

Resources for Praying without Words



The following prayer methods can be adapted for use with people of all ages and abilities. God is accessible to all of us!

Information about Rev. Donna Fado Ivery

To learn more about Donna Fado Ivery and to see her paintings, check her website <https://www.adventuresinhealing.com>. She also contributed the cover painting and wrote a chapter in *Speaking Out: Gifts of Ministering Undeterred by Disabilities*, a compilation of the stories of 25 members of the United Methodist Association of Ministers with Disabilities. <https://www.umdisabledministers.org/resource/speaking-out.html>

Breath work

The Interfaith Network on Mental Illness offers a helpful summary of Mindfulness Resources. One section teaches the reader how to mindfully experience gratitude through the 5 senses, perhaps a good place to start. The second section offers three different ways to bring yourself into the present moment. The final section leads one through a process of gentle mindfulness that allows distractions to come and go. <http://inmi.us/mindfulness-resources/>

Praying in Color

Similar to Donna's painting with the Spirit process, praying in color has been popularized by Sybil McBeth. She refers to the technique as a way to pray when you can't sit still, and finds that children and adults can learn to pray this way. Some prefer to use a template to color as they bring prayer concerns to God, and Sybil offers a number of templates for free on her website, arranged by liturgical season. Others start by holding a person or concern in their thoughts, and allow the free form drawing process to shape the prayer. For some this serves as an alternative to prayerful journaling. Typically colored markers or pencils are used, but any art media could be an option. <https://prayingincolor.com/handouts>

Praying through images

Danny Schweers hosts a website in which he has paired his photos with written meditations, but the photos can be used contemplatively without reading his words. You may choose to find a magazine photo that speaks to you, or use photography to open your imagination and capture an image for prayer. Spend time prayerfully viewing the image, keeping your heart and spirit open to what God might be telling you. <http://www.photoprayer.com/start.htm>

Rev. Virginia DuPre offers yet another way to use images in her *Devozine* article on Praying through Images. <https://devozine.upperroom.org/spiritual-practices/praying-through-images/>

Prayer beads

While much less well known than rosary beads, the use of prayer beads is appropriate for United Methodists who want a tactile way to stay focused and to involve their hands in prayer.

The DisAbility Ministries Committee is a partner ministry under the General Commission on Religion and Race

Kirsten Vincent is spreading the word and has written several books on the process. You can make your own beads, using her template or something simpler.

<https://www.umc.org/en/content/prayer-beads-for-united-methodists>;

<http://prayerworksstudio.com/prayer-beads/make-your-own/>

Embodied prayer.

“We are hungry for worship that directs our whole self toward God, not just our mind, ears, or eyes. I do not believe we are looking for some nice, added extra in the form of an occasional dance or dramatic piece in worship, but a radical shift in our awareness and experience of embodiment. Kathryn Sparks, 2007

Whether we sit or stand, lift our arms or only imagine ourselves doing so, movement can be a powerful way to lift our hearts and spirits to God. Clapping, gesturing, cupping our palms, stomping, bowing our heads, and swaying are all ways we can communicate our inmost desires and needs to our Creator. We can move to music or in silence, visibly or perceptible only to ourselves. In a group setting always provide alternatives so all may participate.

<https://presbyteryofflorida.com/resources/embodied+prayer.pdf>

Using sign language

Related to movement prayer is the practice of sign language, using signs or phrases from American Sign Language or the sign language of your area. Many individuals who have been through special education may know and use these signs. Simple ASL signs to learn include:

- “pray” is done by pressing your palms together as one does for prayer, and moving your hands slightly back and forth
- “God” is signed by keeping your elbow bent and raising your flat hand, held at 90 degrees to your body, up as high as your forehead
- “love” looks like you are hugging your chest by crossing your arms, fingers are flexed
- “thanks” starts with your flat palm near your lips, then moving your hand forward and down, keeping the palm facing up

Praying to music

Kathryn Shirey suggests that many hymns and songs, especially ones based on scripture, are forms of prayer. Sometimes music can express what our words cannot, with songs coming to mind at just the right time. Music can be the prayer or help us focus on our prayers.

<https://www.prayerandpossibilities.com/sing-to-the-lord-music-as-prayer/>

John Wesley on prayer

“Whether we think of; or speak to, God, whether we act or suffer for him, all is prayer, when we have no other object than his love, and the desire of pleasing him. All that a Christian does, even in eating and sleeping, is prayer, when it is done in simplicity, according to the order of God, without either adding to or diminishing from it by his own choice.” From a plain account of Christian perfection. John Wesley (1777)

<https://www.umc.org/en/content/all-is-prayer-how-words-and-actions-serve-god-and-others>