

Service 13th September 2026

Does Prayer Help

A discussion service -

Opening words

As we light this chalice, May each breath remind us of the sacred rhythm of life, the pulse of creation and the power we have to shape the world around us."

1st hymn purple book no 11 - Blessed Spirit of my life

Do you believe in prayer, do you find it hard to pray ?

Sometimes I wonder about prayer and does it help the people

or situation you're praying for or does it just make the person praying feel better. I have had discussions about this with family and friends of various religions and none, but I've never really asked my own church community.

So I thought i would get your thoughts on it .

I do pray everyday , I have my own ritual and I do believe in a God but a lot of times my prayers are the same and I think- "God do you really want to hear the same prayers all the time."

Sometimes too, my very busy mind distracts me by taking me off in all directions, hence why I try to meditate each day to quieten my mind. I think I've mentioned before that I use a Unitarian Universalist bracelet to meditate on which does bring me back to prayer.

I also wonder - does God pray to us by putting intentions in our thoughts.

Just really thought about this because I was sitting on a bus, didn't want to talk to the lady sitting next to me, didn't know her. But she wanted to talk, she told me she loves to get on the bus and get an ice cream and then she told me a lovely story about her sister in a care home who had met a man in

the care home and they sit holding hands. This made the lady sitting next to me so happy, she knew she was ok there. The lady started to cry with happy tears. Did God intend for her to sit next to me and for me to listen. I think that was a different sort of prayer or intention from God to me about being more kind.

So is prayer helpful or a waste of time?

Can you break into groups of 3 or 4 and choose one to lead and feedback later.

Each group will be given a sheet of paper with a few quotes about prayer and a few questions to discuss.

Mary Oliver teaches how to begin to pray:

It doesn't have to be the blue iris, it could be a few weeds in a vacant lot, or a few small stones, just pay attention, then patch a few words together and don't try to make them elaborate, this isn't a contest but the doorway into thanks and a silence, in which another voice may speak:"

Prayer says Katherine Norris-

" is not asking for what you think you want, but asking to be changed in ways you can't imagine."

Rheinhold Niebuhr said-

“ prayer does not change things, prayer changes people, and people change things- prayer is not hearing voices, prayer is acquiring a voice.”

Suzanne Bolton (our lovely member of our congregation who died a while back) said:

“ It is through prayer that every day we may open the door a little wider and come a little nearer to understanding who we are and what our lives are really for.”

Questions

- 1. Do you have a prayer life? Do you believe in prayer?**
- 2. Does prayer in church make you feel connected to spirit (or a higher source) or does it leave you bored.**
- 3. Do you feel prayer in church connects you to each other**

(community)

4. Do you believe prayer helps in the world?

5. Is prayer just a form of wishing.

6. Is praying for someone an act of love?

Feedback from groups

2nd hymn- purple book - no 199- Weaver God Creator

Closing words by Suzanne Bolton

She wrote a lot of beautiful poems, words and songs .

So here's one of her poems to ponder on.

Poem - The God I know

When an artist steps aside to share their creation

They leave some of their selves within that creation

I sense God in the silence after a wave has smashed

Against the rocks, the sun that beams down touches

warmly my face, the black birds song after a storm

The lambs dancing with delight on the moor, in the music

softly playing when I am sad.

The God I know is there.

I believe this too and maybe that's what prayer is about -

taking time to notice.

Our closing words are also by our dear Suzanne,

**“ Help me today to realise that you (meaning the Divine) will
be speaking to me through the events of the day, through
people, through things, through creation.**