



St Mark's Church
LEAMINGTON SPA

Guidelines for Prayer Ministry

Team members

revised Jan 2024



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1. What is Prayer Ministry?

Prayer ministry is an important part of what happens at church. It is offered at the end of many church services, either in response to the sermon, or for particular prayer needs. Prayer Ministry is usually mentioned by the service leader.

‘Prayer ministry is administering God’s love and help to an individual, at their request, through listening and prayer.’

The emphasis is on God as the one who brings comfort, healing, strength, restoration, challenge, and not us. We are simply there as channels of his grace, being alongside the person to pray for/with them to receive from God.

Prayer Ministry involves being open and sensitive to God, and listening carefully and non-judgmentally to the person in order to pray for (or with) them. The focus is on prayer between the person and God. As a prayer ministry team member **your aim is to facilitate an encounter with God through prayer**. You are there, along with your partner to gently support and encourage the person as they come to God in prayer with their needs, and then to leave space for God to minister to the person in whatever way he chooses.

The material shared by the person who comes for prayer should remain **confidential** within the Safeguarding guidelines detailed on page 7. That means you do not disclose the person’s identity nor what they have said to anyone else.

In most cases that may be the end of the encounter, and you would let the person go by offering them to God. Sometimes receiving Prayer Ministry can help the person to realise they may benefit from further help, e.g. going for counselling or

psychotherapy (which are distinct from prayer ministry), or other specialist help. This needs to be handled sensitively – seek guidance from the vicar if in doubt,. It may be that the person would value some further spiritual guidance/support e.g. end of life care, ministry of reconciliation/confession – in which case it would be good to encourage them to speak to the Vicar.

Is healing part of Prayer Ministry?

Yes, Prayer Ministry inevitably includes healing – in its widest sense – and one helpful definition of Christian healing is: *'Healing is Jesus Christ meeting you at the point of your need.'* This quote came from Bishop Morris Maddocks, a former Archbishop's Advisor on Healing, who also founded Acorn Christian Healing Foundation. Healing is broad, and God knows what we need most, even if we don't. Perhaps 'wholeness' is a better way of looking at it, rather than focusing exclusively on physical cure. We can receive God's healing in different ways when we are prayed for: physically, emotionally, spiritually, mentally, relationally. And even if our physical symptoms persist, we can still experience a deep sense of God's peace and healing in the midst of it. Healing is a complex area in itself, and merits further reading/training.

2. Practicalities – How to minister

You will be given your dates via the rotas which come out every month. Please check and put the dates in your diary straight away. If you are unavailable please do everything you can to find a substitute and let the office know.

You will be on duty with someone else. If for some reason you are on your own, it is very important to **pray only in an open, visible area** – e.g. the side aisle. Never pray one-on-one and out of sight.

Beforehand: Get one of the prayer ministry badges to wear at the start of the service. In practical terms, please be aware of personal hygiene when you are on duty – that might sound obvious, but we don't want to cause a distraction/offence by smelling anything other than fragrant! As soon as the service has ended, make your way to the prayer ministry area. Ensure the area is ready and hospitable, and have tissues and a Bible available. If you yourself need prayer, agree to do this at the end. You may want to decide between the two of you who will take the lead.

Pray the preparation prayer:

Prayer Before Ministry

We believe these truths.

For God has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the Kingdom of the Son He loves, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins...For God was pleased to have all His fullness dwell in Jesus, and through Him to reconcile to Himself all things whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through His blood shed on the cross... And having disarmed the powers and authorities, Jesus made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross." **(Col 1:13, 20, Col 2:15)**

We thank you for St Mark's Church. We pray that people will find space to encounter you and your amazing healing power through our prayer ministry. Please meet them at their deepest point of need bringing healing into their body, soul and spirit.

Please empower, strengthen and encourage each of us today. May we experience your power, love, wisdom, revelation and discernment, as we seek to serve and pray for and with each other.

In Jesus' Name we ask all these things. **Amen.**

Be welcoming as people approach. Consider distance/personal space - Don't crowd people. If praying in a pew, you go in first so they can leave easily, or consider having one pew each.

