Welcome to the second e-newsletter on prayer and spirituality in Suffolk. This one looks at places for praying.

Prayer is possible anywhere and many of us pray ‘on the go’ wherever we are. But particular places can help us to pray and to recognise that God is near.

For some people finding a helpful place means going for a walk to be part of the changing seasons and under the big sky. Others value the spaces in buildings, particularly cathedrals and churches.*

We can also shape areas in our own church, at home, and in other places to help us focus on God. Some people need a beautiful display with a symbolic object. Others find books are important, including the Bible and books of prayers. Still others appreciate having things they can respond to and do. The examples on pages 2 - 5 show how people in Suffolk are exploring the possibilities.

What can you do?

I have also begun to explore with churches and other groups a way to become aware of God’s grace so there’s a brief introduction on page 6. Some events in the region are noted on page 7.

I hope these e-newsletters spark conversation and exploration locally. Your thoughts and comments are always welcome to me too. I hear one church house group printed pages of Growing Roots 1 to start talking about their own ways of praying.

Finally, if this e-newsletter was passed on to you and you want to receive it directly please contact me, Anne Spalding, Spirituality Advisor, on anne.spalding@cofesuffolk.org or 01394 610065.

* For exploration in Suffolk see http://www.stedscathedral.co.uk/ or http://www.angelsandpinnacles.org.uk/ or the ‘100 Years 100 Treasures’ books (available from your local church).
**A New Prayer Area in a Church**

Jill Rood describes what was needed in their Suffolk village church and how they made it a reality:

*No Biblical scholar would ever be able to assess how many hours Jesus spent in prayer. However, they would all agree that it was considerable; fundamental to his personal life and the backbone of his ministry.*

St Peter’s church lies within the thriving village of Thurston, population 3500, encompassing all ages.

Along with many churches, we have been meeting to re-evaluate our role as Christians within the community and how our church can better serve the needs of our parish.

Discussion identified our need for quietness and reflection within our noisy and busy world. (Town Pastors are now a recognised part of Pop Festivals at Reading and Latitude 40 where they minister to young people seeking refuge, prayer and quietness.) The Prayer and Meditation Corner project was thus born.

The church has a side altar but it was considered too public for meditation and the need for privacy and comfort was paramount as we wanted all parishioners to feel at ease. A redundant space was identified and, by using pews as a boundary, a space was created. Stained wood panelling and the church building created two walls whilst a column gives privacy.

A rug, armchair and table, three pews, Bible and prayer books together with a Prayer Display Cross are now in situ. Pew runners, banners, cushions and lights are to be added shortly. The corner is available during daylight hours.

The corner is, for me, a place of relaxation, a place to focus on the importance of my relationship with God and to give to Him my concerns and plans hopefully gaining strength and encouragement within my time with Him. We pray that this will serve as a real blessing to the village.
A Season-by-Season Prayer Area in a Church

Helen Mitchell describes the prayer area in their church, used through all the year:

St Gregory’s Church is in the centre of Sudbury, next to the Croft, a lovely green space leading down to the water meadows. It is open every day for prayer and reflection, and an area of the church is specially set aside to help those who come to meet with God in prayer.

There is a table with either a focus for prayer or a more interactive prayer activity, which changes with the seasons. Pictured is the focus for Epiphany suggesting how we might join the Magi in adoration of the Christ-Child. In Advent, there was an opportunity to write our advent hopes and longings on coloured strips of paper and join them up to make a paper chain of hopes. This was used to help decorate the Christmas tree.

There are also candles to light and a prayer board on which intercessions can be placed, which will then be offered in prayer. These facilities are both well used and appreciated by many visitors who drop in during the day.

On Thursday evenings this area is used for our contemplative prayer group which meets for an hour including 25 minutes of silent prayer. Learning, through the way of Christian meditation, to unhook our minds from our own thoughts and open ourselves to God’s loving presence within us is a wonderful source of peace and healing in today’s busy world.

A Prayer Area at Home

This changing display is made up of reminders of people and places placed around a cross cut out of wood.
A Prayer Labyrinth

Some prayer spaces are set out for a particular occasion. Lesley and Andrew Norburn tell of the practice at their church:

*It is rapidly becoming a tradition now that on Good Friday and Easter Saturday we set out a labyrinth on the floor of the church at Ingham near Bury St Edmunds. The setting out of the maze is in itself a spiritual experience undertaken in prayer. Walking the maze is an interactive experience, people being encouraged to take their shoes off to feel the floor, and to take their time as they travel around the maze, experiencing through taste, feel, and smell, something of the Easter story.*

*Building brick walls, anointing a representative body with myrrh and planting seeds in soil are all part of the experience, and we find that it is enjoyed by people of all ages. Although the nave is quite small, many people take their time and on average it takes 30 minutes to travel the full pathway. In the centre is a real cross, and space to sit at the foot of it. Music is played and at the end, a bowl of blessed water in the font is available for people to renew their baptism vows should they wish to. Refreshments and a toilet are available, and there are people on hand to listen if anyone wants – some always do.*

*This year the Labyrinth is open on Good Friday 18 April 12noon to 18:00 and Holy Saturday 19 April 10:00 to 17:00*

*If you want to know more, e-mail Lesley and Andrew Norburn at andrewandlesley.norburn@btinternet.com*
Creative Prayer Spaces: The Fusion

Lucy Summers has been discovering interactive prayer and is making places for other young people to join in:

*In this modern world, praying sometimes isn’t really a huge priority in young people’s society. As a youth myself, I know that prayer doesn’t happen often in many schools anymore so it’s sometimes not such of a natural thing to young people. Growing up, I always struggled with knowing how to pray as it wasn’t something I was surrounded with when being at school. However, this is where creative prayer really has fitted in with my life.*

Creative prayer is praying in ways that are a bit more practical and interactive, such as painting, or using the senses to interact such as visual things. I have really been influenced by the globally known 24/7 prayer movement, as they are very keen on creative prayer and actually have a bank of different ideas on their website ([http://uk.24-7prayer.com/creative-bank/](http://uk.24-7prayer.com/creative-bank/)). Creative prayer involves several different activities that encourage people to connect with God using interesting and creative ways.

