



PRAYING through the day

A resource for families who
want to pray at home together

Produced by The Mothers' Union
in the Diocese of Oxford

Mothers' UNION
Christian care for families

Registered Charity: 249723



Praying through the day

foreword

One of my earliest memories is of being tucked up in bed by my mother, and saying prayers, always ending with

Day by day, dear Lord we pray
To see thee more clearly
Love thee more dearly
And follow thee more nearly
Day by day.

This pack is full of encouragement and reassurance to families, each one different, to find its own rhythm and style of prayer and to create the space to deal with life's puzzlements and big questions.

And it has much to teach adults, as we each grow in confidence in our Christian lives, about our daily need to praise God, to ask for what we need, and to see our whole lives through a lens of thankfulness. I warmly commend it to you, and God bless you and your family as you grow closer together and closer to God.

+Olivia
Bishop of Reading

introduction

God is with us in every moment. When we pray we are including him in our lives, in everything that happens. Praying through the Day offers simple ideas for praying with our young children, so that together we can discover and rediscover God's presence with us: as we wonder at the beauty of his creation, as we experience his comforting presence when times are difficult, and as our eyes are opened in thanksgiving to his constant love for us.

We invite you to enjoy these ideas. Pick and choose what suits you and your children and do let us know how you get on.

The Mother's Union in the Diocese of Oxford



getting started

There is no right or wrong way to pray.

- **No special words** – though some people find value in well-used prayers. Use your own words, which say exactly what you want to say to God, or use no words at all but just share silently your feelings with him. And value whatever your children may say. It will be different for each child and that's OK.
- **No special places** – You don't have to be in church, you can pray anywhere! But you may find it helps to make a special place which everyone knows about, especially at bedtime. Or have prayer reminders around – a cross or a picture – by the door where you go in and out or in the car.
- **No correct positions** – though some people find it helpful to kneel or put their hands together. These are traditional things to do but they may not be right for you. Cuddling and/or holding hands may be much better.

learning from each other

Jesus told his friends that to enter the Kingdom of Heaven, they should become like little children. He didn't mean that we should forget all the experience we have as adults but he was talking about putting trust in God in the same way that young children trust those who love them. And perhaps Jesus was also saying that we should try and recapture the wonder and curiosity and delight that children have so that we can see the world as they see it. We can learn from our children. Let them show us things we might miss on our own.



when questions come up

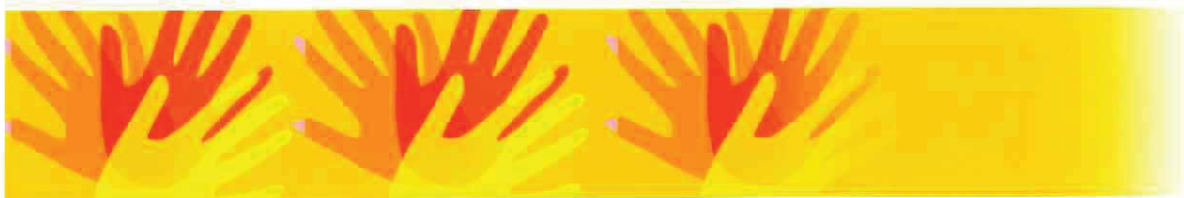


Prayer can be very simple but it is also very powerful. There will be questions which are difficult to answer.

'Why didn't God make Granny better?'

'Perhaps we didn't pray hard enough?'...

Do ask for help – at your church – parenting group – MU branch – your vicar... Other parents will have faced similar questions – we can support each other as we grow in our understanding of God. The resources list includes some Christian bookshops that are also places where we can take our questions.



arrow prayers

Arrows are slim and travel fast.

Arrow prayers are simple and go straight from our heart to God.

While it's good to have special times for prayer and maybe a special place too, it's also good to keep in touch with God all through the day. Arrow prayers are like exclamations: 'Amazing!' 'Help!' 'Thanks!'. With just a few words you and your child can share the events of your day with God in a simple, natural way. There is no moment in the day when God is not with us. Help your children to be aware of the loving tender care that God has for us always by encouraging them to speak with God as naturally as they speak with you.

