



**PRAY
FOR
YOUNG
DISCIPLES**

Introduction

Jesus said, 'Let the little children come to me, and do not stop them; for it is to such as these that the kingdom of heaven belongs.'

MATTHEW 19.14

The Church of England has taken up this longing that Jesus expresses here in Matthew's gospel to welcome children and young people into his kingdom. It has made a bold commitment to 'double the number of children and active young disciples in its churches by 2030'. This is both wonderful and challenging.

There is no doubt that many denominations need to address this issue. Many of our churches have no children, families or young people in their midst at all. In others, there are just a few, whilst others struggle to retain the children that they do have once they go to secondary school. It is a tragedy that so few of the 13-14 million under 18s in our country know how dearly they are loved by God; that they can find meaning and purpose in being followers of Jesus Christ; and know both forgiveness and a secure identity in his love for this life and all eternity. Yet we also remember that God can '*accomplish abundantly far more than all we can ask or imagine*'. (Ephesians 3.20)

This resource was originally written for the *Thy Kingdom Come* prayer campaign (www.thykingdomcome.global), but can be used at any point of the year by individuals or as a basis for prayer gatherings. In its eleven days of prayer, we will be using the acronym P.R.A.Y., standing for Prioritise, Resource, Adapt and You. This will help us to focus our praying and our listening out for God's heart and God's plans for the young people, families and children around us. (cofe.io/PrayWithUs)

If any of you is lacking in wisdom, ask God, who gives to all generously and ungrudgingly, and it will be given you.

JAMES 1:5

Today, we focus on asking God for wisdom and help in our work with children, young people and families (CYPF). Whether you have no contact at all with younger people, or have many of them, there is always more to discover of God's good plans and dreams for your work with them as a church or group of churches.

However, whether you're starting from scratch or longing to grow what you have, you may not know where to begin. You may be struggling for leaders or other types of resources. You may be discouraged by the situation you see around you. So, today, pray earnestly for God's wisdom – remembering, as we see in this verse, that God loves to give wisdom generously when we ask.

Pray for God's wisdom for yourself and for others in your church or churches who long to see your work with under 18s and families grow. Start to pray daily for God to show you what to do. Start to dream with others about what might be possible.



Day 2 **Pray for five children or young people**

Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.

PHILIPPIANS 4:6

Thy Kingdom Come has always encouraged us to pray for five people to come to faith. In this resource, we ask you to start praying for five young people who are yet to discover God's love for them in Jesus.

So, today, choose five under 18s you know and start to pray for them. Write down their names or initials and put them in places that will remind you to pray during the day. They may be family members, children of friends, children or teenagers you know through your work, or community.

Then encourage others who are part of your church to start praying for five young people too. Even a small church with each person praying daily for five under 18s can start seeing great encouragement as children come to faith.



Train children in the right way,
and when old, they will not stray.

PROVERBS 22:6

The work of the Growing Faith Foundation helps churches, schools and households to work together to help children, young people and families have life in all its fullness.

So, today, please pray for the churches and schools and household in your local communities. Pray for good three-way relationships between church leaders, school staff and parents. Pray for creative working together to help children explore and discover Christian faith.

Pray for schools under pressure with the cost of living crisis. Pray for churches longing to grow younger. Pray for parents facing multiple demands in bringing up children and teenagers.



Day 4 **Pray for praying**

And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the Lord's people.

EPHESIANS 6:18

Today, please ask God to raise up many, many people in whatever country you live in to pray for children, young people and families. So many faithful older Christians long to see their children and grandchildren come to faith in Christ and live as his committed followers. Today please pray for a powerful, long-lasting and effective wave of prayer for under 18s and their families.

Pray too for the 20 minute 'Praying for Young Disciples' weekly online prayer gathering (cofe.io/PrayWithUs) in the UK. And for all the many other prayer initiatives around the world for younger generations. Please ask God to raise up committed intercessors across the world to see a new great work of the Holy Spirit in the lives of younger people.



Day 5

Pray for Prioritising

One generation shall laud your
works to another, and shall
declare your mighty acts.

PSALM 145:4

Today, please pray for your church or group of churches to make 'Growing Younger' a key priority: beyond keeping people happy, or dealing with buildings, administration, money and rotas. Research shows that the churches that prioritise their work with children, young people and families are the ones that grow overall.

Pray not only for your own local church or churches, but also for the churches across your diocese, district or denomination. Ask God to put on the hearts of church members in all the churches a willingness to prioritise sharing their faith down the generations. Ask God to give wisdom and inspiration to those who are disappointed or worn down.

Please continue to pray every day for the five children and young people who you long to see become followers of Christ.



For the Lord is good; His steadfast love endures for ever, and His faithfulness to all generations.

PSALM 100:5

Psalms 100, a great and noisy hymn of praise, underlines the love for God for 'all generations'. There are no generations that God ignores. His love is for all people, of all ages, everywhere.

Today, then, please pray for an outpouring of love, through God's people, to children, young people and families. Ask God to give his followers all the resources they need of time, money, energy and commitment, to help under 18s and their families become disciples and then grow in their faith.

Ask for wisdom for all who provide materials and resources to help disciples of all ages. Ask for wisdom for leaders – experienced ones and new ones – as they explore faith with the tiniest of children, with the oldest of teenagers, and with everyone in between.