During: Here is a useful model for prayer ministry:

- Introduce yourselves, and invite the person to share briefly.
- Listen to the person – don't jump in with your own experiences or advice, let them tell their story in their own way. That means giving them space, not interrupting or making assumptions, but really tuning in to their words, feelings, silences, emotions, etc.
- Ask the person what they want God to do for them.
- Be open to God as they speak, and invite the Holy Spirit to come. You may like to suggest the person closes their eyes when you pray, although they may prefer not to, of course. Use your intuition about this, and be sensitive.
- Be very careful about TOUCH! Probably best avoided but ALWAYS ASK FIRST. Don't assume. You could say something like this: *'Is it ok if I just put my hand on your shoulder/arm when we pray? Or would you prefer not? Either is fine.'* It is very important the person feels they can say no without feeling bad in any way. It may be better to 'hover' with your hand in a general way, but without touching. Above all, we need to give the person space and respect their wishes.
- Pray, bringing their requests to God simply and clearly – and audibly (person may be hard of hearing). Pray simple and focused prayers.

- If you pray in tongues, do so quietly, perhaps while your partner prays aloud in English. Whilst we don't want to quench the Spirit, some people may find hearing 'tongues' quite alarming, so it is best to do this silently.
- Watch the person to monitor what is happening – keep your eyes open when you pray!
- There may be tears, or some other reaction, e.g. the person seems to relax a bit, or reacts in some other way to the prayers. Sometimes there is no visible reaction, and that is fine too. God works in many different ways.
- Thank God for what he is doing – give him time to work. Remember, we are not trying to manipulate God! We are simply bringing the person and their requests before God and trusting him to hear and answer in his own way/time.
- Ask the person how they are feeling, and pray accordingly.
- If appropriate, sensitively share any encouraging Scripture, words or pictures you may have sensed from God during the prayer time. Make it clear you are simply *offering* these to the person (not imposing), and it is up to them to decide whether it feels relevant or not. This is very important. Words/pictures like this can be helpful and may point towards a deeper need (and they can also be wrong!) So be humble in the way you offer it. We are all human and sometimes we don't hear God right.
- As you finish, pray for God's protection and blessing on the person, and they should know they can come again for prayer.
- They should leave feeling accepted and loved, with dignity intact.

After: Use the 'Prayer following Prayer Ministry'. It is important to leave your burdens of prayer with God. If extra prayer time has been requested by the person, contact the Vicar.

Prayer following prayer ministry

Jesus, thank you for the opportunities we have had today of serving you and each. Thank you for the testimonies of your love and healing we have heard and seen today.

We realise that the stories of struggle we encounter can be overwhelming, so cleanse us of any sadness, negativity or despair that we may have picked up. Please release us from any burdens and sorrow that are still heavy on our spirits. Guard and protect us as we leave and throughout the week.

(Pause)

Come Holy Spirit, renew us, fill us anew with Jesus' love, His joy and His peace. Strengthen us where we feel weak and clothe us with God's righteousness and truth.

In Jesus' name we ask all these things. Amen.

You might want to pray for one another before you leave too, for your own needs. It is important that you receive prayer on a regular basis as well as giving it to others – we all need it, and you don't have to be desperate or in great need to ask for it. In fact, it is really helpful if those on the Prayer Ministry team are seen to be asking for prayer too – it may encourage others to feel they can come for prayer too.

If you bump into the person in the coming days/weeks, be sensitive and don't assume the person will want to talk about the issue again. If they want to talk about it, they will bring it up themselves. This is also about preserving the confidentiality of the Prayer Ministry situation. (Nb: obviously use your discretion

here too - especially if you know the person well, in which case you may know what they want.)

3. Confidentiality and Safeguarding in prayer ministry

While it is extremely important that what is shared in prayer ministry situations remains confidential it is not always possible. Those coming for prayer need to trust that their issues won't be gossiped around the church, even under the guise of 'sharing for prayer' – unless they have given express permission.

However, there are a few situations where this confidentiality may not be able to be maintained, these are:

1. Information regarding abuse of a child or vulnerable adult - specifically, where there is a risk of ongoing or future abuse.