Here are a few examples of the kind of thoughts that might turn into prayers.

The important thing is to encourage your child to put their thoughts into their own words, as you explore the wonder of God's world together and as you accompany your child in times of joy, as well as in times of anxiety.



amazing!

God, how bright and warm the sunshine is today.

What a brilliant butterfly you've made, God.

Father, these puddles are good for splashing in.

help!

God, we're off to the seaside. Keep us safe on the journey and bring us safe home tonight.

I'm painting a picture, God. Help me make it the best I can.

Dear God, I'm feeling frightened: help me to know you're beside me.

thanks!

I can feel the sand between my toes.

Thank you God for big sandy beaches.

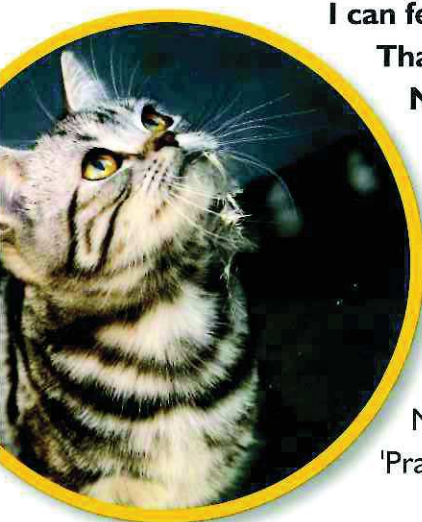
No more stabilisers on my bike – Thank you God!

My cat Tigger has tickly whiskers.

Thank you God for Tigger's whiskers.

When your child is old enough to write, you could provide a little pot of paper 'arrows' for them to write prayers on and then collect the arrows up for a special prayer time at the end of the week. Or download coloured arrow labels by visiting the

Mothers Union Oxford website www.muoxford.co.uk and following the 'Praying Through The Day' link on the home page.





not just words

Prayer isn't just about talking to God. It's also about listening to God and being aware of God's presence through a whole variety of experiences. Children love playing with paint and crayons, glue and scraps of this and that, listening to and making music, being very active and physical indoors and out. With a little thought all these things can be ways to encourage awareness of the Holy Spirit, God's presence with us. Here are just a few suggestions. Knowing your child, you will be able to judge which might be good to use now and which when they are a little older.

candle prayer

Light a candle, turn off the electric light and sit quietly together for a short while just watching the candle flame. As you light the candle you could say the words 'Jesus is the light of the world'.

(Make sure you keep the matches somewhere safe and ensure the candle is not left unattended whilst lit and is properly out at the end).

slow walking prayer

Take a very slow walk round your garden or in the park, just noticing things together, touching, listening and smelling as you go.

The two ideas below build on three of the thoughts which are important in our praying: 'Thank you', 'Sorry' and 'Please'.

counter prayer

Using a quantity of counters (of three different colours), invite your child to make three heaps (one for 'thank you', one for 'sorry' and one for 'please')

movement prayer

Invent simple movements to express the thoughts 'Thank you, sorry and please'.





saying grace - prayer at meals

This is an easy way to introduce a child to giving thanks, as it will be at a time when they can join with others at prayer.

It is part of the centre of family life.

It can be just a very simple thank you or can include prayers for whatever is happening in the world. Ask them what they want to pray about and let them use their own words.

Prayer cubes can also be used. They can be purchased in Christian bookshops, but why not help your child to make their own? (Template in pack.) Prayers or Graces can be written, or printed out and pasted on to each surface. For smaller children a different coloured background can be pasted to each surface (but keep the writing in black on white for ease of reading).

At the start of the meal some families hold hands around the table – some light a candle.

While you are eating, you could talk about what you were thinking when the prayers were being said.

