

FAMILY PRAYER STATIONS AT CHURCH



This set of nine prayer stations can be set up in a church, cathedral or similar to encourage families to pray together in the name of the Trinitarian God for family members, friends, neighbours, the local community, the wider country and the world. The loose theme running through is that of the flames of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost and the related imagery of light.

This is a very active set of prayer activities: the mood is more likely to be upbeat than silent and solemn, which reflects the many different ways people pray in the Bible and in the modern world. The activities and shared experience will give families something to continue talking about and reflecting on into the rest of the week. The suggestion to 'take a photo' each time is to encourage families to share their prayer time on social media, so that their friends and family see prayer as something normal and fun. Depending on your budget and team, you could set up any number of these stations, between one and nine.

Here are some ideas to help you set up your space:

- Have candles in safe holders or lanterns lighting the way from one station to another. (This approach has been field-tested with a pyromaniac teenager and no fire engines needed to be called.)
- Have flame-shaped 'footprints' stuck to the floor or walls to show the way.
- Play background music.
- Have 'passports' with a stamp to indicate that each station has been achieved.
- Have a nightlight to take home to continue prayers there (as in station 9).
- Swap one station for a projected looped PowerPoint or locally-made film of either local scenes/people to inspire prayer, countries/situations from the news or different forms of light set to a meditative piece of music to sit and watch quietly.

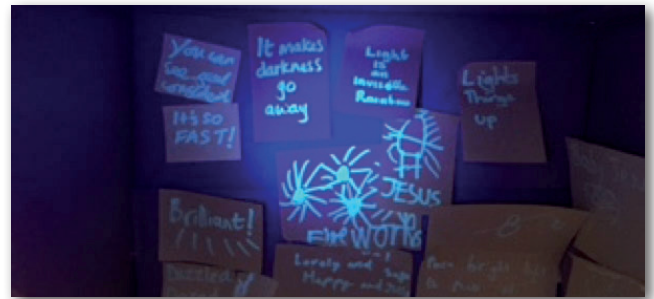
1 God of light

God of light: the light that shone at God's command at the start of creation is the same light that shines today, transforming lives. Reflect a moment on what you know or love about light.

You will need: large cardboard boxes on a table top or a dark space; UV pens and UV torches (both available very cheaply from online retailers); sticky notes; a few prepared ready-written notes in place in the boxes.

On instruction sheet:

- God of light
- 'And God said, "Let there be light," and there was light.' Genesis 1:3
- That same power of God is at work today.
- What's the most amazing thing you know about light? (Or for younger people: how does really bright light make you feel?) Write or draw it on a sticky note with a UV pen, then stick it at the back of one of the dark boxes with the others. Now try to read all the sticky notes with the help of the UV torch.
- Take a photo of your family.



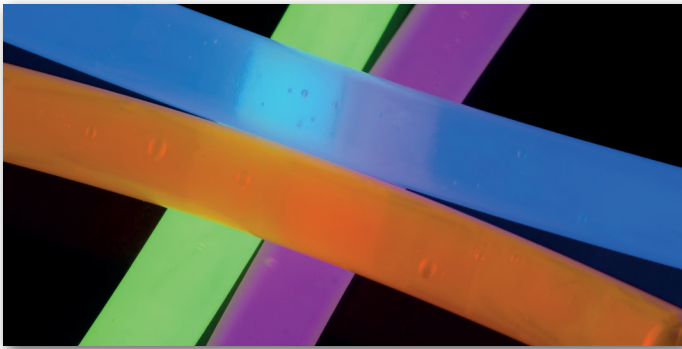
2 Shining Son

Jesus' light shone out from his death and resurrection. Take the light of the cross with you as you pray.

You will need: small rubber bands or pipe cleaners cut into 6cm lengths; glow sticks; a dark space or a large box.

On instruction sheet:

- Shining Son
- Jesus said, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness but will have the light of life." John 8:12
- Take two glow sticks and, using the rubber bands or pipe cleaners, fasten them together in the shape of Jesus' cross.
- Turn the cross shape sideways and diagonally and talk about what you see – what can the symbol of a cross mean?
- When you're ready, break the glow sticks and watch together as the cross lights up.
- Imagine that light spreading through your life and through the world around you.
- Take a photo of your family holding up their crosses and take the crosses with you to light your way.



3 Blazing Spirit

Blazing Spirit: God's Spirit lives in our hearts, lighting our lives.

You will need: olive oil in a small dish; cotton buds; paper cut into elongated heart/flame shapes; a window or a bright light such as a table lamp; a washing line with clothes pegs on.

On instruction sheet:

- Blazing Spirit
- "God's love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us." Romans 5:5
- Are these shapes hearts or flames?
- Use oil and a cotton bud to draw on the paper shape what you think happens when someone is filled with the Holy Spirit.
- Talk about what you know about the Holy Spirit: especially about why we've used oil, why flames and why hearts.
- Peg the shapes onto the line and see your design clear against the light.
- Take a photo of the shapes on the line.