As God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience.

COLOSSIANS 3:12

These verses are a reminder of the types of character traits God longs to see in his people. And, if our churches are to be places of welcome, of encounter with God, of growth as disciples for people of ALL ages, we will need to be people of grace and compassion.

So, today, please pray for churches who have few younger people to know how to adapt and change to become places of great warmth and welcome to younger generations wanting to explore Christian faith and community.

Changing and adapting can be painful, so ask God for extra grace and vision for all those seeking to do things differently, and make difficult decisions about where to put time and energy.



Day 8 **Pray for You**

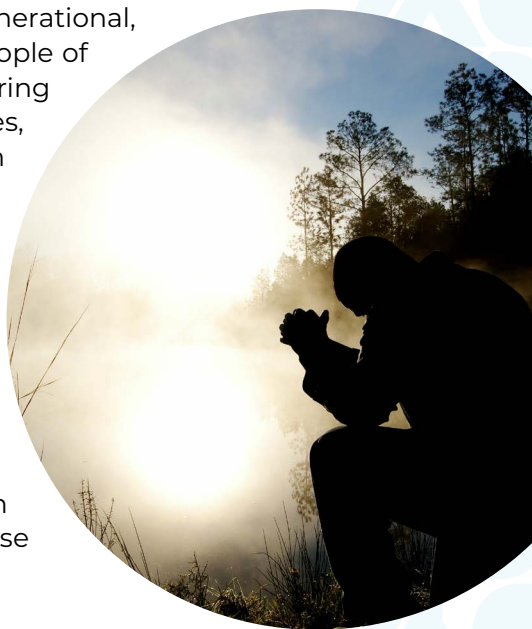
Then He took a little child and put it among them; and taking it in His arms, He said to them, 'Whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me, and whoever welcomes me welcomes not me but the one who sent me.'

MARK 9.36-37

Today, please consider your own role in helping churches become welcoming places for children, families and young people. It may be that your primary calling is to pray. It may be that you can support others in what they are doing. It may be that God is asking you to step up into a new role, or a new level of responsibility in this area.

It is certainly true that each of us has our part to play if our churches are to be fully multi-generational, reflecting God's powerful love for people of all ages. These words from Jesus bring us up short – in welcoming little ones, we actually welcome him, and even more, we welcome God the Father who sent him. Being open to people of all ages is a sign of the Kingdom and a way of making space for the presence of God with us.

What might we need to change in our own lives of prayer, worship and involvement in our church, or groups of churches and our community, in order to welcome God himself in these younger ones?



Take care that you do not despise one of these little ones; for, I tell you, in heaven their angels continually see the face of my Father in heaven.

MATTHEW 18.10

There is no doubt that embracing children, young people and families into our churches is a messy, noisy, challenging business. Life is never straightforward when they are around. And yet, without them, our lives, our churches and our communities are so much the poorer.

So, please pray today for all of our churches to treasure these younger people, to delight in them, and give thanks for them. Pray for opportunities in families, in schools, and in churches for parents, grandparents, friends and relations to share faith with the young people they know, in kind and respectful ways.

Please pray that your church can be a safe place for children and young people to grow up in, with lots of space for them to discover God's call on their lives and to explore it.



Day 10 **Pray for leaders**

So Jesus called them and said to them, 'You know that among the Gentiles those whom they recognize as their rulers lord it over them, and their great ones are tyrants over them. But it is not so among you; but whoever wishes to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wishes to be first among you must be slave of all. For the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many.'

MARK 10.42-45

There is no doubt that working with children and young people to help them become disciples of Christ and grow in their faith is both profoundly rewarding and immensely demanding. Today, please pray for many, many people, young and older, to take up this challenge.

Pray for those who are volunteers already, and for those who are wondering if they can join in. Pray for those who are paid children, families and youth workers, that they will thrive in their role and see great fruitfulness.

Pray for incumbents and other church leaders, for vision and enthusiasm for this work, for welcome and delight in people of all ages.

Pray for the children and young people themselves, that those with leadership gifts will be given opportunity to explore those gifts and take on appropriate responsibility as they grow up.



Now to Him who by the power at work within us is able to accomplish abundantly far more than all we can ask or imagine, to Him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations, for ever and ever. Amen.

EPHESIANS 3.20-21

On this last day of our prayer focus, please give thanks for all the prayers that have been prayed for children, families and young people over these last eleven days.

Remember that God's plans are greater than we can imagine, and maybe commit to continuing to pray for Under18s over the next year. Ask God to give you the courage and discipline to keep praying and give thanks for every answered prayer.

Pray again for the five young people you have been thinking of, and asking God to do far more than you can ask or imagine in their lives – that they will each be devoted Christians whose lives are richly fruitful in the Kingdom of God.

Thank you for travelling this journey of praying for Under 18s and their families. May God bless you, especially in your praying.





**You are invited to pray online every Tuesday 13:00-13:20
for doubling the number of children and young active
disciples in the Church of England by 2030.**

This bold outcome is at the heart of the Church of England's Vision
and Strategy, and prayer is the foundation. Please join us.



For further information, go to
cofe.io/PrayWithUs