

GUIDELINES FOR PRAYER MINISTERS

WHY PRAYER MINISTRY?

Prayer Ministry is an important part of the offering at On Fire Mission's national and regional events and seeks to provide an intentional space, in the company of fellow Christians, for the Holy Spirit to minister to a person seeking prayer for any area of their life, faith, work or ministry. It is founded on the belief that every person is made in the image of God and is loved beyond all measure by God who calls us into deeper relationship and desires to heal, comfort, strengthen, reconcile and equip.

WHAT IS THE ROLE OF THE PRAYER MINISTER?

Prayer ministers are to pray with and for the person seeking prayer; lifting them intentionally before the loving gaze of God, articulating the person's particular concerns (where shared), and praying for their wholeness and flourishing. Prayer ministers pray with confident faith, expectant for God to act, yet with the humility and awareness that we live within the 'now and not yet' of the Kingdom. Ministry may also involve anointing with holy oil by a priest or the laying on of hands by lay or ordained ministers.

If a safeguarding or deliverance concern arises, please speak to the assigned person immediately. If you believe further pastoral support may be required for yourself or the person you are praying for, please speak to the Chaplain or event leader. OFM do not support any attempt to change a person's gender identity or sexual orientation through any form of 'conversion therapy'. In order to ensure that prayer ministry at all OFM events is practiced in a way that is safe, accessible, inclusive and compassionate, it is essential that all prayer ministers read and comply with these guidelines.

National Events:

PRAYER MINISTRY LEAD: Debbie Orriss
SAFEGUARDING LEAD: Simon Cutmore
CONFERENCE CHAPLAIN: Kathryn Fleming

Regional Events:

Every regional event should designate a prayer ministry team leader who is responsible to the OFM Trustees for the provision of prayer ministry at events.

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On Fire Mission is a Registered Charity in England and Wales Number 1157273

Revised March 2020

PREPARATION

All teams should have a lead minister (of considerable experience) and at least one (usually two) other members. A briefing should be conducted by the prayer ministry lead/event organizer and all members of the team should have received a copy of, and assented to, the guidelines.

- **Pray together:** invite God to draw those who need this ministry and to guide your words
- **Attend to practicalities** e.g. oil, stoles (if needed), tissues, location of your prayer station
- **Be mindful of diversity** e.g. a mix of genders and lay and ordained ministers is often helpful
- **Ensure accessibility** e.g. level access, seating if needed for ministers/delegates, sign language

MINISTRY TIME

Teams should stand/sit in open formation; gathering sensitively around the person. Sighted ministers should pray with eyes open but not staring directly at the person. Some people may find persistent, direct eye contact difficult. If standing, it is advisable that each team have one person positioned behind the person being prayed for to help them down gently if they 'rest in the Spirit'.

The safety, dignity and comfort of the person seeking prayer should be maintained at all times. Consent to touch, anoint etc. must always be obtained. It is usual for prayer to release an emotional response, however, if a person becomes uncontrollably distressed or expresses a wish to end the session, gently and swiftly close down the prayer time and assist pastorally/signpost as appropriate.

ASK:

- **Name** and preferred pronouns (if you do not already know them)
- **May I place my hand on your shoulder/arm as we pray?** Be aware that hands extended over or near a person's head or face may feel oppressive to some. It is not necessary, and may be inappropriate, to touch the specific area of the body a person requests prayer for.

LISTEN:

- **Listen to the person** if they wish to share particular concerns for prayer; being careful not to engage in conversation or to make assumptions, respond with judgement (positive/negative), or give advice etc. Prayer is between the person and God; do not request details if not offered
- **Listen to God** responding to any promptings, words, pictures etc. by silently asking God for confirmation before gently offering these to the person to take or to leave
- **Listen to yourself** being careful not to project your own hopes/fears/experience/relationships onto the person but noticing anything stirred in you. Practice good self-care.

PRAY:

- **Invite the Holy Spirit** remembering this is God's work in the person and in their particular relationship with God; we are witnesses and intercessors, simply lifting the person before God
- **Thank God for the person**, affirm their belovedness; grounding them in God's love and mercy
- **Reflect their language**; where appropriate using the phrases and language they used to you
- **Do not be afraid of silence**, leaving space for the person's own work with God
- **Allow people to respond freely** expressing their own prayer and emotions before God
- **Be prepared and attentive**; some people may relax into God's presence by falling to the ground ('resting in the Spirit'). Catch them and support them down with dignity, allowing them to rest in this peaceful experience. Further prayer or assistance is not usually required.
- **Share with humility**; offering only words/images/Scripture/interpretations which build up, encourage and reassure. Don't 'declare' or request evidence of change (e.g. healing)
- **Resist giving advice or counsel** but if appropriate offer to refer/signpost to additional support e.g. counselling, medical or spiritual care (confession, spiritual direction, vocation advisor etc.)
- **Commend the person into God's continuing care** and end the ministry time as a group by praising God, praying for one another and commending to God all those for whom you prayed

CONFIDENTIALITY AND SAFEGUARDING

All prayer ministry should take place in a location where it is visible to others but a person's conversation is not overheard. All information shared in the context of prayer ministry should remain confidential to those who are praying and not be shared unless there is risk of harm to the person or to others. If you receive a disclosure that a person is at risk (esp. child or vulnerable adult), this must be reported to relevant authorities and to the designated safeguarding officer immediately. In the very rare event of suspected demonic activity, the prayer session should be calmly closed down and immediate advice sought from the Prayer Ministry Lead and Chair-person/other experienced priest.