

Children's talk

**St Mark's Anglican Church
South Hurstville**

**Quintessential Sunday
29 July 2007**

**Preacher
The Reverend Chris Albany
Rector**

Reading: John 6.1-13

Prayer

Today we are having a service with a difference – its focus is on a very important topic; ‘Prayer’. I wonder what you think of when you hear that word? What is prayer?

I guess like most people you'd initially agree that prayer is talking with God. But in reality prayer is much more than just talking. The way I like to think about prayer is this. God is always present, the Bible reminds us that God is the one in whom we live and move and have our being. However we do not always remember that God is with us. We forget, we fail to be aware of that underlying reality of our lives - the ever constant, all sustaining presence of God. So we need to find ways of improving our awareness of God's presence. The one thing that helps us when we are learning something and trying to do it to the fullest of our ability is practice. That's true whether we are learning to play a musical instrument, playing soccer, or netball or any other sport. Practice is important and the way to pick up the skills required. Remembering always that if a thing is worth doing it is worth doing badly whilst we learn to do it better.

So my favourite definition of prayer is ‘Practising the Presence of God’. Finding intentional ways to help us be aware of God's presence and so God's companionship, strength and love to help us as we journey through life. Now there are lots of things that can help us ‘Practise the Presence of God’. Here in church for example we have candles, the cross and other symbols to help remind us of God and Jesus. We use posture, on the pulpit is a picture of a child kneeling with hands clasped together – a traditional prayer pose! We might kneel, or close our eyes, or put our hands together when we want to pray in order to prevent ourselves from being distracted.

Prayer can be spoken, or sung, or written. But prayer is also about listening – it's not just talking to God but also listening to God and even more than that being with God.

Whilst a special place, such as this building, or symbols, or set prayers can be helpful in our practice of the presence of God none of these are necessary. Prayer is something that can happen anywhere at any time and it can be just like any communication with a friend – there doesn't have to be a special language. In fact one way to think of prayer is a conversation with God – like any conversation that is two way it entails talking and listening and also silence – just being together.

Of course there is also an aspect of prayer that is communal. We come together with others to be aware of God's presence and importance in our lives. That's what our Sunday worship is all about, and we use words and actions of Jesus in sharing a meal with his friends as away of remembering and knowing his presence and love with us as we ‘break bread together’ and share the bread and wine of communion.

May this service today help us explore different aspects of prayer in its broadest sense and so help us live our lives more aware of that underlying reality – of God's all embracing, and ever constant presence.