Graces can be found in many books, but here are two very old ones to start with:



**Thank you for the world so sweet,
Thank you for the food we eat,
Thank you for the birds that sing,
Thank you God for everything.**

**For every cup and plateful
Lord make us truly grateful.**

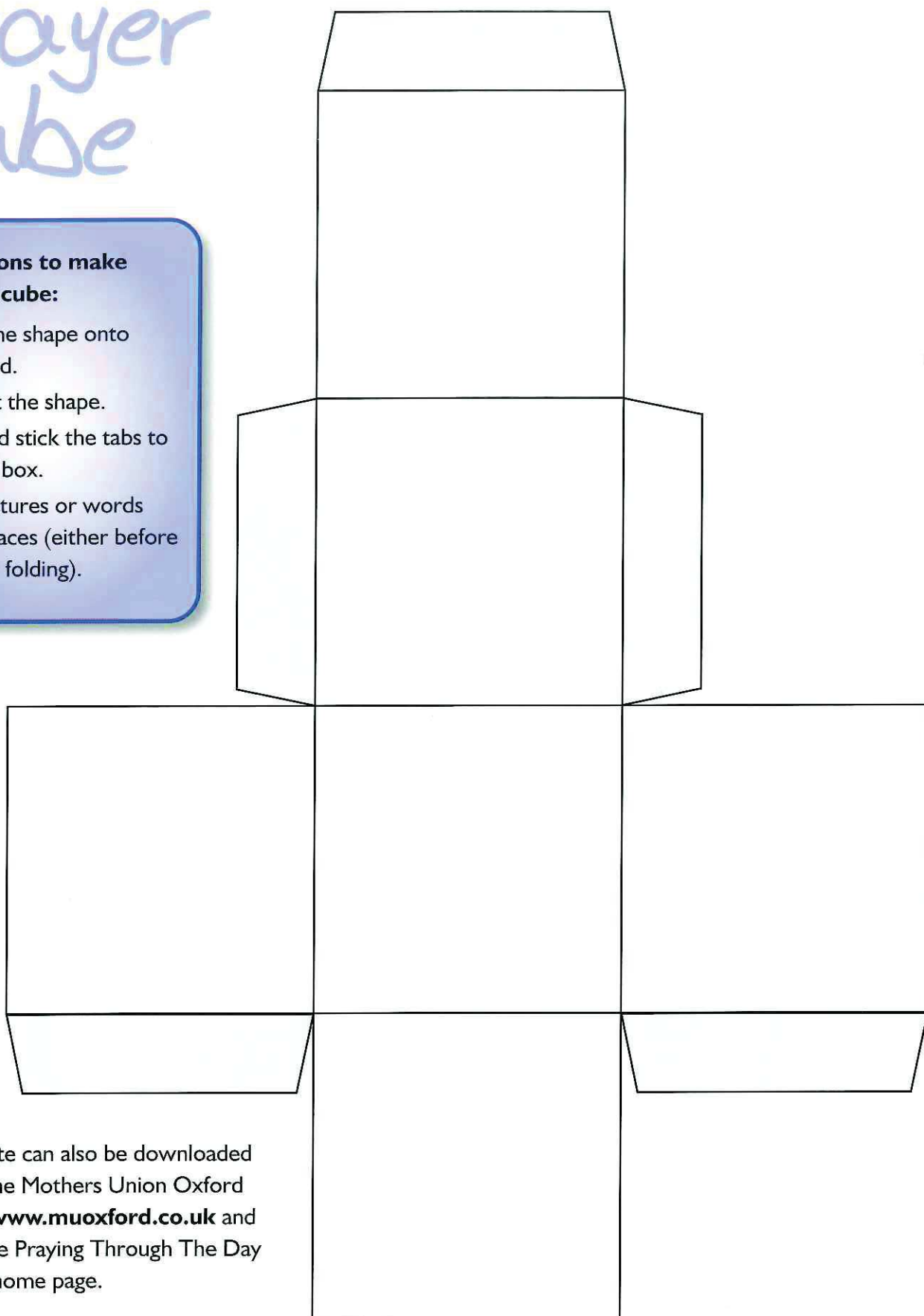
However you start your meal, it should not be done solely for the child's benefit, but as a natural part of the family's thanksgiving.



