
Rally Day: A Call to Prayer

Event: Prayer

Festival Time: 50-60 minutes

Date: Late Summer, Early Fall (Perhaps offer this event the Sunday before children, youth, and adults are introduced to their fall Sunday school classes.)

Format: This kick-off event is designed for families and small groups of 3-5 people who will move independently from one activity to the next. Be sure to make special arrangements to include single adults, elders, youth without an adult and others in the small groups.

The following activities can work well when they are scattered around the church building. Be sure to have a clear map available with a description of activities. Add festive decorations such as balloons at each activity station.

This festival might feel like a fair or a scavenger hunt.

Planning Team: Be sure to take ample time to pray about this event. Pray at the meeting and pray at home. Weeks and months before the Prayer Festival, invite the congregation to pray for this event.

Sample Activities: The following activities are just a sampling of prayer activities for the Festival. What else might you add to the festival?

- Prayer Wreath: Sanctuary
- Prayer Hands: Fellowship Hall
- Classroom Blessings: Classrooms
- Prayer Chains: Foyer
- Pretzels: Kitchen

Detailed Descriptions:

Prayer Wreath: prayers for the church

Materials Needed: Large grapevine wreath (at least 24 inches wide) Ribbons of different colors, textures, and widths.

Assignment: Each member of your group is to think of a prayer for your congregation for this coming school year. How might God bless your congregation? Find a ribbon that seems to fit the prayer. Each person in your group is asked to tie a ribbon on the wreath. Optional: As you tie the ribbon on the wreath, share your prayer with your group.

Follow-up: Present the wreath in worship as part of the prayers of the church. After worship, hang your prayer wreath in a prominent place in the church so all might see and remember to hold your congregation in prayer.

Prayer Hands: prayers for your family

Materials Needed: Construction paper, Scissors, Pens, pencils, crayons

Assignment: Allow someone in your group to trace your hand out of construction paper. (Do not be tempted to trace your own hand.) Once your hand has been traced, cut it out of the paper. Write your own name in the palm of your cut-out hand. When everyone has cut his or her hand from the paper, have your group find a quiet place to sit. Be sure to have pens or crayons with you. Gather your group together. Pass your cut-out hands around to others in your group. The group takes time to name positive things about each person and write down key words in each of the fingers of the hand of that person. (Sample: loving, joyful, kind, etc.) This is a wonderful way for people, especially family members, to affirm each other. Take your hand home. You are a blessing!

Classroom Blessing: prayers for faith

Materials needed: Map of your church, especially Sunday school rooms; Candle and matches (optional)

Assignment: Walk into the different classrooms being used for learning in your church building during the coming year. Offer a prayer in each room. If you want, take a lit candle to each room and stop for prayer.

Sample Prayer: *Gracious God, may the light and love of Christ bless each person who enters this room. Amen.*

Prayer Chains: prayers for the world

Materials Needed: 1 ½ inch paper strips: use white (or pastel) typing paper; Pens, pencils or crayons; Stapler or tape

Assignment: Write down prayer petition on strips of paper. (Use one paper per petition.) Create a paper chain by joining the individual prayer petitions together. Connect all the chains together in a long paper chain.

Follow-up: Bring the prayer chain into worship as a procession during the opening hymn. Adorn your sanctuary with the prayers of the people.

Pretzels: prayers for those in need

Materials Needed: pretzels, drinks

Assignment: Before you eat your snack of pretzels, notice how the pretzel resembles someone who has crossed his or her arms. Make a similar shape by hugging yourself. Remember in prayer those who are in need in the world; the hungry, sick, lonely, etc. After your prayer, enjoy your snack.

Litany

The following litany can be used to begin or conclude your festival. Or it can be adapted for Sunday worship.

Leader: Gracious God, we gather in your name.

People: We come with our joys and sorrows. Listen to our prayers.

Leader: We pray for our church.

People: Show us the ways to reach out to others with the love of Christ.

Leader: We pray for our church leaders and teachers.

People: Guide each with your wisdom and compassion.

Leader: We pray for students and disciples of Christ.

People: Be with your followers—of all ages—as we gather around your Word.

Leader: We pray for those who do not know of your love.

People: Use us to bear witness to the Good News of Jesus.

Leader: Creator of all, rally us around your Word and renew our commitment to follow Christ Jesus. Fill our hearts, minds, and spirits with your love. Empower us to be shining witnesses of Christ. Amen

by Robin McCullough-Bade