Playful Prayer Workshop Overview

Introduction
The playful prayer workshop is a wonderful way for people to explore what prayer is by practicing different types of prayer. This workshop is self-guided so that individuals may move at their own paces. Some may get through the entire workshop; others will spend time in one or two rooms.

Purpose and Learning Outcomes
The workshop has several purposes and is geared toward learners in all stages and places of faith from adolescents to adults. I've listed general learning outcomes; however, depending on the group and context, these can be adjusted to suit your needs.

In this workshop, participants will:
Practice and explore the art of prayer
To become familiar with and engage in prayer practices involving focused/guided prayer, music, scripture, the arts, and contemplation
To reflect on prayer and prayer practices with regard to this workshop, as well as our own thoughts and life experiences

Theological Content
In today’s busy world, prayer often takes a backseat to any number of activities and responsibilities. The point of this workshop is to help people connect, reconnect or deepen their prayer lives by exploring different types of prayer. The different rooms of prayer experiences touch on all manners of theological content: confession, the Lord’s Prayer, thanksgiving for creation, the name of God (through breath prayers), God’s presence with us (a prayer based on Isaiah 43), and much more. The exact theological content a participant will encounter depends on how God leads each participant through this workshop. In broad strokes, the hope is that this experience will demonstrate that in prayer, we speak to God through our words, thoughts and actions, and in prayer, we hear and listen to God as well.

Materials and Set-up Information
Ideally, this workshop is set up in one long hallway with five different rooms. Each room is assigned a type of prayer (Guided Prayer, Contemplative Prayer, Creative Prayer, Musical Prayer, Scripture-based Prayer). Signs for placing on the door of each room are provided in pdf format.

Within each room, there are two to three different prayer stations and activities that participants are invited to explore and practice. Each station is numbered and has a set of instructions. These instructions are provided for your use in pdf format. While you are familiarizing yourself with this workshop, you may want to have the different prayer room instructions in front of you while you review the following materials and set up information for each room.
**Guided Prayer Room**
Materials: 9 chairs, 3 copies of each station's instructions

Set-up: If possible, choose a room with open space for this prayer practice.
Place 9 chairs in a circle facing outward so that participants do not look at each other.
Place Guided Prayer Station One instructions on every third chair (chairs 1, 4, 7)
Place Guided Prayer Station Two instructions on every third chair (chairs, 2, 5, 8)
Place Guided Prayer Station Three instructions on every third chair (chairs 3, 6, 9)

**Musical Prayer Room**
Materials: 4-5 hymnals, boombox/ipod & speakers, CD

Set-up: Choose a comfortable room for this one. If you’ve got a room with couches or comfortable chairs, label this room the Musical Prayer room.
On a table, place the stack of 4-5 hymnals along with Musical Prayer Station One instructions. You may want two copies of these instructions available.
In another part of the room, place the boombox/computer/iPod & speakers on a table. Next to the music, place a copy or two of Musical Prayer Station Two instructions. You will want to choose a CD to play in this room. The CD can be quiet, lyric-less music; or, you may want to choose a Christian CD with lyrics. This is your call.

**Scripture-based Prayer Room**
Materials: This room will need to have 2 tables, 8 chairs, 8 Bibles, and 4 copies of scripture-based prayer stations 1 & 2 instructions


**Contemplative Prayer Room**
Materials: This room requires 2 tables, 12 chairs, 2 Styrofoam takeout containers cut in half, 4 forks, sand, 4 different icons, and 4 copies of Contemplative Prayer Stations One, Two and Three instructions

Set-up: For the first station, you will need 2 Styrofoam takeout containers cut in half so that there are four small containers. In these containers, place enough sand for people to draw or write their confessions and burdens in. Place all 4 of these sand-filled containers on a table with four chairs. Place a fork and Contemplative Prayer Station One instructions next to each takeout container.

For the second station, you will need to place four chairs facing a wall or a window. On each chair, place a copy of Contemplative Prayer Station Two instructions.
For the third station, you will need a table with 4 chairs. Place an icon next to each chair. You may want to use icons that your church already has, or you may consider going online and printing 4 different icons. I usually use icons that depict different images of Jesus. Above each icon picture at each chair, place a copy of Contemplative Prayer Station Three instructions.

**Creative Prayer Room**
Materials: This room will need 2 tables, 8 chairs, and a small stand for placing instructions on. It will also require 4 cans of playdough, 4 squares of waxpaper, markers and colored pencils, and white paper.

Set-up: Place a stand in one corner of the room. Place Creative Prayer Station One instructions on the stand. Be sure there is enough room for people to move around the stand so that they may practice kinesthetic/embodiment prayer.

At one table, place 4 chairs around it. At each space, place a piece of wax paper and a can of playdough. Above each piece of wax paper, include a copy of Creative Prayer Station Two instructions.

At the second table, place 4 chairs around it. Place markers and colored pencils in the middle of the table. Place a stack of white paper for drawing on in the middle of the table. At each chair, include a copy of Prayer Station Three instructions.

**Additional Information**
In some of the prayer rooms, you may choose to use candles, dim the lights, or use lamplight instead of overhead lighting. The mood you choose is up to you! I often leave the lights on for Creative Prayer and Scripture-based Prayer. I turn the lights off and place candles in the Contemplative Prayer room. I usually used dimmed lighting in the Musical Prayer Room and the Guided Prayer Room.

**Notes and Suggestions**
This workshop may be framed however you would like. We have had it set up for congregational use before Lenten worship on Wednesday evenings; we have also used it as part of a confirmation unit on prayer. This can be incorporated into seeker’s classes, Sunday school curricula, or even before a church council meeting. It is a good idea to have some reflection after this workshop. You may want to spend time unpacking which types of prayers felt comfortable or uncomfortable; what prayer habits and practices people have; the purpose of prayer; etc. This reflection time should be geared toward the participants and the way in which you are using the workshop. A sample reflection that I have used is below.

I usually allow for 45-60 minutes of time for the workshop. Remind everyone the point of this workshop is not to do everything (although that is certainly an option), but to stretch ourselves to try and explore different types of prayers.
Sample Reflection

1. Which type of prayer was most comfortable for you?
2. Which type of prayer was most uncomfortable for you?
3. Read through the list of quotes about prayer. Pick one that jumps out at you (whether you agree or disagree with it), and share with the group why this particular quote struck you.

***The quotes are listed below. A pdf for copying and distributing these quotes is included in the workshop materials.

A) Prayer may not change things for you, but it for sure changes you for things. (Samuel M Shoemaker)
B) As long as there are tests, there will be prayer in schools. (Unknown)
C) Practical prayer is harder on the soles of your shoes than on the knees of your trousers. (Austin O’Malley)
D) I often pray, but I’m not sure Anyone is listening. (Mignon Mclaughlin)
E) Prayer is not merely an occasional impulse to which we respond when we are in trouble. Prayer is a life attitude. (Walter A Mueller)
F) Listening is the beginning of prayer. (Mother Teresa)
G) Some people think that prayer just means asking for things, and if they fail to receive exactly what they asked for, they think the whole thing is a fraud. (Gerald Vann)
H) Before we can pray, “Lord, Thy kingdom come,” we must be willing to pray, “My kingdom go.” (Alan Redpath)

4. Why do you (or don’t you) pray?
5. What have you learned about your own prayer practices from this workshop?