



Leading the Prayers of Intercession

1. Please go to the place for leading the Intercessions DURING the Creed, so that you can begin straight away with, 'Let us pray for the needs of all.'
2. Introductory words, reflecting on what prayer is, or on the theme of the readings, or anything else, are completely UNNECESSARY, and detract from the task in hand. Start straight in with "Father, we pray for ...", or "Let us pray for ...", etc.
3. Published BOOKS of intercessions are wordy and not helpful, especially as they often follow a different order of subjects than the 1982 Liturgy requires (see 4 below). If set words are desired, use one of the forms in the Appendix at the end of the 1982 Liturgy. All that is needed is to **pray** for people and their needs.
4. In the biddings, always use the STRUCTURE and order set in the 1982 Liturgy for the Intercessions, as this allows people to know what is coming next:
 - a. The world and its peoples - justice, peace, governments, community.
 - b. Those in need - sickness, hunger, bereavement, pain and oppression.
 - c. The Church and its members - the Bishop, those in all kinds of ministry, those preparing for Baptism or Confirmation, this congregation, other churches.
 - d. The departed - any who died recently, and others we wish to remember.
 - e. Ourselves and one another.

It is important to include particular names of people who ask for prayer (Christian name is sufficient).

Don't include GIVING THANKS in the Prayers. Thanksgiving occurs elsewhere in the Service, especially the Great Thanksgiving.

Each of these sections should have: a **short bidding** for particular people or needs; a **silence**; and a **response**.

5. The SILENCE between the biddings is ESSENTIAL, so that people can actually pray. About 10 seconds each time is right (count "one thousand, two thousand ...).
6. Use a SIMPLE response such as:
 - Lord, hear us, Lord, **graciously hear us.**
 - Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**
7. Use AS FEW WORDS as possible. About 300 words (including responses) is right. You do not have to be creative or original, simplicity is best, and 'less is more.' We cannot pray explicitly for everything, so decide what to focus on. The silence allows people to include other things, aloud or in silence.
8. Be careful not to give the impression of exhorting or informing people (or even God!) via the prayers. It helps to say "We pray FOR ..." rather than "We pray THAT" Prayers that say 'Help us to see that ...', or 'Remind us that ...' should be avoided at all costs. They come across as preaching, not praying.
9. Always CONCLUDE the Intercessions with, "We bring all these prayers through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**" (or similar).

THANK YOU for offering this service to your church. I hope this guide is clear and helpful.

Bishop Ian

An Example of Prayers of Intercession

Let us pray.

Father, we pray for the world and all people,
for the people of N. and an end to war and suffering,
for reconcilers and peacemakers,
for those most affected by climate change
and those who work to prevent it,
for those who govern us and represent us,
and for this community and this country.

Silence

Lord in your mercy,
Hear our prayer

For all who are sick in body and mind,
for those who grieve,
for those who suffer prejudice or abuse,
and for those who ask our prayers, N, N, N, N, and N.

Silence

Lord in your mercy,
Hear our prayer

For your Church
and for all people of faith,
for the leaders and servants of the Church,
for Ian, our bishop,
for our Vestry members who will meet this week,
for N. and N. as they prepare for marriage,
and N. as they prepare for Baptism.

Silence

Lord in your mercy,
Hear our prayer

For all who have died,
for those we have known and loved but see no longer,
and all whose lives and deaths are known only to you,
for N and N who died recently,
and N and N whose anniversaries occur this week.

Silence

May they rest in peace,
And rise in glory.

For ourselves and each other, for our needs and concerns.

Silence

Lord in your mercy,
Hear our prayer

Father, hear all these prayers, spoken and unspoken,
for we bring them to you through Jesus Christ, our Lord.
Amen.

HEAR OUR PRAYER

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THE 1982 Scottish Liturgy has a very short rubric or instruction in the middle of the service, section 14, headed 'Intercessions.' Although it is summarised in so few words, it is a vital and central part of the liturgy, and indeed of our personal experience of worship. Coming after the readings, the Intercessions are part of our response to the Word of God (the others are the sermon, reflecting on the Word; the Creeds, responding in faith to the Word; and the Eucharist, giving thanks for the Word). In Intercession ('standing between') we are holding before God the world and the Church, particular places and individual people.

