**A Sunflower prayer**

This prayer helps children to grow spiritually using the example of

how to cultivate sunflowers. It builds on the sunflower worship sent to schools this week.

Set the tone of the worship by copying the link below and showing the upbeat film of sunflower fields. Ask the children to think about the emotions they feel when they see the flowers.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NEXyY2NZGKI>

After children have watched the video, play again and freeze on a picture of large sunflower. As the children to imagine that sunflowers are people – what would they be like (happy/kind/strong?) Ask the children to justify their choices. Why do they think that sunflowers are sometimes called ‘the flowers of hope’?

Give each child an A5 piece of paper and a selection of appropriately coloured crayons/felt tips, chalks. As you pray the words below, ask the children to draw a sunflower in silence as they focus on your words.

 Speak slowly and quietly to contrast with the film.

### Today we are going to ****ask God to show us the support and structure we need to grow spiritually****

We are like God’s Sunflowers.  The bright yellows, light yellows, light browns, dark browns, orange browns, oranges and golds – they make look the same but each sunflower is unique in its own way. To grow sunflowers, we need to know how they grow, where best to grow them, and how much sunshine they need, water, etc. Sunflowers are easy to grow if you follow the steps in a gardening book.  Just a few easy steps and the result is breathtaking.

In our school, we are an assorted group of different people coming together as one – like a field of sunflowers. We also have instructions on how to live - we learn from the teachings of Jesus in the Bible. Following in His footsteps shows us how to be kind and how to serve other people, how to make others’ lives better, how to make people happy. Like the sunflower, we need to be guided to grow. It’s easy to give up when things are difficult. But like the sunflower, we can grow in the most difficult of circumstances with God’s help.

Sunflowers will grow quickly in the sun and heat but at a certain point they need a structure, wall, or each other to lean against so that they have ideal growing conditions

Likewise, we need people that we can rely on to help us grow - family, friends, a church and a school.

Ephesians 4:17-24 says that we are to live as children of light. Like the sunflower needs the sun, we need the guidance of God. At each step of our growth God holds us up, he helps guide us. He lights the way.

**Lord, help us to turn our hearts towards you. Guide our steps and be our wall of strength so we can lean against you as we grow. Help us to listen carefully, think about our words and actions and comfort each other when we need help. Help us to appreciate everyone we meet and learn from those you send our way.**

**Amen**

Ask the children to keep their sunflower picture at home and use it as a reminder that God, family, friends and school are always there to help them to grow.

Once the prayers have been written, ask the children to carefully fold the envelope flaps to hide their prayers. Once this is done, invite the children one at a time to place their envelope with the flaps facing up onto the surface of the water in the bowl / container. The child can then watch while their envelope flaps gently open to reveal their prayer. This is a visual way of offering their prayers to God. It is helpful for each child to think about their prayer as they watch the water interact with the paper to open the flaps.

Clearly this would take a long time for all the children to place their prayers in the bowl and watch them being ‘sent’. Our suggestion would be that the sending of the prayer is an activity available to the children throughout the day to do individually. In this way, prayers could be more privately sent and then the child can dispose of the envelope afterwards if they wished.

**Further reflection:**

Think about what Jesus said in the quote from Mark’s gospel (see image on the left). He is reassuring us that God always listens to us.

Does this always mean that we will get what we pray for?

Why/why not?