4 Shine in my family

Shine on my family: praying for people in our families.

You will need: paper plates; felt-tip pens; hole punch; thread; scissors; something to tie the finished spiral on to.

On instruction sheet:

- Draw a spiral on a paper plate (the back of a plate works best).
- Talk and think together of people in your family who need the light of God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit to shine on them. Write their names or draw their faces in the spiral, taking care not to write over the lines you have drawn.
- Cut along the spiral line, make a hole at one end and attach a thread. Hang up your prayer spiral and spend a moment praying together for the names you can read or the faces you can see on it as it spins. Take a photo of your family around the spiral.
- Remember to collect your spiral when you've finished the trail.

5 Shine on my Friends

Shine on my friends: praying for our friends.

You will need: a large piece of paper with a tangled black line drawn on it; black pens; inkpads or sponges soaked in paint (use very bright colours); a string of fairy lights (optional).

On instruction sheet:

- Shine on my friends
- Here is a string of Christmas lights... but it needs more lights!
- Talk about your friends and pray for each of them to know Jesus, the God who came at Christmastime: for each friend you want to pray for, put a thumbprint like a lightbulb on the wire, and write their name next to it.
- How many friends can you pray for?
- Take a photo of your family at work on the string of lights.



6 Shine on my neighbours

Shine on my neighbours: praying for our neighbours.

You will need: coffee filter paper; biro; red felt-tip pens; spray bottle of water; waterproof tablecloth.

On instruction sheet:

- Shine on my neighbours
- Think about the people who live next door to you or above you or below you.
- Draw their houses or flats in biro on the coffee filter paper.
- Now, around the edge of the filter paper, draw flowing patterns in red, which is the colour used by many churches at this time of year – the Holy Spirit season.
- Spray on water and, as the patterns spread gently cover your neighbours in the warmth of God's love, pray for them. It will take a while, so enjoy the peace and quiet and don't rush it.
- Take a photo of your family watching the patterns diffuse.

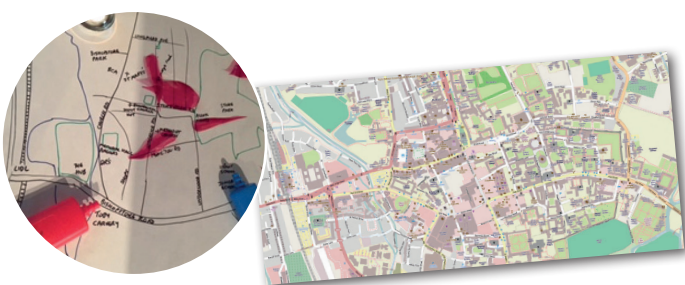
7 Shine in my neighbourhood

Shine in my neighbourhood: praying for the place we live.

You will need: a large easy-to-read map of the neighbourhood; pens; craft or real feathers; balloon pumps or paper fans.

On instruction sheet:

- First, add any extra buildings or places you can think of to the map.
- One symbol for the Holy Spirit is a dove, so imagine the feathers here represent the Holy Spirit.
- Take a feather and place it at the edge of the map.
- Flap the fan or pump air at it until the feather moves on to the map.
- Say a prayer for the place, building or people living or working where it lands.
- Challenge each other to make the feather land in a particular place that you particularly want to pray for.
- Take a photo of your family at prayer.



8 Shine on my country

Shine in my country: praying for a country that is special to you.

You will need: a world map; a large sheet of transparent plastic film that fits over the top of it when taped down (stationers sell a long roll of cellophane which works very well); yellow, red and orange paints slightly watered down and with glitter added if you like; drinking straws; teaspoons; cloths or wipes; a bin.

On instruction sheet:

- Pray for God's Holy Spirit to move across your country.
- Another word for 'Spirit' is 'breath'. Use your breath to pray now without words.
- Put a spoonful of paint at the edge of the country you come from or a country that is precious to you.
- Using the straw, blow the flame-colour across the country as far as it will go.
- With each breath you take, imagine God's breath transforming the people in the places your paint touches.
- Take a photo of the transformed map. If it gets too painty, you may want to wipe away your paint and leave the map clear for the next family.

9 Shine in the world

Shine in the world: praying for other countries.

You will need: You will need: a directional torch (such as a Maglite); old CDs, mirrors of all shapes and sizes or mirrored card cut into small shapes (you can find packets of small mirrors for craft in shops like Hobbycraft); sticky notes; names of countries clearly written on sticky notes and stuck to a wall; nightlights.

On instruction sheet:

- "Let the light of your face shine on us" Psalm 4:6
- Work together as a family, with one person holding the torch and the others using the mirrors to bounce a beam of light on to a particular country that needs the light of Christ. Challenge each other to make your mirror-beam touch different countries before everyone else.
- As a family, choose which of these countries you most want to pray for and take that sticky note down from the wall. Take it home, together with a nightlight to help you remember to pray that Jesus' light will shine in that country.
- Take a photo of your family working together.