.methodist.org.uk/sunshine) in a small group (a version for individuals is coming in 2024).
* Watch a video such as [Rob Bell’s Nooma video on ‘Breathe’](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wh3c45Hug4), or read a book such as Richard Rohr’s *The Naked Now* and Malcolm Guite’s poem *The Church’s Banquet*, which offers a helpful contrast between “Precise prescription, rigid regimen,” and “beauty and gratuitous abundance”. Other suggestions are available from the [Sunshine and Showers course](https://www.methodist.org.uk/our-faith/a-methodist-way-of-life/visit-every-station/pray/sunshine-and-showers/sunshine-and-showers-go-deeper/).
* Try journalling daily for a week. Record your prayers. Record where and how you tune into God’s voice.