

TIPS FOR MAKING TELEPHONE CALLS

- Find out some information about the person you are ringing beforehand.
- Rapport building is an integral part of the communication process and this can be achieved on the phone, making conversation comfortable and enjoyable.
- Open with a smile. Believe it or not, a “smiling voice” is more comfortable and relaxed.
- Identify yourself immediately, your name, where you are from and the reason for your call.
- Ask them if this is a convenient time to call. If not, schedule another time.
- Eliminate all distractions – radio, television. Make sure it is quiet and you won’t be interrupted.
- Listen carefully. Be aware of the person’s tone of voice to determine how receptive they are to your call. Concentrate on the person and their conversation.
 - L let others speak
 - I intend to hear what they are saying
 - S speak when it is your turn
 - T talk with them, not at them
 - E enthusiastically respond when appropriate
 - N never speak when the other is talking
- Let the person know you are listening with appropriate small responses from time to time.
- Speak clearly and slowly.
- Show empathy – share in the person’s emotions, thoughts or feelings. This is great for rapport building. Empathy can be shown by using phrases like “I understand what you mean”. “I can see where you are coming from”. “That must make you feel really good”. “I understand why you would think that way”.
- Be yourself and relax. If you are uptight and trying to be someone you are not, it will act as a barrier to building rapport.
- Be friendly. This is possible by using good modulation and inflection in your voice, by showing an interest in the person’s conversation and by sharing laughter and light-hearted moments as the opportunity arises.
- Before ending the call check that you have achieved what you wanted to.
 - Have you passed on useful information?
 - Does the person know the Pastoral Coordinator’s contact details should they have any concerns?
 - Do they have any questions?
 - Are they happy to have another call from you from time to time?
 - Is there anything you can help with?

ELDERS – PASTORAL CARE

Thinking outside the Square – practical tips

As elders, we have been appointed to our church for our pastoral and leadership skills. This is a commitment and a privilege and one which we should endeavour to take seriously.

However we are all different, and some of us are not as comfortable as others with some of the pastoral skills required, especially one on one visiting. This is ok. There are ways that we can adopt to make this easier.

We have been assigned a group of people to visit, phone or meet on a casual basis. This doesn't have to be something we dread or find onerous. Despite our apprehensions, however, we do have to make an effort to care for others and get out of our comfort zones. It is our responsibility to do so.

So, rather than thinking of this as a fixed task, it is better to think of your group as your responsibility for on going pastoral care, no matter how you chose to do this. This may require thinking outside the square.

Pastoral care isn't about problems or issues, although these may arise. Pastoral care is about *keeping in touch, friendship, and communication.*

Pastoral care can be done in many different ways, and to suit your busy lifestyle and that of the person receiving care. It can also suit *your* skill set. It doesn't have to fit into a rigid pattern of visiting, coinciding with quarterly communion. Some will want this and some won't. Find ways that suit *you* to keep in touch. You will be surprised how easy it becomes. *It is better to do some than none at all.* You will be surprised how your confidence and faith develop as a result. It really is a privilege to share with others. Pastoral care requires planning. Plan how you can do your pastoral caring.

People love to be needed. Keeping in touch is vital to our ministry. It is simply, *caring.*

Caring is "love in action"

Ideas and ways to keep in touch:

1. Check to see whether your people would like visits, phone calls, or to meet for a coffee or just have a friendly chat at church. Maybe something twice a year is sufficient for your person. Maybe an occasional phone call suits them better.
2. Find out what they want from you – this is a two way partnership
3. If your people are not attending church regularly, is there anything you can help them with or do they have any concerns?
4. Do your people know how to contact you?

