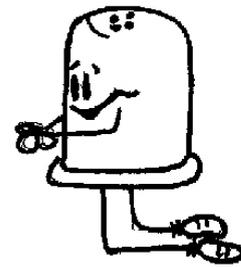
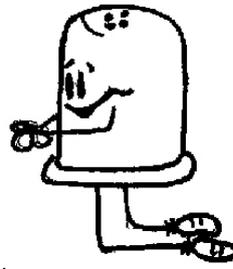


# Helping children pray.



Prayer is more than an activity in a children's programme or a formula to be learnt. It is part of the Holy Spirit in our lives, at any age or stage of faith.

As fellow learners, we all need to practise and learn about prayer, and there are things that we can pass on to our children too.

SSALT material usually places it's prayer in the final section as a response to what you've heard from God. But prayer can be part of every stage of your time together.

One of your aims in praying with the children in your group should be to help them pray outside the group! They can come to God at any time, in any place and about anything.

## SOME QUESTIONS ALWAYS ASKED

*What is prayer?* One way to describe prayer is that it is communicating with God - like being with a good friend, but far more than that. Talking, listening, being together, are all part of our relationship with God.

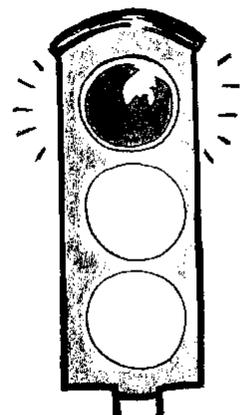
If God already knows what we need and what we are thinking, why do we need to talk to Him? Maybe we don't have to, always. Part of helping children learn about prayer is giving them time to be quiet and recognize that it is ok just to be. Prayer is about lifting high the name of Jesus, and exalting Him just because He is God, so when we lay our requests before Him we are acknowledging His Supremacy, and when we are just praising Him, we too are exalting Him.

*Does God always answer our prayers?* This is a hard one to answer. One way to help understanding is to give an example of a time when a friend asks for something, but it would not have helped your friend if you had given it to them.

Another way to answer is to draw a large set of traffic lights.

- Red** - No, I'm sorry
- Amber** - Not yet, wait a while
- Green** - Yes

Explain that these are all answers, even if we do not like them, or do not understand them.



## HOW TO PRAY?

Prayer is a spiritual act, a communion between the Lord of the universe and the members of your group. At the same time, children and their leaders, are physical beings, full of energy with senses that are preoccupied with the things around them. Let these become part of prayer, helping children to bring all of themselves to God!

*Eyes closed?* There are times when this helps to shut out distraction, to listen quietly to what God wants to say, or when you want children to think about their own response, rather than what their friend is thinking and doing. But closing our eyes isn't part of a formula for prayer!

*Eyes open!* Children can also use their eyes if they are given something to focus on e.g. Each other - if you are praying in a group.

*Pictures or posters* - particularly ones that they have made to help them pray.

*Looking outside* - if thanking God about things you see etc.

*Hands together?* Making our bodies still and focused on God can be helpful. Hands together, or palms turned upwards, can help children realize that they are giving themselves to God.

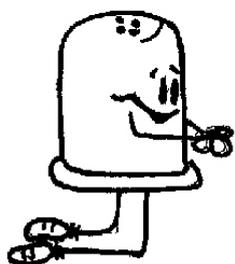
*Using hands!* Everyone could put their thumbs upward as they thank God, thumbs down as they say sorry to God, and thumbs out as they pray for each other.

*Using our voices* - God can hear us when we are silent, when we whisper or when we shout. Varying the volume of our prayers, reminds you that you are communicating with God, everywhere, all the time.

*Leading prayers* - keep your prayers at the children's level of understanding as well as language. Link your prayers to what you have been learning. Explain that 'Amen' is a Hebrew word that means 'True, faithful and trustworthy' and Jesus often used it to introduce very serious sayings. We close our prayers with 'Amen'. in His name, as a seal of our consent or more simply, we are saying, 'I agree', Encourage children to say 'Amen' if they agree with what you have been saying to God.

SSALT gives creative ideas for prayer to help you and the children dedicate yourselves to God - not just your minds but all of you. Hence our suggestions of use of craft, or play, or movement. It is fun, but it is intended to be more than that. Creative prayers, through craft or play are intended to help us give praise to God for our whole beings, and glorify Him through it all.

In helping children to pray we want to bring them to a place where they say,  
'God is real' and I want to talk to Him'!



Remember  
'Pray at all times,  
giving thanks'.