2. Where you are concerned that there is a risk of serious harm being done to/by someone.

3. Disclosure of criminal activity – past, present or future, in particular anything to do with drugs trafficking and anything to do with terrorist activity.

In situations where you are hearing information which you sense may need to be passed on, you should treat the person gently and with care, without being judgmental. You should reassure them of God's loving presence, but should also convey that you may not be able to keep this totally confidential, as you have concerns for their/others' safety. In the first instance, you should tell them that you will need to take advice from the church safeguarding officers – PSO or Vicar. Things are not always clear cut, and in this way, they will see that you are not going to rush off to the authorities without a backward glance, but that you are taking

due care to think the situation through, and check out the legalities with another responsible person.

Reassure them that you will only share sufficient information with this person in order to make an informed decision about whether this needs to be taken further. We have to keep within the law, and are aiming to ensure safety for them/any vulnerable adults or children.

Once you have talked about it with one of the above (if possible without disclosing the person's identity), you will be clearer about any next steps. The Vicar always needs to be aware of any potential situation like this, as leader of the church, and they would then be involved in deciding how to proceed.

St Mark's Safeguarding Officer/ Vicar would then contact the Diocesan Safeguarding Advisor for confidential advice.

If, after discussion and advice it seems clear that further steps should be taken to ensure safety, the Vicar will discuss with you how this might happen. Ideally the person themselves can be encouraged or persuaded to do this, i.e. to tell the relevant authorities (e.g. Social Services, Police, GP, etc). You will not be expected to deal with this alone, the Vicar would always be involved in this kind of process.

You should be aware of the Church Safeguarding Policy <https://www.st-marks.net/Content/uploads/files/SafeguardingPolicy.pdf> and procedures for reporting concerns (sample form at end of booklet).

There is a list of useful phone numbers at the end of the booklet as well as a quick guide to reporting concerns.

4. Support for Prayer Ministry team members

Helping or listening to others can be draining. Sometimes what we hear can be quite disturbing so it is important for team members to pay attention to what's going on within themselves. When we minister to others we *give out*, there is a cost involved. God's love and resources are endless but we can become tired and drained and need to find regular ways to be restored and nourished and equipped. Those who do prayer ministry should also receive prayer ministry, at least periodically.

There are also sometimes other things that kick in, we may listen to things we have experienced in our own lives that may yet be unresolved, or they may touch a raw nerve. We may take too much upon ourselves because we need to be needed or want to fix others. It may simply be that the story we hear is distressing and it upsets us. If this happens then please seek out someone else who understands this kind of ministry, and can listen to how you feel and pray with you – this may be the person who was your prayer partner in the prayer ministry situation, as they will have heard the situation being shared. Or you could speak with the Vicar.

It is very important that you do this in such a way that you don't break confidentiality – i.e. share your own feelings, but not the details of what you heard, and especially not the identity of the person who shared it. If this kind of reaction happens a lot it may indicate the need for ongoing support, counselling or supervision – i.e. where you meet regularly with someone outside the prayer ministry situation to offload and explore your own issues. The vicar or Marie Calvert could help/advise on where to find this kind of help.

Don't forget that people belong to God, they are responsible for their own journey, and healing is the work of the whole Church, the body of Christ, not just prayer ministry.

If you have accompanied someone into the presence of Jesus then you can be confident that in some way they have been helped.

5. Prayer ministry v Counselling

Prayer Ministry is different from counselling, and team members should be clear about what is being offered when someone comes for prayer after a service. They should not attempt to counsel someone, (even if they are also a counsellor).

We have already established what we mean by Prayer Ministry. Here are some key points about Counselling:

Counselling is carried out by those with considerable training and suitable qualifications, on a one-to-one and contractual basis. i.e. based on a conscious agreement between the counsellor and the person to meet together on a regular basis so the person can work through some issues, often stretching back into the past. It is bound by strict ethical Codes of Conduct.