5. Do your people have a copy of the church phone directory for other contacts?
6. Use the phone. A phone call is simple and easy, yet an excellent way of checking that all is well. On going communication is important.
7. Some people may have chosen to meet up for a coffee. They often feel more relaxed in this environment. That is great.
8. Organising a coffee or potluck meal with *all* the people in your group once or twice a year works well and the group enjoys it, despite their diversity. This is an excellent way to encourage real pastoral care – people in the group developing relationships and looking after each other. Maybe this can be done after church, at church, (a familiar place) or in your own home. Potluck encourages ownership of the event too, if it is overwhelming for you to do this alone. This is also a good environment for prayer for the group, and less threatening than on a one to one basis for some. Encouraging others to join in too, encourages ownership of the group.
9. Make sure you touch base with your group on Sunday at church if they are there. Regular contact, no matter how short is very good. If you miss seeing one of your people over a few Sundays – a simple phone call to see that all is well, is always appreciated.
10. Attend quarterly Communion lunches and make an effort to talk to your people.
11. Make sure your group are aware when quarterly Communion is on, especially if you are not coinciding it with a visit.
12. If there are any major changes or events at church, make sure your group knows, especially if they are not regular attendees, or don't have email connections.
13. Attend the other pastoral lunches and mix with your people.
14. Are your people aware of the Pastoral Care Coordinator, who they can contact in times of need, for themselves or for others?
15. If you have any concerns, contact the Pastoral Care Coordinator for some help. Maybe someone needs extra visits, or meals, or transport (don't forget we have the pastoral freezer with made up meals). The Pastoral Coordinator can organise what you need and we also have Pastoral Assistants, on whom the coordinator can call. It is important that she is aware. She can be contacted by phone: 4763144 or 021 144 04 94, or by email: margaret.gilkison@xtra.co.nz
16. Likewise, the Coordinator will contact you if she has heard of any concerns. It is a two way process of working together, keeping the pastoral care of the individual as the foremost concern.

Remember

The most important thing to be aware of is excellent *communication* with your people showing warmth, love and acceptance.

With regular communication comes the sense of *belonging*.

With belonging comes a *deepening of faith*.

With deepening of faith comes *commitment*. This may involve becoming a Member of the Church or offering skills and services to the church family.

With commitment comes *pastoral care of others*.

It is the calling of every Christian to be a caring person. Our example is Christ, and his attitude and spirit and caring. This means it is the task of all members of the parish and not just the ministers or elders. We need to encourage this.

**Grant us a vision, Lord
To see what we can achieve
To reach out beyond ourselves
To share our lives with others
To stretch our capabilities
To increase our sense of purpose
To be aware of where we can help
To be sensitive to your Presence
To give heed to your constant call.**

David Adam

**Lord open our eyes,
that we may see You in our brothers and sisters;
Lord, open our ears,
that we hear the cries from the hungry,
the frightened, the oppressed.
Lord, open our hands,
that we may reach out to all who are in need;
Lord, open our hearts,
that we may love each other as You love us.**

Canadian Prayer

SOME SIMPLE THOUGHTS ABOUT PRAYER

Lord, teach us to pray.....Luke 11;1

Prayer is simply talking to God. It is communicating with God. Prayer is a “one on one” conversation - a conversation from the deepest parts of our hearts. Prayer is telling God what is on our minds and what is in our hearts.

God cares deeply about each and everyone of us. He desires to have fellowship with us. We are his most precious creation and he loves us dearly.

Prayer is at the heart of our relationship with God. God wants us to get to know him. He knows that we need direction in this life. He knows we need comfort and assurance. God talks to us through our minds and hearts. He speaks to our moral righteousness and fairness, to our sense of what is right and Godly.

However we must be receptive to God’s words. We must communicate with God and listen for God to speak. We must be prepared for God to speak to us, and when he speaks to us, he wants us to listen. There are always two people involved with prayer. God and us. Prayer should never be a monologue, but must be a dialogue. Prayer is as much listening to God as talking to God. Prayer is a conversation between us and God, and no conversation can be worthwhile if one party in it never gives the other party time to speak. A good conversationalist has as big a gift listening as he does talking. Prayer is as much as accepting the will of God as asking God what our will desires.

God can speak to us through his Word. He speaks to us through His Holy Spirit, who is with us every second of the day. God speaks to us through other believers and God speaks to us through divine circumstances, through many wonderful things that come into our lives.

Prayer changes *us*, *not* God. Prayer opens our hearts and minds to the greater and wiser will of God. Through prayer, God gives us strength to better reflect his character of love when we are tested. Through prayer God gives us courage and peace to trust *in his control* over matters that are beyond *our control*. God is intimately involved in our lives, when everything is going wrong in our lives. What prayer does, is transform doubt into trust.

We should trust God because God is right here all the time, He loves us unconditionally, He listens to us, He helps us, He hears us, He keeps His promises, He helps solve our problems, and above all, He gives us peace. All we have to do is talk to Him, trust Him and focus on Him.

