



On your marks

This is an idea to help people pray together, based on the theme of seeds. It might fit into a harvest service. It is suitable for all ages but tiny children will need to be helped not to eat the seed. Perhaps an adult or older child could hold it for them.

Get set

You'll need enough seeds for everyone to have at least one each. Sunflower seeds, peas or similar are big enough to handle and small enough to be symbolic. You'll also need seven copies of the Bible passages below, each one highlighted to show which one needs to be read out. Hand these out to seven different readers, sitting all over your building.

Go!

1. Enthuse about a gardening or farming project from another country, such as the Eden Project's *Gardens for Life* project in three continents; Christian Aid's work or work supported by your church or diocese in another country.
2. You might like to tell the parable of the Sower from Luke 8:4-8 first. There is a fun version in [The Gospels Unplugged](#) or a quieter Godly Play version.
3. Display some gently changing pictures of different sorts of ground: a trodden-down path, rocky ground, weedy or thorny ground and fertile ground, and as they are on display, ask people to think or talk in pairs about some of the following questions, depending on who is present:
Which part of this parable do you like best?
Which part do you find most puzzling?
Which part of the parable do you think is something like your own life?
Which part of the parable do you think is something like your church?
What do you think God wants to say to you through this parable?
4. Give everyone a seed to hold. If you have a farmer or a gardener or a botanist, they might like to lead this part, talking from their own experience. The aim of this part is to help everyone, young and old, realise what a miracle a seed is. Talk about the seeds for a moment: let everyone have time to grasp how small they are, what they might turn into, how you have to bury a seed before it can grow and other wonderful things about seeds you have known.
5. Ask everyone to hold their seed in the palm of their hand as you pray together. It might be good to display the beautiful images you have found on different websites as you pray. All Bible passages are from the NIV. Teach the response that will come between each passage:

Leader: You are the Lord of the harvest.

All: **Help us sow seeds of your kingdom.**

Then God said, 'Let the land produce vegetation: seed-bearing plants and trees on the land that bear fruit with seed in it, according to their various kinds.' And it was so. The land produced vegetation:



plants bearing seed according to their kinds and trees bearing fruit with seed in it according to their kinds. And God saw that it was good (Genesis 1:11-12).

For as the soil makes the shoot come up and a garden causes seeds to grow, so the Sovereign Lord will make righteousness and praise spring up before all nations (Isaiah 61:11).

He who goes out weeping, carrying seed to sow, will return with songs of joy, carrying sheaves with him (Psalm 126:6).

I tell you the truth, unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds (John 12:24).

He told them another parable: 'The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed, which a man took and planted in his field. Though it is the smallest of all your seeds, yet when it grows, it is the largest of garden plants and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and perch in its branches' (Matthew 13:31-32).

(Paul said,) 'I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but God made it grow' (1 Corinthians 3:6).

Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, as clear as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb down the middle of the great street of the city. On each side of the river stood the tree of life, bearing twelve crops of fruit, yielding its fruit every month. And the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations (Revelation 22:1-2).

6. Finish with a prayer like the one below and invite everyone to come and plant their seed in a pot or window box or seed tray that some willing volunteer will look after and eventually plant out the beautiful or tasty results for all to enjoy.

Father and farmer, you work your miracles through the dirt and dark of everyday lives. You bring life out of death; you recycle what is rotten, you provide nourishment and shelter out of tiny beginnings. Give us your gardener's patience to work and watch and wait, to nurture what is delicate, weed out what is harmful, and rejoice when the harvest gives *your town* a taste of heaven.