

Picking-up Prayer

Picking-up Prayer is not an original idea but it is perhaps the first to provide some level of organisation to this approach of praying. This is for the purpose of resourcing the wider church, relieving it of the burden of 're-inventing the wheel' and providing a measure of cohesion in the Body of Christ in mission.

This is provided as a guide to give you more detail on what Picking-up Prayer is about and to get you going. The main ingredients to add to this are enthusiasm, vision and a little imagination.

Connecting

This information is also available from our website (www.churchplus.info/prayer/picking-up-prayer) and downloadable as a pdf. From our website you can also send us your questions, suggestions and testimonies - we'd love to hear!

What is it?

Picking-up Prayer (PuP) has got to be one of the easiest ways to mobilise Christians in strategic, creative and dynamic prayer that takes them onto the streets with opportunities for God-encounters with the public; we have already heard how this is happening in other places.

PuP is praying through the streets of your village, town or city while picking up litter. That's it. Simple. This method of praying gets Christians out of their churches and homes and onto the very streets they want to see transformed. The primary aim is to bring blessing onto the streets, both physically and spiritually.

Strategic. Whether it's the whole city or just a street where your home group meets you can plan a long term strategy for clearing the streets (and parks etc.) of physical rubbish, while at the same time clearing the spiritual 'atmosphere' of spiritual rubbish (strongholds etc.). Hard areas can be targeted more frequently and the street cleaning is your 'permission' to access these areas.

Creative. A little bit of creative thinking goes a long way! You don't have to imagine the areas you're praying for, you can get right into them and see for yourself. More than that you can sense the atmosphere of the area, see what's happening immediately and connect more easily with what the Spirit might be saying about it. It is easier to make declarations in faith when you're right there in the middle of it all.

Dynamic. It's ministry the way it is depicted in Scripture; out and about among the people who need an encounter with God. On the streets is where it all happened and what made the stories we all remember, and this is one way we can start building our own stories.

How does it work?

We've already said it has to be one of the easiest ways to 'get out there'; here's a simple plan you can follow to make it happen:

1. Contact your local Council

This isn't entirely necessary...but a very good idea! It safeguards you should anyone challenge what you're doing as the Council can simply say that they know about it and have said it's OK. It also helps with building relationship with your local government and services. This is certainly a good and worth while thing to do. Your Council can even supply all the equipment you need free of charge (see Resources below).

2. Promote PuP in your church and other churches too.

It can be a challenge creating opportunities in your church to encourage both prayer and evangelism, and even more so creating unity projects across several churches. This is one simple way you can do both. The only theological points to agree on are; God's love is for everyone, we're to intercede for the lost and the broken, and we're to be bearers of the good news of Jesus Christ and His Kingdom. After that it's all secondary and not as important.

3. Plan your strategy with a street map.

Choose the areas you're going to target and make sure it's clear and simple to follow. You can use obvious landmarks and boundaries to make it as easy as possible. Depending on the size of your team you could either target larger areas or several different areas at once.

4. Prepare your team.

You don't need big meetings or long training sessions! The minimum you need to do is to inform your team what it's about and why you're doing it, and you'll have already done most of this through your advertising! All you're asking your team to do is to turn up at a certain time in a certain place, use the equipment to pick up litter and pray while they're doing it, and then return by a certain time to the meeting point. The only other thing to really talk about is how to connect with the public should opportunities arise.

5. Inform your Council.

Provided you have informed your Council (see 1. above) they will want to know when and where you'll be doing your litter picking, mainly so that they know when and where to drop off the equipment and provide any advice on the location. For example, they won't let you do this on roads with speed limits greater than 40mph, apart from country lanes. If you're going to do this regularly you could provide them with a timetable.

6. Go and do it!

At some point it's got to happen! You can do it any time and you can do as little as half an hour. The most important thing is to enjoy it and be a blessing to your community. The only discipline that needs particular encouragement is to spend the time praying and not chatting with each other!

7. Feedback

It's good to get feedback from everyone so that you can tweak things as they go. You also want to hear about your team's experiences and testimonies, as well as how things have changed over time. Again, do share that with us as we'd love to hear how you get on.

8. Do it again!

This is going to have the most impact over a longer period of time, so even if you're planning a one-off big clean up why not plan an ongoing operation that is smaller in scale but keeps the praying out on the streets.

Who can do it?

This is so simple anyone can do it! As already stated, you only need as little as half an hour. This makes prayer and evangelism accessible to everyone - even the most timid. People with some disabilities will be able to get directly involved, but for those who really aren't able to get on the streets they can meet together to pray in support of those who are out on the streets.

Strategy examples.

Here are some ideas to get you started. Read through them all as you'll be able to mix and match the different suggestions and ideas, and of course add your own.

1. Rural Contexts & Small Groups

You may be a small house church, rural/village church, or a home group. The minimum you need is two people (preferably, but one will still work!) and a street, road or lane. If your setting is rural and you don't have a problem with litter you could tidy up grass verges, sweep pavements, cut the grass...but speak to the Council first to make sure this is OK. You could ask someone to walk the dog with you and take different routes each time, take up photography or jogging. If there's no litter then get creative about how you get out to pray. If you need to use a tractor or a boat then so be it! In this context it is easy to see how this could become a regular, even daily, strategy for prayer.

A home group or house church could start by targeting the street on which they meet and share their stories when they gather - there's nothing more encouraging than testimonies.

2. Church Campaign

It can be quite a challenge to get Christians excited about prayer and evangelism but this is one way you might be able to capture their imagination. Your church may have defined boundaries such as a parish which you could use to define your target area. The size and context of the parish/boundary will determine how you tackle the systematic approach to praying through your community.

3. The Big One-off / City Campaign

It can be easier to rally people to a big one-off event, the advantage being that it is a one-off and you can give it a big high profile push, either just in your church or perhaps even city-wide involving other churches.

It is becoming a common feature in our towns and cities that churches are focussing on their common bonds and working together. Many places are seeing much fruit coming out of these new relationships. PuP provides another opportunity for churches and Christians to work together in a simple and practical way and build on what's important.

These are just to get you thinking! There's plenty of opportunity for getting creative, you just need to consider what's appropriate for your context.

Resources

People. You have the main resource in your church(es).

Equipment. Your local Council most likely has the equipment but you could purchase your own if you wanted. Here's what you need: litter-pickers, disposable gloves, strong bin bags, high visibility jackets, sharps box (for needles etc).

Publicity. The only other thing you really need is some publicity material for promoting it. We can provide you with downloads if you wish to print the material yourself or we can provide printed material for you, which you then print your details in the spaces provided.

Finally...

So there we are, a simple but effective strategy for getting church outside its building and engaging with community in a creative and effective way.

If you need any further assistance or simply want to talk further about this great initiative we'd be more than happy for you to contact us.

Don't forget, have fun - enjoy yourself!

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