Prayer cube

Instructions to make a prayer cube:

- Copy the shape onto thin card.
- Cut out the shape.
- Fold and stick the tabs to make a box.
- Add pictures or words to the faces (either before or after folding).



This template can also be downloaded by visiting the Mothers Union Oxford website at www.muoxford.co.uk and following the Praying Through The Day link on the home page.



How to begin making a special prayerbook

Take a 'scrap' book – spiral-backed books are best, as they will lay flat when opened.

Print headings in large letters at the top of each page. This can be done by hand with marker pens, by using a computer to print out the headings, or by using a suitable stencil. Please do not over-use capitals to emphasise the heading, as it is confusing for early readers.



Page 1

Thank you for the world

Together, find pictures of the world and God's creation and stick them on to the pages under the heading.

Page 2

Thank you for the food we eat

Use pictures of food for this page.

Page 3

Thank you for the birds that sing

This time birds!

Page 4

Thank you God for everything

Pictures of your child's favourite things and those of interest to them.

Print a large Amen and place it at the bottom of the page.

Continue on further pages with photographs of family and friends under the heading Dear God, please look after them.

This is meant to be the child's own book, so let them stick in pictures and things they like – e.g. Birthday cards, Post-cards sent from friends on holiday, pictures from magazines.



help your child to make their own special prayer book

This one belongs to a little girl
called Lily and is being made
with the help of her Grandma.





prayers at bedtime

At bedtime we have the opportunity to share the events of the day with our children. A time to look at the highs and lows without judging feelings and emotions.

Use simple words.

We don't have to sit hands together, eyes closed.

God welcomes the time we spend with him and many children enjoy sitting cuddling their favourite toy and talking to God in their own words and using words they understand.

ask what they have enjoyed

Relive those moments.

Treasure them again and thank God for them.

They are God's gifts and signs of his love.

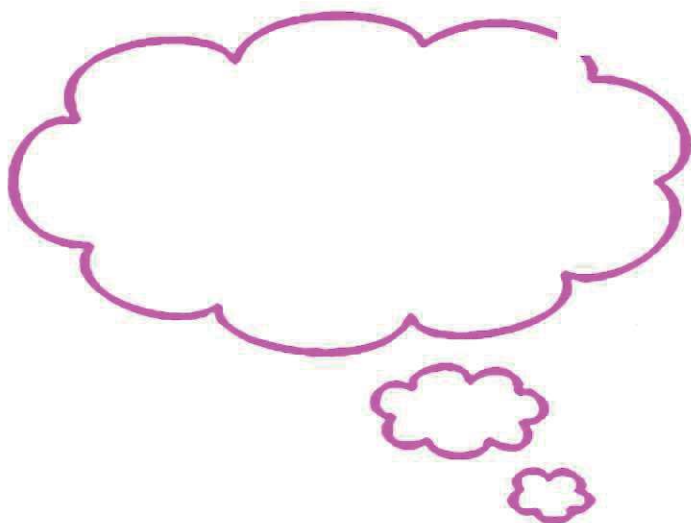
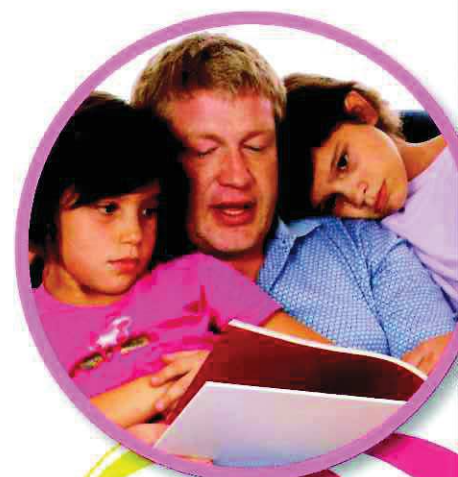
Don't judge them just give thanks!

ask your child what made them sad

Explore their feelings of sadness.

Share your child's concerns.

