

Lift your eyes up: St Stephens Day of Prayer: Resources for those praying at home

In this season, in this year, in our church, there are many anxieties and concerns that jostle for attention, and yet our heavenly Father has instructed us to lift our eyes away from the stormy waves, and fix our eyes on Him, the author and perfecter of our faith.

Thank you for committing to this hour of prayer.

For some of you, this is a regular part of your relationship with God, but for others, this may be the first time you have committed to praying for such a time. May God bless you as you step out in faith!

Preparing for your hour of prayer.

Take a few moments to prepare your space for prayer- turn off your phone, retrieve your bible, find a pen and paper or your prayer journal, and find a comfortable place to sit. You may wish to light a candle to symbolise being in the presence of the 'light of the world'. You may wish to access some of your favourite hymns/worship music to listen to as well.

There are several prayer stages for you to pray through.

- 1. Be still and Know that I am God: Pausing before God*
- 2. Adoration: Rejoicing in His goodness*
- 3. Confession: Repentance, Forgiveness and Restoration for relationships*
- 4. Supplication: Thy Kingdom come:*
 - In this world*
 - In Australia*
 - In our church*
 - In our homes*
 - In our lives*
- 5. Contemplative Prayer – respond to God creatively: draw, write, create*
- 6. Blessing & Benediction Your blessing upon others.*

Prayer Stage 1:

Pausing before God

Pausing:

“Be still and know that I am God”

Psalm 46:10

This year we are lifting our eyes to Jesus; the author and perfecter of our faith.

*When we pray, God hears us - we're starting a conversation with the creator of the universe.
When we pray, we partner with God to seek His kingdom.*

1. Pausing:

Pray: As I enter prayer now, I pause to be still; to breathe slowly; to re-centre my scattered senses upon the presence of God.

A breath prayer is a short simple sentence that can be said in one breath, and repeated. This time of prayer helps you transition from your life of busyness, to being aware of the presence of our holy Lord.

You may wish to repeat one of the following phrases (or a bible verse that centres your thoughts on Him).

Pray it out loud or in a gentle whisper

My God and my all

Father, I belong to you

To you be all praise

To God be the glory

Lord of all

King of Kings, Lord of Lords

Your amazing grace

(You may also wish to pray that God will help you focus on him for this hour)

You may wish to pause for 5-10 minutes

Prayer Stage 2:

Adoration: Rejoicing & worshipping our Lord

You are worthy, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honour and power, for you created all things, and by your will they were created and have their being."

Revelations 4: 11

You may wish to worship God at this time through listening to some worship music and meditating on his word. Read the words silently, then read them out loud, finally pray them. This version is from the Message, but you may wish to use your preferred bible translation.

Psalm 96: 1-13 (The Message)

1 Sing God a brand-new song! Earth and everyone in it, sing!

Sing to God - worship God! Shout the news of his victory from sea to sea,

Take the news of his glory to the lost, News of his wonders to one and all!

For God is great, and worth a thousand Hallelujahs. His terrible beauty makes the gods look cheap;

Pagan gods are mere tatters and rags. God made the heavens -

Royal splendour radiates from him, A powerful beauty sets him apart.

Bravo, God, Bravo! Everyone join in the great shout: Encore! In awe before the beauty, in awe before the might.

Bring gifts and celebrate,

Bow before the beauty of God, Then to your knees - everyone worship!

Get out the message - God Rules! He put the world on a firm foundation; He treats everyone fair and square.

Let's hear it from Sky, With Earth joining in, And a huge round of applause from Sea.

12 Let Wilderness turn cartwheels, Animals, come dance, Put every tree of the forest in the choir -

13 An extravaganza before God as he comes, As he comes to set everything right on earth, Set everything right, treat everyone fair.

Rejoice - thank God for those things which are obvious. But also thank Him for non-obvious things which we sometimes forget - random acts of kindness, being healthy, a positive song or meal. Relish and savour these moments in gratitude to the Lord.

If you are at church: look at our buildings, consider the faithful servants that have gone before and prepared the way. Rejoice in His Bride.

Rejoice in your church community St Stephens – praise God for your brothers and sisters in Christ, praise him for the things you have learnt about him at the church.

Rejoice in our world: This beautiful creation, that reveals the goodness of the creator that breathed life into it. Every sunset, every sunrise, every living thing proclaims his glory.

This time of rejoicing and worshiping may take 10-15 minutes

Prayer Stage 3:

Confession: Repentance, Forgiveness and restoration

When we draw near to God, we become acutely aware of His holiness and acutely aware of our own sin. Sin gets in the way of our relationship with God and our relationship with others.

The cross reminds us that Jesus paid the ultimate price and died for your sins. If you have a candle before you, it reminds us of God's purifying fire – in Him we find forgiveness and transformation.

5 minutes:

Spend some time asking God to examine your heart and reveal to you sins that you need to deal with. They may involve addictions, anger, pride, envy, and unforgiveness.

You may wish to name them out loud or write them down on in a personal confession prayer.

5 minutes:

What do you want to say to God?

Jesus told us: I have come that you may have life, and have it to the full.

Read Psalm 51:

¹ Have mercy on me, O God,

according to your unfailing love;

according to your great compassion

blot out my transgressions.

