



On your marks

One of the key regular ingredients in an act of worship with children present is a version of the Lord's Prayer. There is of course the ongoing debate about whether we use the traditional words (with the thees and thous) or a more modern version. However, whichever one you go with, it can still remain meaningless to the children unless you introduce a way of helping it to connect with the reality of our everyday lives. What follows is a simple set of actions that could become a regular feature associated with saying this prayer whenever you are all together in church. The actions will help the words to stick as well as open up clues as to what this precious prayer means.

Get set

No particular preparation is needed other than the leader learning the actions so she or he can teach the rest. Maybe this could be learned first as part of a Sunday group session and then be brought into church for the all-age worship, where on its first appearance the children will need to teach the adults.

Go!

1 If possible, ask the congregation to stand in a circle around the outside of any chairs or pews and hold hands.

2 With each section of the prayer here are the actions to learn:

Our Father - *hands joined*

In heaven - *hands joined and raised high*

Hallowed be your name - *heads bowed*

Your kingdom come - *release hands and make a gesture of invitation*

Your will be done - *a salute*

On earth as it is in heaven - *all stamp feet for 'earth' and then clap high above heads for 'heaven'*

Give us this day our daily bread - *hands out ready to receive*

Forgive us our sins, as we forgive those who sin against us - *hands clasped together in front of the body and then released; turn and shake hands with the people either side*

Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil - *hands together in front of the face, shielding away temptation and then one hand up as a stop sign*

For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory - *one hand pointing up high; the other hand raised in a clenched fist; finally, both hands raised above the head high, with fingers spread*

Forever and ever - *draw a large circle in front of yourself with one hand several times*

Amen - *use the popular 'wind-up' Amen... with a long drawn-out 'A', accompanied by the imaginary cranking of a handle, and followed by the word 'men' being shouted loud along with a big clap of the hands*

3 Here are some ideas for a possible teaching commentary as you learn the actions for the prayer:



- It is a prayer without **me** or **I**
- It calls us to Christian community and not to individualism, as **together** we discover God
- He is **Father** (intimate) and **heavenly** (cosmic); a friend and King
- 'Hallowed' means very special and holy
- It starts with God's rule, God's will and God's name!
- There is a Trinitarian pattern within the prayer: God provides (Father), God pardons (Son), God protects (Holy Spirit)
- Forgiveness is central
- The pattern of the prayer is: God, God, God, us, us, us, God, God
- 'Amen' means I agree

4. Some other comments:

- Each phrase is a signpost to lead us into the heart of God.
- John Stott, writing about the prayer says: *the whole point of the prayer is to teach us what sort of God our God is, and what sort of priorities a Christian should have.*
- Tertullian, an early Christian writer, said that this prayer is a summary of the whole Christian gospel.