

Please photocopy these pages and distribute to Children's Ministry leaders/ teachers and as a 'Take-home' for parents and grandparents

PRAYER AT HOME AND IN THE CLASSROOM

Do you know where the first mention of prayer is found in the Bible? Genesis 4:26!

To Set also a son was born; and he named him Enosh.

*At that time people began to **invoke** the name of the LORD.*

Here's a great place to start in thinking about prayer. Invoke literally means 'in voice' or 'to call'. Prayer also involves listening. *Be still and know that I am God.* Psalm 46:10

It is through our prayers, as we call upon God and listen for the Spirit's nudging that God uses us to be change agents in the world. Our faithfulness, our love for one another, our desire to seek justice and peace, our witness in the world and around the corner is shaped as we come to know God. Our prayers are indispensable to God's work in the world. For many of us, that world begins with the children and youth in our midst.

As adults we have the responsibility to:

Be attentive to our own prayer life

Create an environment where prayer will flourish

Help children recognize God's presence in their day-to-day activities

Help children and families grow into the rhythm and habit of daily prayer

You as a Prayer Model

Parents, grandparents, and teachers must never forget their own actions and attitudes are imitated in the lives of the children and youth they spend time with. One of the most profound illustrations capturing this notion is Tim Ladwig's cover design for *When Daddy Prays* (see resource listing). A small boy, looking into the floor-length mirror sees his father's image. Here's a poignant reminder that children want to be just like the adults who love and care for them.

Most adults with vibrant prayer practices grew up watching significant adults in their life pray with and for them. Will you..

- -be open to the God's power in the mystery of prayer?
- -be moved and transformed by the holy Spirit so daily prayer is an essential and natural aspect of your day to day routine?
- -pray daily for children? Teachers, put your class list in your Bible or with your devotional materials. Select one or more names each day.
- -explain to the children the ways in which you are holding them in prayer?
- -pray over your home each morning or the Sunday school classroom as you enter it?
- -be transparent? Don't be afraid to admit to the children when anger, conflict, discouragement or busy lives became a roadblock to prayer

- ask other adults (or your congregation's prayer team) to pray with and for you and the children in your class or home?
- invite children and youth to pray for and with you?

Creating a Spiritual Environment for Prayer:

1. Considering creating a small 'sacred space' in your home or classroom where you will gather regularly for prayer and devotions

- use an interesting piece of fabric or ask children to decorate a piece of newsprint, cloth or to paint on the surface of the table
- add a candle, Bible, shells, smooth stones with each person's name on it (have a supply on hand for visitors and guests), a bowl of water in daily remembrance of baptism
- also add a small empty bowl as a reminder that God's abundance is sufficient. Often we get caught up in thinking we must fill our lives to the brim with activities and stuff. In prayer we empty ourselves before God.

2. A sacred space need not always be confined to inside the house or church.

- take advantage of a labyrinth or prayer path your congregation, community, or neighboring church may have
- use parks, hiking trails, a wildlife refuge or even the corner of your own yard or church grounds to be a regular place for prayer

EveryWhere and EveryWay: Invitations and Occasions for Prayer

Surely the Lord is in this place and I did not know it! –Genesis 28:16

Make your prayer times "out of the ordinary! When Jesus used common, ordinary materials to teach, preach, heal, and when he slipped away to pray in solitude before daylight, we are reminded of the sacredness of our day-to-day realities.

1. Children are never too young to learn to pray. Studies have show that babies born to mothers who regularly repeated the Lord's prayer or frequently sang a particular prayer during pregnancy, became alert and animated when hearing the same prayers.

2. We know there is not just one stance for prayer, Yet, long before they can understand prayer time or put words to it, infants and toddlers who are taught to fold their hands, are given a "multi-sensory signal" that will stay with them for the rest of their lives.

3. Prayer is always associated with story so allow time to tell one another stories of the community, the family, the world, the workplace or school or church, and surround the stories with prayer.

4. Use the expected rhythms of your home or classroom as well as unexpected surprises to involve children in prayer.

- ⊙ in new things and goodbyes
 - as you welcome a new student or when a pet dies
- ⊙ in homecoming and leave taking
 - at family reunions or before your vacation
- ⊙ in times of fear or joy
 - when parent's divorce or when the soccer team wins
- ⊙ in the car or on a bike path
 - when you hear a siren or at the first sign of a new season
- ⊙ in celebration and concern
 - when the braces come off or at military deployment

Prayer Ideas for Class and Home

In addition to the inspiration, motivation and practical ideas you'll find in the resources listed below, a few additional suggestions include:

Prayer Cube-a simple and comfortable way to introduce prayer in the classroom and home. For explanation and one model Visit www.elca.org/

God's Cell Number-a fun way to teach about God's faithfulness. Tell kids, "God's says 'Call Me! My number is Jeremiah 33:3.'" *Call to me and I will answer you and I will tell you great and hidden things that you have not known.*

'Awesome God' Moments-take time at the end of the day, the class, the week, the family celebration, or as you conclude your vacation let each person name the way God's love and grace has been revealed.

Prayer Journaling-provide a visual dimension to on-going prayer in your class or home by putting up a white board or newsprint sheet for each person to jot down a prayer concern or joy as it arises or to post a memento or reminder of a particular prayer need. Take time at the end of the week or the month to review and give thanks and praise.

Kid's Own Book of Prayers-involve you class or family in making a 40-day Lenten collective prayer book to share with friends, family, and others in the congregation. Each person can write (by hand or computer) a portion of more prayers. Add their own drawings and then photocopy and assemble. It could also be a 31 day monthly prayer book.

Kids as Prayer Leaders-emphasize that even the youngest child can pray and can also lead others in prayer. Let a child say a series of simple prayer phrase that is then repeated by others. Might children be asked to be prayer leaders in your congregation's worship service?

Suggested Resources:

A Family Discipleship Calendar, ELCA Christian Education, 978-6-0002-2040-2.
Available in 25-count packs by calling 800/328-4648 or on-line at
<http://archive.elca.org/christianeducation/CEPlanner/PDF/ChristianEdPlanningGuide%2031.pdf>

Heart Ignite: 166 Engaging Prayer Experiences for All Ages, Griner & Monroe, Youth and Family Institute www.youthandfamilyinstitute.org or 1-877-239-2492

50 Ways to Pray: Practices from Many Traditions and Times, Teresa Blythe, Abingdon Press. 0-6873-3104-8.

A World of Prayer, selected by Jeremy Brooks, Eerdmans Books. 9780802852854 (a picture book with beautiful illustrations and short prayers from children across the globe)

Children and Prayer: A Shared Pilgrimage; Betty Shannon Cloyd, Upper Room Books, 0-8358-0803.

Children Praying: Why and How to Pray with Your Children, Joan Bel Geddes, Soren Books, 1-893732-04-4.

Peanut Butter and Jelly Prayers, Julie Sevig, Morehouse Publishing. 0-8192-2275-5.

Teaching Prayer in the Classroom: Experiences for Children and Youth, Delia Halvorson, Abingdon Press. 0-687-06425-2.

When Daddy Prays, Nickki Grimes, Eerdmans Books. 0-8028-5266-1. (another beautifully illustrated book for children **and** the adults they are watching)

Check out the latest offerings for prayer and lifelong learning from Augsburg Fortress Publishers. Visit the online store at www.augsburgfortress.org or call 800/328-4648.