

Parents: Here is a discussion guide about prayer for your family to use at home. At the end are two prayer activities you can do as a family group or independently after the family discussion. Please reach out to the church office at aplcoffice@gmail.com with any feedback or questions. Thank you!

Prayer Discussion Guide for *Confirmation* Families

Questions are in italics with conversation prompts below in plain text.

When you get together for Confirmation class, you usually begin with highs, lows, and prayer. Why does class start that way? (open discussion - some possible responses are below)

Sharing our joys and challenges builds trust and gives a place for us to support one another in our lives.

It's also a way for us to be reminded that our lives at church are connected with our lives outside of church. There's not just "church life" and "regular life." There's all of life. All of life is supported by prayer. All of life is connected to God—sometimes that is really amazing stuff and sometimes it's the daily stuff. It's good practice! Like any faith practice, it's something that actually takes practice! We pray in class and at church so we learn to live lives of prayer both at church and outside of church!

Why do we pray?—Think about it. Talk about it as a family. Popcorn it aloud. Some possible responses are below.

Jesus tells us to! (Lord's prayer)—(law)

It's an act of love. An act of relationship. God reaches out in love always—(Gospel)

Do you expect an answer when you pray?—Think about it. Talk about it as a family. Popcorn it aloud. Some possible responses are below.

Yes. No. Sometimes. Examples?

Why do we pray for other people? Intercessory prayer?—Think about it. Talk about it as a family. Popcorn it aloud. Some possible responses are below.

Prayer makes a difference to the pray-er. To God. To the person being prayed for. When we don't have the words, other people pray on our behalf.

Some ways to pray:

It's ok to use different/creative types of prayer, prayers you've written at another time or prayers that other people have written. The Holy Spirit can still work through that.

1. Prayers that other people wrote:

Martin Luther's small catechism

In the front of our ELW hymnal are some special prayers, printed below. Pick one and pray it together:

Prayers for Young People

God of all good gifts, your Son gathered children into his arms and blessed them. Help us to understand our youth as they grow in years and in knowledge of your world. Give us compassion when they face temptations and experience failures. Teach us to encourage their search for truth and value in their lives. Help us to appreciate their ideals and sympathize with their frustrations; that with them we may look for a better world than either we or they have known; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Lord God of our ancestors, we thank you for what you have done and will continue to do with our daughters and sons. Walk with them in life, and keep the evil one from obstructing their path. You see all; you know where the water is deep. Keep them from danger. Order their steps and guide their feet while they run the race of faith. May the good work that you have begun in them be brought to completion at the day of Jesus Christ, in whose name we pray. Amen.

Prayers for Friends

Pour into our hearts, O God, the Holy Spirit's gift of love, that we may share the joy of friendship, human and divine, revealed in the love of Jesus Christ, who lays down his life for his friends and in whose name we pray. Amen.

Prayers for families

Triune God, whose will it is that humans live in community, bless family life everywhere and fill all homes with respect, joy, laughter, and prayer. Strengthen the commitment of husbands and wives to one another, that they may mirror your covenant faithfulness; pour out your Spirit on parents, that through them their children may taste your unconditional love; and empower all family members to live in your grace and forgiveness; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Prayer for times in life (such as times of national or global disaster)

We pray to you almighty God, in this time of the COVID-19 pandemic. You are our refuge and our strength, a very present help in time of trouble. Do not let us fail in the face of these events. Uphold us with your love, and give us the strength we need. Help us in our confusion, and guide our actions. Heal the hurt, console the bereaved and afflicted, protect the innocent and helpless, and deliver any who are still in peril; for the sake of your great mercy in Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

OR: Prayers for people who can't sit still (labyrinth and Daisy Chain below).

2. Prayers of contemplation: if you like you can use the Prayer Labyrinth that follows.

Keep in mind that the Prayer Labyrinth is not a maze! There are no false turns or dead ends. Trace through the labyrinth as you pray, or write your prayers along the path of the labyrinth.

No labyrinth handy??? Pray as you go about your daily life. Thank God for whatever you see! Ask for aid! Praise God!

3. Try a prayer Daisy Chain (from "Prayer for People Who Can't Sit Still" by William Tenny-Brittian, pages 79-80)

For those of us who can't sit still, making daisy chains—whether of daisies, dandelions, gum wrappers, paper strips, or paper clips—can be an extraordinary prayer opportunity, an opportunity that lifts not only ourselves but those around us and leaves us with physical evidence of our prayer time. This is an important aspect for those of us who are task-oriented and have a need to see some sort of product for time spent.

To begin your indoor prayer chain, find a quiet place and get yourself centered by closing your eyes and taking a few deep breaths. Listen to your breathing and concentrate, trying to hear your heartbeat. Offer a few words to God to dedicate the prayer time and then take a moment to just relax and listen. When you feel centered, begin your prayer chain by taking one of the strips of paper and writing a prayer note on it. You may simply want to write the name of a person for whom you're praying, or a few words expressing your gratitude or a need. As you write the prayer, offer a few quiet words to God about it. Listen to your spirit to hear if God has some thought or word for you.

When you feel ready to close this prayer, form a paper link by bending the paper strip end-to-end and taping or gluing the ends together. Next take another strip of paper and add your prayer to it. Repeat the process, except when you're ready to close the prayer, thread the new paper strip through the previous link and tape or glue the ends together, forming the second link of the prayer.

Continue praying this way until you have exhausted your prayer thoughts. Then, with a last strip of paper, close the prayer time by offering thanks to God and using it to attach the end links of the prayer chain together, thus closing the prayer chain.

Include a prayer for our Confirmation class (and our Confirmation families) in your prayers!