² Wash away all my iniquity

and cleanse me from my sin.

³ For I know my transgressions,

and my sin is always before me.

⁴ Against you, you only, have I sinned

and done what is evil in your sight;

so you are right in your verdict

and justified when you judge.

⁵ Surely I was sinful at birth,

sinful from the time my mother conceived me.

⁶ Yet you desired faithfulness even in the womb;

you taught me wisdom in that secret place.

⁷ Cleanse me with hyssop, and I will be clean;
wash me, and I will be whiter than snow.

⁸ Let me hear joy and gladness;
let the bones you have crushed rejoice.

⁹ Hide your face from my sins
and blot out all my iniquity.

¹⁰ Create in me a pure heart, O God,
and renew a steadfast spirit within me.

¹¹ Do not cast me from your presence
or take your Holy Spirit from me.

¹² Restore to me the joy of your salvation
and grant me a willing spirit, to sustain me.

¹³ Then I will teach transgressors your ways,
so that sinners will turn back to you.

¹⁴ Deliver me from the guilt of bloodshed, O God,
you who are God my Saviour,
and my tongue will sing of your righteousness.

¹⁵ Open my lips, Lord,
and my mouth will declare your praise.

¹⁶ You do not delight in sacrifice, or I would bring it;
you do not take pleasure in burnt offerings.

¹⁷ My sacrifice, O God, is ^(b) a broken spirit;
a broken and contrite heart
you, God, will not despise.

Jesus promises us that he forgives our sins.

*“... only Jesus was left, with the woman still standing there. **10** Jesus straightened up and asked her, “Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?” **11** “No one, sir,” she said. “Then neither do I condemn you,” Jesus declared. “Go now and leave your life of sin.” - John 8:9b-11*

Praise God that your sins have been forgiven.

This stage may take 10-15 minutes

Prayer Stage 4:

Supplication: Thy Kingdom come: Interceding for our land:

"I urge, then, first of all, that petitions, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for all people— for kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness..."

1 Timothy 2:1-27

How to intercede for global events like COVID19: The three Ps

What?

When faced with the reality of a crisis, this prayer format helps us to pray in a simple, practical way.

Why?

"God does His best work for the world through prayer. God's greatest glory and man's highest good are secured by prayer. Prayer forms the godliest men and makes the godliest world." E. M. Bounds

It can be helpful to focus our emergency intercessions at times of large-scale crisis on three particular groups:

- 1. People afflicted:** We ask God to comfort those who suddenly find their lives torn apart by grief, loss, fear and trauma.
- 2. Pastors and Priests:** We ask God to give courage to church leaders seeking to bring Christ's presence and hope in the midst of trauma and profound questions of pain.
- 3. Peacemakers, politicians and police/public/private health workers:** We ask God to give clarity and wisdom to government agencies and NGOs, doctors, nurses, paramedics and support workers: blessing and supporting their efforts to bring justice, reconciliation and aid.

You may wish to pray for one of these particular groups, or extend your intercessory prayer for:

- *Our world (thinking of those serving God in other parts of the world)*
- *Our country*
- *Our local and universal church*
- *Our homes*
- *Our families*
- *Prodigal children*

The following prayer format has been taken from the Prayer Course set of resources. <https://prayercourse.org/toolshed/>

Prayer Stage 5: Thy Kingdom Come: Our hope for the future is in Christ

Creative Contemplative Prayer:

Our Father who created the heavens and the earth, made us in his image.

You may wish to pray with a creative response.

Spend some time thanking God for his creativity.

Thy Kingdom Come is our prayer.

You may wish to draw a picture that is your prayer for what you would like the world to be when God's kingdom comes.

You may wish to write a poem, a song, or a prayer, that is your response to being with God.

What is your desire moving forward?

Your response might be focussed on:

God's character

God's promises

God's provision

God's transforming grace

Prayer Station 6:

Blessing others.

One of the joys of being part of a church is loving caring and praying for each other.

In response, you can pray for that prayer concern, then pray a prayer of blessing upon those.

A blessing or benediction can be traced back to the book of Numbers where Aaron and his sons bless the Israelites with this blessing:

*“The Lord bless you
and keep you;
the Lord make his face shine on you
and be gracious to you;
the Lord turn his face toward you
and give you peace.”
(Numbers 6:24-26)*

You may wish to use a different blessing from the bible or write your own.

May the love of the Father,
the tenderness of the Son,
and the presence of the Spirit,
gladden your heart
and bring peace to your soul,
this day and all days, Amen.

We would ask that you pray for some of the following prayers that have come through to the church recently:

- That our children and youth might not lose their connections without a youth pastor. That they might support each other and grow in their relationship with God.
- That our church might have resolution regarding its leadership – that God’s plan might unfold
- For health, healing and wholeness for Jim and Diana as they lead us
- For God’s Spirit to empower our church in unity and grace as we grow in maturity
- For healing and health for Jeremy

You may also take this opportunity to bless:

- Our children, teenagers and young adults
- Our various ministries
- Our different congregations.
- Our city
- Our state
- Our church leaders (staff, wardens, youth and children leaders, Bishop, Archbishop)