Pray for the event that made them sad, those people who have been sad, those who have had a bad day.



think about tomorrow

What is there to look forward to?

What is happening that may be scary?

What is exciting?

Ask God to guide us through the day?

write or draw in the bubble!

At the end of the sharing time if you wish you could say a prayer (blessing) over your child as they snuggle down to go to sleep. You can download extra copies of this page by visiting the Mothers Union Oxford website at www.muoxford.co.uk and following the Praying Through The Day link on the home page.



some simple prayers

And a space to add your own.

Let the children add pictures or their own words.

Ask grandparents or godparents for their special prayers.



Dear God

Thank you for my friends, and for the games and fun that we share.
Please help me to be a good friend to them.
Amen.

Lord

Please help me to notice people who need my help.
Children who are alone and do not have a friend.
My parents and teachers, when they need a hand.
Amen.

God, you are great.

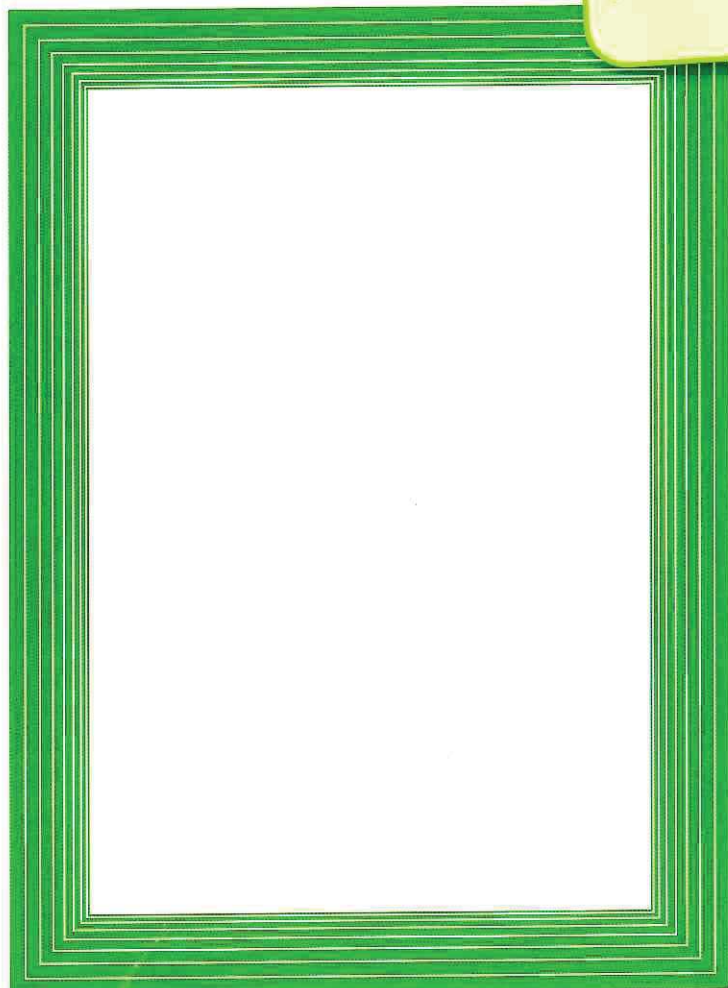
You made the world and it is good.
Thank you for making it so beautiful.
We are sorry that we have spoiled it.
Amen.

Dear Jesus

Please help me at school. Sometimes I find it hard, and then I specially need your help.
I know you are always with us.
Amen.

Blessing

Lord, bless us and protect us.
Lord, smile on us and show us your love.
Befriend us and help us.
Amen.



resources

Prayers and Prayer Activities

In a World of Wonders (ISBN 0-281-05614-5) Robert Cooper

A gentle yet powerful prayer book for children with beautiful photographs.

A Child's Book of Celtic Prayers (ISBN 0-7459-4880 4) Joyce Denham, LION

Beautiful Celtic prayers for children of primary school age.

Family Prayers (ISBN 1-84417-174-4) Rosemary and Peter Atkins, KEVIN MAYHEW

Simple prayers to share with children, with lots of brightly coloured drawings.