I have found this really works with young people as it’s a fun and relevant method to talk to God. The tasks appeal to young people and include ways of responding to injustices in the world. Creative prayer rooms can have a very spiritual atmosphere as mood lighting, music and cushion / beanbag zones usually tend to play a large role in these rooms.

The Fusion is a new prayer movement based across Ipswich that encourages young people to pray by the way of creative prayer. I’ve been appointed by Ipswich in Prayer to set this up and my main aim is to train the future prayer warriors of the church. In the next year or two I hope to build up a forum of young prayer leaders in local churches to host their own prayer events.

You can learn more about The Fusion on [http://www.networkipswich.org.uk/Articles/380126/Network_Ipswich/Action_Zones/Prayer/The_Fusion.aspx](http://www.networkipswich.org.uk/Articles/380126/Network_Ipswich/Action_Zones/Prayer/The_Fusion.aspx)

and can contact Lucy on [thefusion.ipswich@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:thefusion.ipswich@yahoo.co.uk)
Growing Roots

Noticing God’s Grace

Anne Spalding has begun working with churches, deaneries and other groups to notice God’s grace for themselves and to explore how to know more of God’s grace in their own place:

Life is full of changes. Some of them we plan and welcome but others are forced upon us whether we like it or not. And in these changes we usually lose some things and gain others. So my question is whether, in your present changes, you are losing or gaining opportunities for God’s grace to be known?

Not everyone finds it easy to identify God’s grace but, in the Christian tradition, one approach is based on St Ignatius’ Examen of Conscience. Here we take time to reflect on what is life-giving now (Jesus came to bring abundant life; John 10.10) and on where we feel closest to God; also on what is draining life away or making us feel far from God.

Once we can recognise the touches of God’s grace, we can talk about what is important for knowing the life of God more. As a church or group, if we go on to recognise our own circumstances and characters as well, we can begin a realistic conversation on how to develop the life of God where we live, work and worship.

This process was used by the PCC of St Mary-le-Tower, Ipswich, at their Awayday. They wanted to explore how to grow spiritually as they develop their church life and their place in the town. At the Awayday itself, some of the sharing together was profound and those unable to come are said to have felt they missed out! Charles Jenkin reported that they found ‘clear themes … [on] where and how we find life / God’ and identified “who God is for us, … where God has been present and leading, and where we feel he is leading at this time in the life of the church”. From further reflection in groups they also noticed ‘significant strengths … to build on’ but recognised that the future may require ‘being brave’. Specific questions on aspects as varied as the choir, finances and prayer need exploring with others as the next step in their plans to grow spiritually.

If your church, deanery or group would like Anne’s help in this sort of exploration, contact her as usual on anne.spalding@cofesuffolk.org or 01394 610065.
Growing Roots

Events

Clare Priory Retreat in Ordinary Life

The “Silent Prayer” ministry team will be offering a supported retreat that could fit into the ordinary life of most people.

The Retreat will run during Lent, from 8th March to 5th April 2014. There will be a full day at Clare Priory on Saturday 8th March and another on Saturday 5th April. Between these two dates the retreatants will be asked to commit to two periods of silent prayer each day, possibly of between 20 and 30 minutes each.

Each retreatant will be accompanied by a prayer companion who will be in contact with the retreatant once each week. This will either be in person or via the telephone. The purpose of this contact will be to encourage and support the retreatant.

The cost of the retreat is £70 payable on 8th March. This includes the two full days with a buffet lunch provided. We will open at 9.30 on Saturday 8th March at Clare Priory. If you live a long distance from Clare it is possible to book overnight accommodation at the Priory. To book a place please contact Kathy at the Priory on 01787 277326.

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Simeon Centre Lent Retreat Day

Who Touched Me? Healing for us today
(with speakers Michael Thompson and Pam Thorn)

Saturday March 1st, 2014

10am–4pm at Ridley Hall, Cambridge CB 3 9HG

Book your place at: www.simeoncentre.co.uk
or call Rosemary Kew on 01223 746593
Registration Fee: £20 (Please bring a packed lunch with you; drinks will be provided.)

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Norwich Diocese Wounds that Heal: A day for all those interested in the church’s ministry of healing

Saturday March 22nd, 2014

9.30am – 3.30pm at St Luke’s Church, Aylsham Road, Norwich NR3 2HF

Exploring ‘health’ and ‘healing’ with the clergy who direct Holy Rood House, Thirsk (pioneering centre for health and pastoral care), including workshops on developing Christian ministry of healing in churches and a panel for emerging questions

Cost: Free and lunch provided
Contact Caspar James on 01603 882335, caspar.james@norwich.anglican.org

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More events can be found via the Spirituality pages of the Diocesan website:
http://www.cofesuffolk.org/index.cfm?page=landf.content&cmid=354