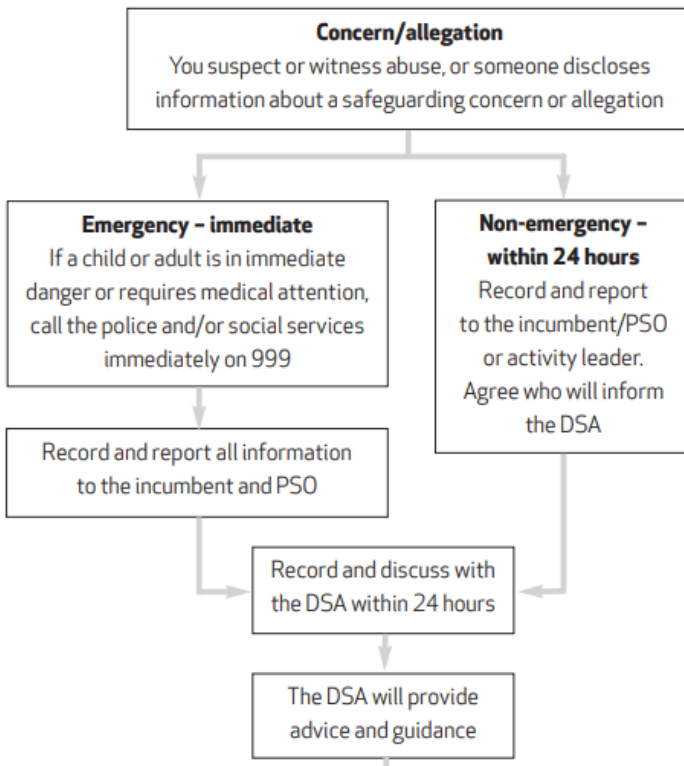
In prayer ministry situations good listening skills are essential, and this is our focus – i.e. Listening, rather than trying to counsel. However, if the Prayer Ministry team member additionally happens to have counselling/psychotherapy training, they would probably instinctively bring some of their counselling/therapy skills into this encounter too. Using some helpful and gentle counselling skills is fine – but embarking on in-depth counselling-style questions into someone's motivations or their painful past is probably inappropriate and could cause further distress. That kind of intervention needs to be held in the safety of an agreed,

ongoing counselling agreement, not in a one-off encounter after a church service.

6. New team members

New team members – especially men - are needed. Current team members and small group leaders should look out for those who have a heart for prayer and pass names on to the Vicar or the offices.

7. Reporting a concern – quick guide and sample form



Please report your concern as soon as possible about the well-being of a child, young person or vulnerable adult in your care.

Name of Church	St Mark's Leamington Spa Warwickshire
Name and contact number of Vicar	Rev Tim Broadbent
Name and contact number of person completing report	
Date of report	
Date and place of observations or incident	
Name of group (if appropriate)	
Name and address of child/young person/adult	
Date of birth of child/young person/adult	
Name and contact number of parent or carer	
Report (continue on separate sheet if needed)	
Advice given/actions taken/people spoken to	

Signed:

Dated

Please print name:

8. Useful telephone numbers

Sarah Price Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser	02476 521345 07950 382934 (Mon-Fri) safeguarding@covcofe.org
Warwickshire Children's Social Care	Office hours: 01926 410 410
Emergency Duty Team Warwickshire	Out of hours: 01926 886 22
Warwickshire Police	01926 415 000 / 101 if dialling from Warwickshire. In an emergency 999
NSPCC	0800 800 5000
CRASAC (Coventry Rape and Sexual Abuse Centre), P. O. Box 2464, Coventry CV1 1ZA	Helpline 02476 277777 24 hour answer phone. www.crasac.org.uk helpline@crasac.org.uk
Rape or Sexual Abuse Support (RoSA) – Warwickshire	Telephone: 01788 551 151 E-mail: support@rosasupport.org Website: www.rosasupport.org

Other national helplines

The following national helplines are also available:

- Childline – 0800 1111
- Stop it Now – 0808 1000 900
- NAPAC (National Association for People Abused in
Childhood) – 0808 801 0331
- Samaritans – 116 123
- Family Lives – 0808 800 2222
- National Domestic Violence Helpline – 0808 2000 247
- Action on Elder Abuse – 0808 808 8141