

Prayer station ideas

Education Sunday 2009

'THE EARTH IS THE LORD'S.' HOW THEN SHALL WE CARE FOR IT?

Prayer stations are a good way to help people to pray and engage with issues, and they appeal to people of all ages and at different stages on their faith journey. Prayer stations can be interactive, multi-sensory, meditative, challenging, inspiring and more! Try these ideas in your church, perhaps during an all-age worship service or a special Education Sunday prayer event. Suggestions of Bible verses you can print out and display are included for each stand, but you may want to adapt these and find other verses, poems and quotes to display. Just remember to keep them simple and easy for everyone to understand.

STAND ONE: GOD'S AMAZING CREATION

You will need:

- CD player with a CD of nature sounds (available in most CD shops - or record your own).
- PowerPoint show or printed pictures of God's beautiful creation (you could ask some of your church members for their best photos). Include pictures which show the vastness and beauty, as well as the detail and intricacy of creation.
- Paper and art supplies for drawing/painting.

Spend a minute listening to the sounds of nature. Close your eyes and imagine being in a beautiful place surrounded by God's creation. Look at all the images of God's amazing universe and be reminded of how awesome and powerful God is. Think about how creation reveals God's glory and how the vastness and the detail found in the universe is evidence for his existence. Close your eyes and imagine your own favourite place in nature. Describe it to another person, or draw or paint it on paper.

Bible verses: Genesis 1:31, Psalm 19:1-4

STAND TWO: GOD'S PROVISION

You will need:

- A selection of chopped up fruit, ready to eat

Take a piece of fruit. Before you eat it, think about its journey from being a small seed to being on the plate in front of you. Think of the workers who grew and picked the fruit. As you eat the fruit, take your time to think about how good it tastes and thank God for all the good things he provides for us.

Bible verses: Genesis 1:11-12, Psalm 34:8, Psalm 65:9-10, Psalm 147:1-11, 1 Timothy 6:17

STAND THREE: THE EARTH AS A GIFT

You will need:

- A globe inside a gift box tied with ribbon

What is the best present you have ever been given? Tell the person next to you. Now untie the ribbon, open the present and take it out of the box. Thank God for giving us such a wonderful gift and remember that this gift is one which has been passed from one generation to another for thousands of years. As you put the gift back in the box and retie the ribbon, reflect on the responsibility we have to look after it, so that it can be passed on to future generations.

Bible verses: Genesis 1:26-28; Psalm 8; Psalm 115:16

STAND FOUR: DESTRUCTION

You will need:

- Pictures showing the waste, destruction, injustice and poverty which humans are causing to the earth
- Facts about the effects of climate change (www.christianaid.org.uk/issues/climatechange/facts)
- Cut-out paper people

Although people in poorer countries have done little to contribute to climate change, they are the ones who suffer the most from its effects. Ask for forgiveness for the way that humans, especially in the last few decades, have abused the responsibility they have been given to look after the planet. Take a cut-out paper person and write a prayer for the individuals and families who are affected by climate change and the over-consumption of resources.

Bible verses: Psalm 24:1-2

STAND FIVE: GOOD GRAFFITI WALL

You will need:

- A large canvas or wall of paper to write on
- Marker pens

Graffiti is often seen as a way of spoiling the environment. However, on this graffiti wall you are free to write or draw your thoughts and prayers about the way people have treated God's creation, and your hopes and dreams for the future of the earth.

Bible verses: Amos 8:4-6, John 3:16-17

STAND SIX: OUR IMPRESSION ON THE PLANET

You will need:

- Carbon footprint calculator (www.tearfund.org) set up on a computer with internet access if possible
- A large tray of damp sand (or similar)

First use the carbon footprint calculator to get an idea of your global impact. What impression have you made on the planet? As you think about your everyday life and the impression that you have made and are making on the earth, slowly press your hand or foot into the sand. Say sorry for any ways you have contributed to the destruction of God's creation and added to the waste and over-consumption of the earth's resources. Confess any apathy you may have about these issues. Ask God to help you to make a commitment to restoring the earth, to thinking more carefully about how your actions affect the environment and to making a positive impression on the planet.

Bible verses: Genesis 1:26-28, 2:15

STAND SEVEN: BE THE PRAYER, BE THE CHANGE

You will need:

- A world map jigsaw
- Candles
- Seeds and soil
- A display of ideas of positive, practical ways to care for and restore the earth. See *The Everyday Activist* by Michael Norton or www.365act.com or www.wearewhatwedo.org for lots of ideas and resources. Also look at 'Further reading' for Education Sunday 2009.

Look at each of the ideas of simple changes you could make in your everyday life. Ask God to inspire, challenge and encourage you about a few in particular. Decide on the ones you want to commit to doing. As a symbol of your intention and promise to make those changes, either:

1. Add a piece to the puzzle, showing that you want to play your part in restoring creation.
2. Plant a seed in the soil, to show that small actions given to God will grow and be transformed.
3. Light a candle and pray that God's light and love will shine through you and the way you live.

Bible verses: Romans 8:19-21, James 2:14-17

EXTRA IDEAS & SUGGESTIONS

- At each of the stands, you could include prayers, poems and extra facts, along with the suggested Bible verses (find the verses on www.biblegateway.com to save time typing them out). Check out the Education Sunday material for more ideas.
- Why not get a teacher or children's leader to write a child-friendly version of the instructions for each stand and include this too.
- Be careful about which translation of the Bible you use for Genesis 1:28 (about having *dominion* over the earth) and 2:15 (about *tending* and *keeping* the garden). It might be helpful to include the meanings of the original Hebrew words in these verses, since the interpretation of these verses has been part of the reason humans have abused and mistreated the earth.

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