



On your marks

During Lent, as Christians prepare again to enter the mystery of Easter, it has traditionally been a time to set aside longer to pray. Maybe this Lent could be an opportunity to help your group to learn a new prayer together or to understand better a prayer they already know. The following is an action prayer idea for Lent which could be a regular short feature for each session of the Sundays in Lent.

Get set

You will need to learn whatever prayer you choose! There are modern versions of traditional Lenten Collects, which you could select. Alternatively, there may be prayers from your own Church tradition that the children hear often in church but which you would like them to work with more carefully this Lent. You could also look through books of prayers for children and decide on a Lenten prayer that you feel would suit the age-range of your group and also one that suggests possible actions to accompany it.

Go!

1. Introduce the idea of Lent as a time to get ready for the events of Holy Week and Easter Sunday. This festival is so important for Christians that it needs six weeks to get ready! One way to get ready is to learn and use a special prayer so that during Lent we can give more time to talking and listening to God.
2. Introduce the special prayer that you have chosen. Talk through the meaning and any longer or more difficult words.
3. One way to remember this prayer (and any other prayer) is to learn it with actions. In fact it is good to remember that prayer and action should always go together! Together with the group, work out suitable actions that could accompany each group of words in the prayer. Practice this together. Alternatively, you may well have already worked out actions of your own to teach the children.
4. Make this 'prayer and action' feature a regular part of each of the Sunday sessions in Lent. It may be helpful also to light a candle as a stilling focus before you say your special prayer together. You may also like to introduce a picture from the Easter story each week so that this builds up into a whole gallery to set near the candle as a further focus for your prayer.
5. The words of the prayer could also be illustrated by the group. Spend a little extra time in one of early sessions drawing, painting or sculpting something that this prayer suggests to them. This could then be put together as a Lenten gallery as another focus for your regular 'prayer and action'.
6. When you meet together with the whole Church in worship, make sure that you and the children's group teach the congregation your special Lenten prayer.