The Intercessions have been part of Christian worship since the early Church. The First Letter to Timothy urges Christians to devote themselves to prayer for all people (1 Timothy 2:1-8). In the 2nd century, in the earliest surviving description of a Christian eucharist in Rome, Justin Martyr, twice mentions intercessory prayer. He refers to it when describing a eucharist after a baptism: the newly baptised are brought into the congregation, and then all "offer prayers in common for ourselves, for those who have just been enlightened and for all people everywhere." He also tells us that after the readings and sermon, "we all stand up together and send up prayers; and as we said before, when we have finished praying, bread and wine and water are brought up."

By the 5th century these Prayers had become too long, and they were replaced by a litany of intercession, as used in the Eastern church at the beginning of the liturgy instead of within it, with short petitions and a congregational response ('kyrie eleison' - Lord, have mercy). In the next century, this was shortened

still further, leaving only 'Lord, have mercy' as we have it today. The 16th century reformers re-introduced the Intercessions, but in a fixed form, such as the Prayer Book's 'Prayer for the Church.' In effect, from the 6th century onward, directly addressing and reflecting the day-to-day needs and situation of the world and the church disappeared from the eucharist.

In the 1960s and 70s, in the period of liturgical renewal that followed Vatican II, revised eucharistic liturgies started reinstating the Intercessions at the heart of the liturgy. The 1982 Scottish Liturgy (and in its 1970s experimental versions) did exactly this, and so, as already noted, we have the short but very clear instruction at section 14:

"Prayer is offered for the world and its people, for those who suffer and those in need, for the Church and its members."

This order is deliberately given, even though many other churches, such as the Church of England's 'Common Worship', follow a different order, starting with the Church. As the commentary by Gianfranco Tellini (one of the authors of 1982 Scottish Liturgy) makes clear, the 1982 order rests on a theological and missional principle: "We have the duty to pray and act for the benefit of the world at large. To pray first of all for the Church and then to recommend to God's gracious goodness the world and its people will not do any more."

The 1982 Scottish Liturgy provides examples for Intercessions in the Appendix. In some congregations these are used without much variation. They are in danger of becoming a modern equivalent of the Prayer Book's fixed 'Prayer for the Church.' In fact they are just





examples of three different styles of composing the Intercessions. Each one is in a different form: form 1 is a litany, a series of short petitions with a response; form 2 has an introduction followed by petitions with response and a final collect; and form 3 has an invitation, followed by specific requests for prayer. They are given as examples, and should be used as such, enabling leaders of intercessions to create something that will help their own congregation to join in this essential act of collective liturgical prayer.

One very significant change in contemporary liturgy is that in many congregations the Intercessions are now led by lay members of the congregation. This is not anti-clericalism (I trust!), but a way of widening involvement in the collective worship of the whole People of God. But whether they are clergy or lay, those who lead the Intercessions are doing something highly significant, something which they are committing themselves to doing well, and so they should expect preparation and training for the task. Published books of intercessions are available, but they often just become pre-packaged forms again. Writing the Intercessions for each occasion is far better, more immediate, simpler, but it is not easy and help is needed. For instance, local clergy may provide guidelines to assist people. There are many good examples around. Here are some points gathered from a few I have come across:

"Stay calm. On the day pray the prayers (this may sound obvious): don't read them, or recite them or present them, but pray them. Have God in your sights, not the rest of us."

"In leading the prayers we are not ... giving a sermon, telling people

As Augustine says, "Work as if everything depended on you; pray as if everything depended on God."

what God thinks, telling God what's what, giving our view on hot issues."

"We pray for ..." is better than "We pray that ..."

"Silence is essential, so people can actually pray."

"Keep it simple. Practise the discipline of saying less and communicating more."

Preparation is so important because, theologically, the Intercessions are not individual prayers but an expression of our baptismal priesthood, the common offering of the whole Church. Which is why those who are able usually stand for them. If this makes Intercession feel like 'work', then that is good, it is 'work', the work of Christ through us.

It may also lead to other 'work' as well. The Intercessions should enlarge our spirits and enlighten our minds, so that we see more of God's will for the world. Our praying for the world will then be joined to our working for it. As Augustine says, "Work as if everything depended on you; pray as if everything depended on God." ◊