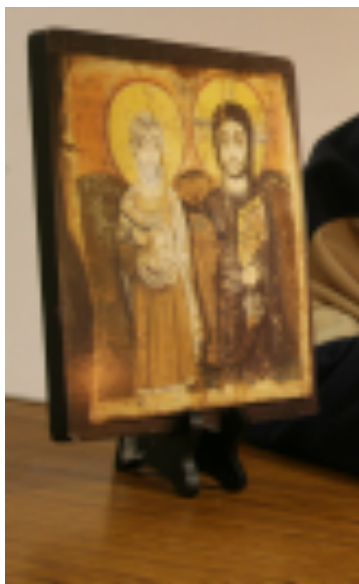

When I choose to pray, I am saying that I trust that life and love will have the last word, even if I wobble sometimes.

The ground for this trust is the raising of Jesus Christ from the dead.

When I pray, even angry prayers, I am saying to God that I want to keep talking rather than walk away. And God promises that he will never walk away from us.



Taking it further...

The spirituality team offer a foundation course in Christian spirituality (Inspire) and a training course for spiritual directors (Engage). We can also run a Week of Accompanied Prayer or a short teaching module on spirituality.

Six to eight times a year there is a Spirituality Day (quiet day or quiet morning) on the mainland or Isle of Wight, on a Saturday 10 till 1 or 3.30. Many local churches also offer quiet days, as do the Sisters of Bethany in Southsea. The spirituality adviser is delighted to come to your church to offer a quiet day or prayer workshop.

The diocesan newspaper, the Pompey Chimes, has up-to-date information, or check the website www.portsmouth.anglican.org.



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Prayer - where to begin?



Reach out to God

When we feel we want to reach out to something mysterious and awesome, sometimes it's good to use words that are already there. The leaflet 'Some basic prayers' offers suggestions. At other times we want to bring what's on our hearts: people, places, situations. It doesn't matter if we can't find the right words. The Bible speaks of God's Spirit praying within us with sighs too deep for words.

God knows what is in our hearts, but it is important for us to speak it out, however muddled we feel. God can still use us as channels of his grace and love to his world.

Prayer gets easier with practice: turning to God night and morning for just a few minutes will help you become more aware of God accompanying you through your day. Having a few prayers in your mental 'knapsack' like the Lord's Prayer and the evening collect will help when you find yourself at a loss for words. Perhaps add a psalm or a short Bible passage too.



Fill my hands, Lord, with blessings, and my heart with wonder.



Lost in wonder

Sometimes we just want to be still and savour God's presence. We can hold the stillness by using a short prayer word every time we feel ourselves distracted, e.g. 'Jesus', 'peace', 'love'. A cross, ikon or candle to look at can be useful. A quiet space like a church or a park can help too.

Lighting a candle can symbolise our prayer going up to God, and also the light of Christ illuminating the world and the person we are praying for. My prayer is only a small part of a great web of love and concern stretching around the world, and every prayer is an invitation to God to come in power.

Hands-on prayer

Prayer stations that offer activities like untying knots or putting pebbles into water can stimulate our hearts to pray from a deep level. Walking a labyrinth can help us reflect on our journey with God and the twists and turns we have taken. Prayer beads, either for the set rosary prayers or for other prayers of your choice, can be helpful. You will find your mind turning to God as soon as you pick up the beads. These or a cross in your pocket can be something to hold onto at difficult moments in the day. For the same reason, it's good to have a regular 'prayer corner' at home that will help you still down and turn to God when you come to sit in it.

Unanswered prayer

God always answers, but 'No' can be very painful to hear. For some people it breaks their trust in God when a loved one suffers a tragedy. Faith says that God's love is boundless. What cannot be mended on earth (the natural processes of ageing and disease, as well as human evil) will be restored in heaven. Life remains hard and God does not insure us against bad things happening. But he promises that whatever happens he will be with us. And at the end 'behold, I make all things new.'