

## Praying with Children

by Kate Lichti

Kids (and adults!) love routines, and the past couple of weeks have almost certainly upended your family's routine. Kids of all ages are likely feeling and showing the stress of this disruption in different ways. With this in mind, we wanted to share some simple ideas for facilitating a family routine of praying and checking in with one another, based on our routines from Children's Church. You could adapt this for a short prayer time after dinner or to frame a family devotional time.

**1. Light a Candle:** Candle light marks a sacred space and is a calming antidote for screen lighting. At children's church we say, "We light a candle to welcome the presence of God and to ask Jesus to light our path," as we light the candle.

**2. Sing a Song:** A simple, repetitive chant from church like "All Shall be Well," "Come and Fill Our Hearts with Your Peace," or another familiar tune.

**3. Invitation to Prayer:** Prayer is a chance to celebrate and give thanks for what is making us happy and to ask for help with what is worrying us. There's a lovely quote from Mr. Rogers (who else?) about naming our fears: "Anything that's human is mentionable, and anything that is mentionable can be more manageable. When we can talk about our feelings, they become less overwhelming, less upsetting and less scary." This goes for prayer, too! Start with a simple prompt, like "God, we bring to you and to each other things we are thankful for...things we are worried about... people we want to pray for."

**3. Pass a Prayer Stone:** We pass a stone (or another special object) from person to person to remind us that whoever is holding the stone gets to speak and everyone else will listen (No interrupting!). You might pass the stone several rounds for different prayers (go once around the circle naming one thing you're thankful for, then one thing you're worried about, etc.)

**4. Ring a bell and respond:** At church, we respond to each child's prayer "God, hear our prayer." Then the child who prayed rings the prayer bell and passes the stone to another person. After everyone has had a chance to speak, the leader closes with a simple prayer, such as "We bring all these prayers to God who loves us, Amen." Or maybe you could read scripture, a poem, or the Lord's Prayer together.

**5. Ending:** At children's church, we close by singing "This Little Light of Mine" as we blow out the candle, reminding each child that even as the light is blown out, we carry the light of God's love within us as we go.

This blog post from Virginia Theological Seminary has some nice ideas for setting up a prayer space with children during Lent:

<https://buildfaith.org/creating-lenten-prayer-space-home/>