**Pray continually: give thanks in all circumstances,
For this is God’s will for you in Jesus Christ.**

1Thessalonians5: 17-18

Father, teach me how to pray,
for I do not know what to say,
sometimes so unsure, I barely say a word.
Grant me strength to persevere,
keeping faith that you are near
even though it often seems you haven't heard.
Help me to share what's deep inside,
doubts and fears I try to hide,
faults and weaknesses I hesitate to name.
Give me faith to bare my soul,
trusting you can make me whole,
set me free from any sense of guilt or shame.
Help me share my hopes and fears,
joy and laughter, pain and tears,
knowing every part of life is your concern.
And to comprehend your will,
teach me also to be still,
so that through your Spirit's prompting I might learn.
Bid me come because I may,
not because I'm told to pray,
but responding to the welcome you extend –
neither nervous or in dread
but approaching you instead
as a faithful father, living, loving friend.

Nick Fawcett

How, when and where we should pray:

We do not need to talk to God in any special kind of religious or theological language. We talk to him just like a friend. We are not judged on how we speak.

We can talk to God whenever we want. If God is our friend, then we will continually be speaking to him. He is a friend to whom we can go at any time without feeling a nuisance.

We can pray anywhere, in the quiet of our room, on the bus, at the supermarket. Prayers can be any length. They can be long or they can be "arrow prayers" - phrases, words, thoughts, half sentences spoken anywhere to God. If God is everywhere, we can meet him anywhere.

Prayer is not an escape, but the way to conquest:

Prayer is not flight, prayer is power. Prayer does not deliver us from a terrible situation; prayer enables us to face and master the situation. Often people pray to be delivered from a problem, to be rescued from a situation, to be saved from a disaster, to be spared a sorrow, to be healed from a sickness, to be freed from a physical or mental agony. Sometimes it is true, deliverance comes, but far more often it is that we are given strength, which is not our strength, to go through with it, and to come out the other side of it, not simply as a survivor, but with a faith that has strengthened and deepened and a mind and a life that has been purified. Prayer does not provide a means of running away from the human situation; prayer provides a way of meeting the human situation.

Lord you don't promise us comfort or wealth,
freedom from sickness, immaculate health:
faith brings no pledge of exemption of pain,
troubles oppress us again and again;
tragedies cause us to grieve and despair,
sometimes their burden too painful to bear;
visions are shattered and hopes turn to dust.
Yet, though such trials turn out to be true,
still I believe you will help me get through –
there by my side when I can't carry on,
offering strength when all other has gone.
Even in sorrow you somehow bring joy,
peace that no trials can ever destroy.
Light in the darkness continues to shine,
turning the water of life into wine.

Nick Fawcett

Praying for/with Others

Learning to pray comfortably with others can initially be quite stressful as we are forced out of our comfort zone. However as we have more experience with this, it does become easier. Remember who we are talking to. The true audience of our prayer is God. When we are praying with others, we are not talking to them, but to God. When we pray with others, we become partners with God in his work of salvation, healing, comfort and justice. God can certainly accomplish those things without us, but he gives us the privilege of being involved with him through prayer. When we intercede for someone and their concerns and needs, we are asking God to use his awesome powers to provide, to help, to comfort, to strengthen. We are acting as a go between, asking God to direct his power in a specific direction.

The important thing to remember is that God is not concerned with whether or not we choose the 'right' words, or how eloquently we pray, but rather that we are coming to him, to be in his presence, and to seek his blessing upon those for whom we pray. God cares more about what is in our heart, rather than what is in our mouth when we pray. Communication with Him should be the same as communication with any close intimate friend. You are talking with God. Relax and enjoy the privilege.

Don't ramble. This is your brother or sister you are praying with. Be yourself, not some pious person you are not, for God created you the way you are. A prayer can be brief or long, but when praying while visiting, it is better to err on the side of brevity, rather than length.

The Lord's Prayer gives us a pattern for all our praying:

- 1 *We come into relationship with God, we need him, we long for him – Our Father*
- 2 *We give God our thanks and praise – hallowed be your name*
- 3 *We seek God's will – your kingdom come, your will be done.....*
- 4 *We bring God our needs – give us today our daily bread.*
- 5 *We express of need of forgiveness and our desire to be giving – forgive us our sins...*
- 6 *We ask for strength and protection – lead us not into temptation*

Pray personally. Use a specific item of concern that has been raised by the people during the course of your visit and for an item of thanksgiving for something that has happened in their lives.

