

All of us pray in different ways at different stages in our lives. Sometimes our way of praying changes as we grow in our relationship with God.

God has created each one of us as a unique being, so our way of praying is also unique to each individual. Today, prayer is not only confined to Scripture, as the use of pictures, contemporary readings or poetry is also a way to enter into the experience of prayer. Some of us may find it difficult to pray with too many words and feel drawn towards using art and symbols in our prayer. For others it will be praying through touch, or contemplating a picture, an image, a painting, or an icon. Or we may be drawn to exploring shape and colour in prayer. These different ways of praying can help us to enter into the mystery of God's presence, through the artistic gifts of others. In doing so, we also recognise ourselves as co-creators of God.

Book suggestions

Astley, N and Robertson-Pearce, Pamela (eds) (2007) *Soul Food - nourishing poems for starved minds*. Bloodaxe books.

Dickins, Rosie (2014) *The Usborne Art Book about Colour*. Usborne Publishing.

Wallace, Sue (2000) *Multi-Sensory Prayer, over 60 ready-to-use ideas for creative churches and small groups*. Scripture Union Publishing.

Websites

www.prayerwindows.com/art-as-a-prayer

www.Usborne.com/quicklinks

Front cover images: www.wellsprings.org.uk; www.southwark.anglican.org; www.trinitybeth.org; readingtothecore.wordpress.com; www.bitewallpapers.com; K Dixon



Multi-sensory prayer

Prayer using images and symbols



Gazing at an image or holding a symbolic object can be a gateway, a portal into contemplation and communion with God.

As you focus and become absorbed by what it is you have chosen to use, remember it is not the physical attributes that are being worshipped – not the picture, wood, stone or clay itself – but what they represent. Allow yourself to be simply present in the moment, present to God as God is present to you.

Using an image

Look through the pictures provided here and choose one that speaks to you the most. **Holding** the picture, rest your eyes on what you see, and relax into it. Let it still you.

Consider what is before you. Allow your eyes to travel, then rest where your attention is most drawn. What strikes you in what you see? What do you glimpse of God through it? What are you feeling? You may want to **try and position yourself in the picture**. What happens to you as you contemplate your part in it? Does it evoke a memory, an inner image, music, a poem, a song, or a passage of Scripture perhaps? Does it somehow connect with your life – if so, in what way? Why do you think this might be?

You may find there are things you want to say to God, or sense that God is in some way speaking to you.

When you're ready, gently bring yourself back to the room and **end your prayer** by saying thank you or using words that are familiar, such as the Lord's Prayer (Our Father) – whichever feels right and comfortable.

Using prayer stones, a holding cross, or other objects

Hold the object in the palm of your hand, cradling and clenching it in turn, then relaxing your hand. **Feel** its weight and texture.

Consider its story – where it came from: the wind, sun, frost, water and human hands that helped give it its current shape.

Contemplate how that story speaks to you; how does it make you feel? Does it remind you of something? What do you glimpse of God through it? Perhaps you want to think about your own story, and what has led you to today. You may find there are things you want to say to God, or sense that God is in some way speaking to you.

As you hold your cross or stone, know that your yesterday, today and tomorrow are held in the palm of God's hand.

When you're ready, gently bring yourself back to the room and **end your prayer** by saying thank you or using words that are familiar, such as the Lord's Prayer (Our Father) – whichever feels right and comfortable.

