

Leading the Congregation in "A Prayer for the World"

There is only one thing that the international organizers of the Global Day of Prayer have asked every observance to do, and that is to read collectively the prayer called, "A Prayer For The World" (PFTW) publicly. Below you'll find several suggestions which have been helpful for others.

Reading it straight through

If you read it straight through, it will take a little over five minutes to read it in English. Of course, the time can be much longer in some languages. If it is necessary to read it in two languages, then the time is more than double. This can prove to be quite tedious.

Reading it and using it as sections

Another approach that has worked well in many places is to break up the reading of "A Prayer for the World" into seven sections, allowing time in between the seven sections for prayer, singing or other acts of worship. Some of the most vital gatherings in different parts of the world have managed to use the seven sections of the prayer as a way of structuring a large portion of the program for the gathering.

Leaders as readers

You are not required to read every word in unison. In many settings, the main body of the prayer has not been read in unison, but instead by leaders or groups of leaders. At the end of every section the leader calls forth the response from the congregation which is at the end of every section.

One very practical idea is to invite seven different leaders to be the ones who read a particular section of the prayer. This can be a good way of involving and honoring leaders from different traditions or backgrounds.

Different languages

One idea is to read the first, third, and fifth section in one language and the second, fourth, and sixth in the alternate language, and read the last section twice, once in both languages. Another way to have all sections read in both languages is to read the first section in one language, then pray or sing in united prayers as described below. Then, at the conclusion of that segment of prayer, read the first section again in the second language, so that the public reading of the prayer serves as bookends on the congregation praying extemporaneously in any language.

The Seven Sections

Below you'll find descriptions of each section of "A Prayer for the World" and some ideas that have been used for guiding or directing the assembly to pray. Use your creativity to bring forth the best of your culture and diverse Christian traditions to enable everyone to unite in prayer.

1. Coming as One People to One God

The first section easily leads to dynamic and powerful praise. Many have planned lively music and anthems of praise to precede and to follow the reading of this section. If at some point you are going to read the Apostle's Creed, which is optional, it might be a good time to do so in the midst of a series of songs. Since this section affirms who we are as God's people and our submission to Him as Lord of all the earth, the Apostle's Creed can be a fitting confession of faith at this point.

2. Thanking our Father

After reading this particular section, it should be easy to move into singing again. You might also invite everyone to break out in prayer all together at the same time, thanking God for salvation, thanking Him for His blessings, and much more. This might also be a timely moment to invite anyone who has not yet responded to God's call to trust in Christ as Saviour to do so. Be very careful with such an evangelistic appeal. Because Christians are gathering from many diverse traditions, it is very important that any evangelistic appeal does not call for people to come forward to the front. This may be a common approach in your tradition, but can be very problematic for blended gatherings. Just call for people to trust in Christ, and then to tell someone what they have just done.

3. Declaring Jesus as Lord

Following this portion of the prayer, you can easily invite people to pray for three things:

- a) Evangelization. Pray for the gospel to spread throughout the city and country. Pray for the completion of world evangelization among every people on the face of the earth.
- b) Christ's kingdom. Pray for Christ's Lordship to increase in people's lives throughout your city, bringing tremendous transformation to lives and the society.
- c) The government. Whenever we pray for Christ's kingdom, it can be very fitting to publicly express our desire that God bless and strengthen the leaders of our lands. Even if there are problems and corruption, find ways to pray in positive ways for leaders at every level.

4. Confessing our sin to repent

A large focus of the GDOP is a call for repentance. Repentance is a gift and cannot be performed as a scripted ritual. But you can work to provide an environment in which people have time to face God and cry out to him for mercy upon their lives and those around them. Beware of speaking negatively of the lives of people who are not Christians. Consider the line very well within the prayer: "All the sins that we may find in our world, You have found among Your people." Invite people to ask God for mercy upon us as a gathered people. Among us we find brokenness and shame. Give people opportunity to cry out to God. You may consider calling for one minute of utter silence before God. You may want to call for people to bow before God on their knees. Be careful repeating ceremonies of reconciliation that may have been valuable in the past, but may not be what God desires at this time. Seek God for ways to give the best promptings at this point so that the people will have met with God in Spirit and in truth.

5. Receiving His Spirit

Invite the Holy Spirit to freshly fill His people with His love and power. This is the section in which we can pray for God to move with power through His people in dealing with the great challenges of our day. There are long lists of tremendous difficulties. Do not make it your ambition to pray for every problem. Pray for God to move in ways that only He can. At the same time, pray that He will empower His people to act in wisdom and grace to bring healing and life to what is broken.

6. Seeking Victory over Evil

Be sure to address God directly, asking Him to move against evil powers. Minimize direct confrontation of evil powers. More people will be able to unite their fullest measure of faith in asking God Himself to overcome evil. Singing comes naturally at this point, but beware of an unseemly triumphalism. Pray with those who suffer for the name of Christ in many parts of the world.

7. Welcoming the King of Glory

You might prepare the people before reading this section by inviting participants to welcome Jesus into any area of their world: their homes, workplaces, schools, villages and cities. With the people freshly focused on Jesus visiting these very places with His grace and power, then read the final section of the prayer. Another way to prepare is to read some of the passages quoted in this section: Matthew 21:8-11, Psalm 24, and Revelation 22:17, 20. However it is structured, find a dynamic way to pray for the resurrected Christ to visit our communities with His transforming presence and life. The triple response at the end of the prayer can be very moving as people focus their attention on the coming Son of God. Be ready to sing with praise.