Pray for God's will in every situation. We become quickly involved in the "I wants" because we are human, and it good to be able to assess each situation to see if it is God's will for our lives.

Allow time for prayer with your people, if the Spirit moves, but do not force anyone to pray. It could "turn them off" visits. Ask them if this is something they would like a prayer. You could also ask if there is anything specific they want prayed about.

Thank God for answered prayers and also unanswered prayers. God has control and will answer prayers in His own way and His own time, and that He listens to us.

Be sensitive to the people you are with. Don't talk down to them in your prayer. Don't preach at them in your prayer. Don't embarrass them in your prayer. Don't bore them with overly long prayers.

Remember that privacy is important.

God is near us when we pray. Although we may feel awkward when we attempt to pray, God promises to be near us and with us, as we turn to him.

Prayer is no easy matter. It demands a relationship in which you allow someone other than yourself to enter into the very centre of your being, and to see there what you would rather leave in the darkness, to touch there what you would rather leave untouched.

Henri J.M. Nouwen

Dear Lord, please give us the courage to welcome Your light into those dark corners of our lives. Amen

JESUS THE INTERCESSOR

Graham Redding

"Prayer is as simple as picking up a telephone to speak to a close friend. Jesus is always there for you. Just tell him what is on your heart."

I still remember that first instruction on prayer, which I received not long after becoming a Christian twenty-five years ago. It conveyed a sense of immediacy and intimacy in relation to prayer that, for a new Christian, was helpful.

As time passed, however, I found that the telephone model of prayer didn't quite cut it anymore. For a start, it seemed to favour speech above silence, talking above listening, babbling above waiting. It seemed to portray Jesus more as a kind of cosmic buddy than Lord of the cosmos, thereby undermining the otherness and sovereignty of God.

Moreover, as I became familiar with the New Testament, I discovered a much more nuanced relationship between Jesus and prayer than the telephone model was able to convey. I noticed in the Gospels of Matthew and Luke, for example, Jesus' instruction on prayer, including the template for prayer that became known as the Lord's Prayer, and I pondered the possibility that prayer might be as much a

learnt activity as it is a spontaneous outpouring of one's innermost feelings. I noticed Paul's exhortation to seek the mind of Christ, and wondered what role prayer might play in this task and what kind of disciplined attentiveness might be required. And then I noticed those texts that refer to Jesus praying for his disciples (John 16:26; Romans 8:34; Hebrews 7:25), and I began to think about Jesus as Intercessor.

As I studied the book of Hebrews I noticed that the reference to Jesus as Intercessor was linked closely to his perceived role as High Priest. I found it fascinating that the author of Hebrews used the liturgical symbolism of the priesthood in ancient Israel to interpret the ministry of Jesus, and not least, his prayer life.

As James Torrance points out,¹ in ancient Israel, as in Israel to this day, the central act of worship and prayer took place on the Day of Atonement. That was the day in the year which gathered up the worship and prayers of every other day. On that day, an offering was made to God which gathered up every other offering made daily in the sanctuaries. On that day, the worship and prayers of all Israel were led by one man, the high priest, "the one on behalf of the many". The climax came when the high priest, with the names of all Israel on his breastplate and shoulder, laid his hands

¹ James B. Torrance, "Prayer and the Priesthood of Christ", *A Passion for Christ: The Vision that Ignites Ministry*, Handsel Press, 1999, p.56

the head of an animal and sacrificed it, variously confessing the sins of all Israel. He then took the blood of the official victim in a vessel, "ascended" to the Holy of Holies and there interceded for all Israel that God would remember his covenant promises and give his people. As he was praying in the holy presence of God, all Israel was crying outside, one great volume of prayer ascending to God, led by the high priest. He then returned to the waiting people outside with the Aaronic blessing of peace.

A declaration that, as High Priest not just of Israel but of all humankind, the risen and Ascended Jesus exercises an ongoing ministry of intercession is of immense theological significance. It suggests, first of all, that the redemptive work of God in and through Jesus of Nazareth did not end with the events of the Easter. It is ongoing; it is continuous. As Andrew Murray, in his classic book on prayer, says of Jesus in this regard, "He does not intercede."² What a remarkable affirmation to make!