A Story, a Hug and a Prayer (ISBN 978-1844171842) Michael Forster, KEVIN MAYHEW

Promises for Little Hearts, (ISBN 1-85985-266-1) Elena Kucharik, CANDLE BOOKS

Side by Side with God in Everyday Life: Helping Children to Grow with God Through All Times, (ISBN-13: 978-1841018553) Yvonne Morris, BARNABAS FOR CHILDREN

Psalms for Young Children, Marie-Helene Delval illustrated by Arno, (ISBN 9780802853226), EERDMANS

I can say a prayer (ISBN 9780745962337) Sophie Piper, LION

Hand in Hand – Enjoying Faith as a Family, from central Mothers Union at www.themothersunion.org

Our Family GodVenture, (ISBN-13: 978-0956385901) Victoria Beech, Sticker Activity Book

Books to help young children through difficult times

When Goodbye is Forever (ISBN 0-7459-4879-0) Lois Rock, LION

Now We have a Baby (ISBN 0-7459-4885-5) Lois Rock, LION

Badger's Parting Gifts (ISBN 978-0-00-664317-3) Susan Varley, HARPERCOLLINS

Waterbugs and Dragonflies (ISBN 0-8264-7181-1) Doris Stickney, CONTINUUM

Three books by Victoria Beech and Paediatric Chaplaincy Network:

Jesus still loves Joe (ISBN-13 978-1905893508)

Maya goes to Hospital (ISBN-13 978-1905893201)

Sam and his Special Book (ISBN-13 978-1905893225)

For Further Reading

Praying through Life (ISBN 0-7151-4010-8) Stephen Cottrell, CHURCH HOUSE PUBLISHING

Not a prayer book but a book about prayer in the family.

Mother's Union On-line bookshop for Children's books

www.mueshop.org/product-category/books-2/childrens-reading

Websites where you can find resources

www.faithinhomes.org.uk - full of ideas and information

Domestic abuse issues

www.restoredrelationships.org/resources/info/105/

www.thehideout.org.uk

www.domesticshelters.org/domestic-violence-books/teens-and-children

Tragedies and death

www.familyeducation.com/videos/12-childrens-books-help-explain-tragedies-death

www.usurnsonline.com/grief-loss/10-solid-biblical-christian-books-for-kids-about-death-heaven/

www.icanteachmychild.com/5-childrens-books-that-deal-with-death-loss-and-grief/

There are some additional Praying through the Day resources that can be found on the MU Oxford website

www.muoxford.org.uk/index.php/category/resources/prayer/

Christian book and coffee shops

Browse through a selection of children's resources, stop for a drink & a chat.

Please check opening times before visiting

Banbury

The Mustard Seed (St Mary's Gift Shop), St Mary's Church, Horsefair, Banbury OX16 0AA,
01295 253329, www.banburystmary.org.uk/the-mustard-seed/

Faringdon

The Mustard Seed, Market Place, Faringdon, SN7 7HP, 01367 244821, www.mustardseed.org.uk

Great Missenden

St Andrew's Bookshop, 61-65 High Street, Great Missenden, HP16 0AL, 01494 862168

www.standrewsbookshop.co.uk

Grove

Cornerstone Christian Centre, 10, Savile Way, Grove, Wantage, OX12 0PT, 01235 772280
www.cornerstonegrove.org.uk

Henley-on-Thames

Quench at d:two, 55-57 Market Place, Henley-on-Thames, RG9 2AA, 01491 577414
www.dtwo.co.uk/index.php/quench-bookshop

Maidenhead

Quench, 19 Queen Street, Maidenhead, SL6 1NB 01628 621985
www.quenchshops.com/pages/maidenhead

Milton Keynes

Milton Keynes Christian Books, Chapel Annexe, 13a Wolverton Road, Stony Stratford, Milton Keynes, MK11 1DZ, 01908 566960, www.mkcb.org

Newbury

Shoemakers, The Arcade, Market Place, Newbury, RG14 5AD, 01635 37836
www.christophershoeemaker.org.uk

Oxford

St Andrew's Bookshop, 57c St Clements Street, Oxford, OX4 1AG, 01865 247567
www.standrewsbookshop.co.uk

Reading

Greyfriars Christian Bookshop, 64 Friar Street, Reading, RG1 1EH, 0118 951 6703
www.greyfriarsbookshop.org.uk

Wallingford

The Fountain Christian Bookshop, 21b St Mary's Street, Wallingford OX10 0EW, 01491 839511
www.ridgeway-church.org.uk/the-fountain-bookshop

Winslow

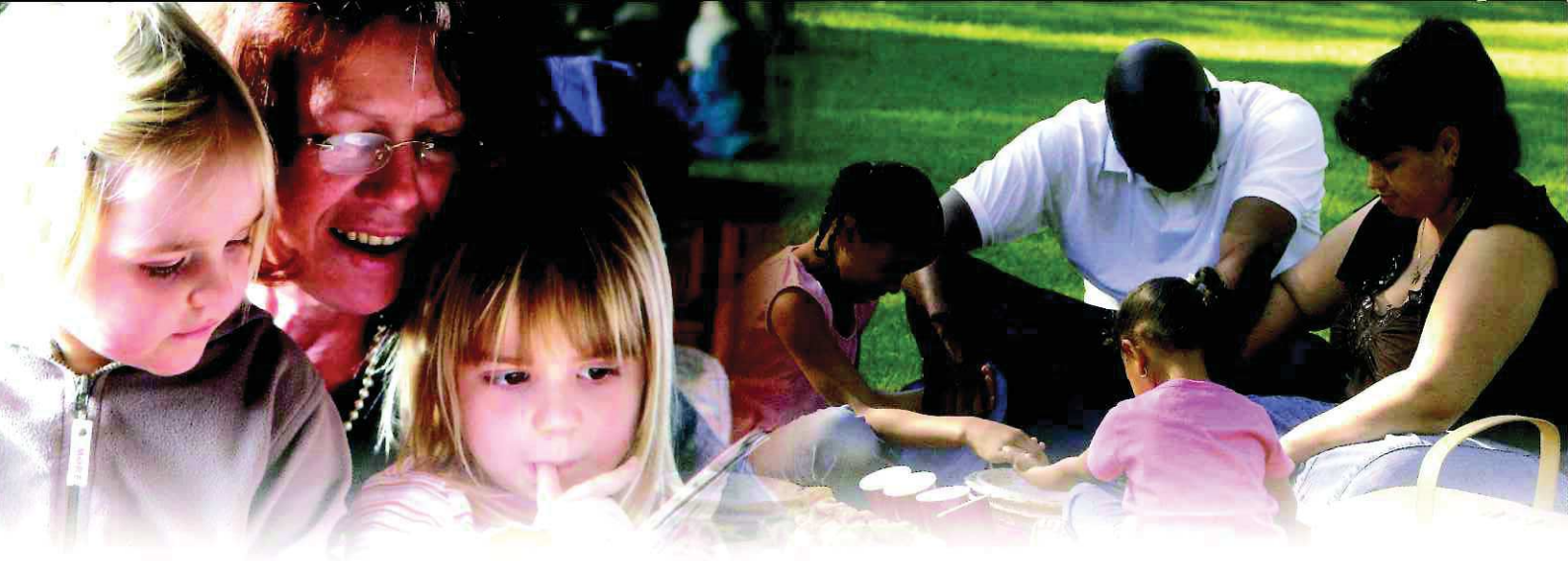
Tabernacle Books, 24 High Street, Winslow, MK18 3HF, 01296 714460
www.tabernaclebooks.com

Witney

St Andrew's Bookshop, 31 High Street, Witney, OX28 6HP, 01993 709429
www.standrewsbookshop.co.uk

Wokingham

Quench, Holme Grange Craft Village, Heathlands Road, Wokingham RG40 3AW, 0118 977 6715
www.quenchshops.com/pages/wokingham



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