As it suggests, further, a Trinitarian view of prayer, in which the Son prays to the Father in the Spirit, and we, for our part, are drawn by the Spirit into the eternalayer-life of the Son. Thus conceived, prayer is not so much something that we initiate and do; it is something in which, through the activity of the Spirit, we are privileged to participate.

In this regard, I find the Johannine concept of abiding in Christ rather helpful. Often, the Christian discipleship seems to be portrayed predominantly in terms of following Christ, and the Christian life one of imitating or following the example of Christ. I'm sure we've all heard the advice given to young people to ask themselves in times of temptation, "What would Jesus do?" And some of us may have seen the car bumper stickers that read "WWJD", or, "What would Jesus drive?"

Now while these questions are valid to a point, they do presume a certain understanding of discipleship that focuses on following the example of a man who lived two thousand years ago. John, however, would have us think about discipleship in slightly fuller categories of participating or abiding in the ongoing life of the One who participates or abides in the life of the Father and who assures us of his prayers. Under this model, our task is not to somehow second-guess what Jesus would do or say in a given situation, but rather to share actively in his risen life and allow that life to permeate and transform every aspect of our lives, including the activity of prayer.

I was intrigued to discover a few years ago, during the course of my doctoral studies on prayer, that the vast majority of the earliest Christian liturgical prayers and doxologies appear to have followed

a Trinitarian pattern. Prayers were offered to the Father, through the Son, in the Spirit. This pattern explicitly recognized the mediatorial role of the Son in relation to prayer and worship.

Regrettably, it is a recognition that the Church has not maintained consistently in its worship. I invite you to take note of the prayers next time you are at church. I would say that, as often as not, you will find them to be Unitarian (directed to God, singular, with little or no recognition of the mediatorial role of Christ) and Pelagian (portrayed as something that we do, we offer thanks and praise, we confess our sins, we intercede for the life of the world).

When intercessory prayer follows a Pelagian pattern in public worship, it tends to come across as something we feel we ought to do. We ought to pray for others because, following the example of Jesus, we should be concerned for the world. Thus conceived, prayer becomes a kind of Christian duty. Often such prayer seems to be tacked on to the end of the worship service, almost as an afterthought to the high point of the service, which is the sermon.

Understood in terms of sharing in the eternal intercessory work of the Risen and Ascended Christ, however, intercessory prayer takes on an entirely different character. It is interesting to note that

Diebold Schwartz, one of the forerunners to the Genevan Reformation, located the prayer of intercession within the Eucharistic prayers of consecration and thanksgiving, thereby acknowledging that intercessory prayer is inextricably linked to the intercessory work of Christ in his role as High Priest. John Calvin continued this practice.

In conclusion, it seems to me that acknowledging Jesus as Intercessor necessarily involves four things:

1. A recognition that, through the activity of the Spirit, our prayers (and indeed our worship) somehow share in the eternal energy of prayer and worship that flows within the Godhead. There is a sense in which, through these activities, we share in what one theologian, Barbara Brown Zikmund, describes as the Triune God's "eternal dance of togetherness".
2. A disciplined seeking after the mind of Christ, as we try to look at the world through his eyes and pray as he would have us pray. I like to think of this in terms of praying in the shadow of the Cross. It is there that we encounter the casualties of life and history, and hear afresh the revolutionary perspective of the Beatitudes.
3. An acknowledgement that our

prayers do not start and finish with us. Jesus is the Pioneer and Perfector of our faith, our Advocate and Intercessor. His prayers precede, perfect and follow ours, which means that we need not be ashamed of our rather meagre and stumbling efforts or feel obliged to cover everything in a single prayer.

4. Maintaining the link between thanksgiving and intercession. We pray in a spirit of thanksgiving for what God in Christ has done and continues to do in our place and on our behalf. We do not know how to pray as we ought, but Christ prays for us, with us and in us. As James Torrance puts it so eloquently, "Prayer is the Father's gift of grace in giving us Christ to stand in for us and in giving us the Holy Spirit to teach us to pray, and lift us up in prayer into a life of loving communion."³

In the nineteenth century, Scottish theologian John McLeod Campbell described prayer as the "utterance of participation in the life of Christ." I have yet to find a better definition, and believe it conveys in a nutshell all that I have said above about the nature of intercessory prayer and the role of Jesus as Intercessor.

³ *A Paschal for Christ*, p.62