

# LEBC Guidelines for Prayer Ministry Team

Praying for others is a wonderful and challenging ministry. It is an important part of our Sunday gatherings, whether it happens spontaneously or in a more formalised way. To recognise and encourage this, we have established a dedicated Prayer Ministry Team.

## A. You will need to...

1. Be a Member of LEBC. The CMM will be kept informed of who is on the Prayer Ministry Team.
2. Be spiritually prepared - in fellowship with the Lord through your own prayer and Bible reading.
3. Share the mission and vision of LEBC.
4. Wear your pin badge to identify you as part of the Team.
5. Adhere to all guidance in our Safeguarding policy and in guidelines in Section H below, to minister to children, young people or adults at risk of harm.
6. If you do not follow the guidelines in this document, you may have to be released from this ministry.

## B. Prayer ministry and personal space

We recognise that during prayer ministry we commonly invade people's personal space. Our goal in these guidelines is for the people we're praying with to feel comfortable at all times.

The "Personal Zone" is generally between 45 cm and 1.2 m from another person. In this zone it is normal for private conversations to take place.

The "Intimate Zone" is less than 45 cm (for some it could be further away) and is generally reserved for those in close relationship with a person, or those invited in for a specific purpose (such as seeking medical or dental treatment, having a haircut - or receiving prayer ministry).

While most people are comfortable with others entering their Personal Zone, the Intimate Zone is different. Many people can tolerate this Zone being invaded from the side, such as sitting next to someone in church or on a bus. However, they may not cope well when it is invaded from the front or behind, so avoid this when conducting prayer ministry.

## C. General guidelines

1. Ask the person if they are comfortable standing or would prefer to sit together.
2. Pray in a clear, slow and quiet manner. Don't raise your voice. Keep your prayers short, free from jargon and simple.
3. Pray in and through the name of Jesus gently and calmly.
4. Be aware of personal space (see Section B). You may "lay hands" on people, if you:
  - a. ask their permission,
  - b. explain that what you are doing is an act of fellowship and care,
  - c. place your hands on the back shoulder area **only**.
5. It may be helpful to keep your eyes open while praying in certain situations.
6. If they become tearful, it may be appropriate to offer to hold their hand or place your hand on their shoulder to comfort them.
7. If they begin to respond oddly when you are praying for them, gently and quietly call the minister or a member of the Leadership Team. Avoid quick and dramatic movements. If you're praying standing up and the person (for whatever reason) slumps to the floor, try and cushion their fall.
8. If in the course of praying for a person you sense the Lord is giving you insights into their situation. **Do not** pray aloud about your insight, but silently about it. At the conclusion of your prayers ask, "Was there anything else you wanted to pray about?" or, "As we were praying did anything else come to mind that we might bring before the Lord?" If they say no, you must respect that. The person we are praying with is in charge of the boundaries at all times. We must never violate trust.
9. **Do not** arrange to meet with them to continue prayer ministry "in your own time".
10. If they ask for total confidentiality, **don't** promise this. Instead, reassure them that if you need to pass on any information to someone else, you will tell them first. (You are obliged to report criminal or safeguarding concerns to the Designated Persons.)
11. Beware of any signs of "unhealthy" attachment - such as the same person approaching you for prayer each week, particularly if it is someone of the opposite sex. Report this to another member of the Team. Likewise do not seek out the same person to pray with them each week.

## D. Informal prayer ministry

This is when we naturally offer to pray with someone after sharing a conversation with them. It could be mainly thanksgiving, or responding to a need or difficult situation they describe. **This will be our usual week-to-week approach to prayer ministry.**

1. Feel free to pray for people without a second member of the Team. You can do this in busy public areas like the sanctuary or the entrance hall over coffee.
2. You can pray with people of the opposite sex. However, if they request more confidential prayer, find a second Team member of the appropriate sex and move to a quiet place. Then follow the guidelines below for formal prayer counselling.
3. If you feel uncomfortable at any point about praying for the person or what they are sharing, stop and ask to find a different/second Team member. You could say, "Do you know who would be really good for you to speak to about this...?"
4. Do not approach people and ask to pray for them, even if you feel "led" to do so.

## E. Formal prayer counselling

This is when we invite people to receive prayer within a particular part of the sanctuary or church building, as part of the response to preaching or worship (eg, an evangelistic message or a healing service).

1. You will be allocated another Team member to pray alongside you.
2. Greet the person coming forward with a smile, and introduce yourself if you don't know them.
3. If you don't know their name, ask if they are happy to give it, and repeat it back immediately. This will help you remember it and reinforce in their minds that you're taking them seriously. But don't be concerned if they don't want to.
4. Ask how you can pray for them. Listen really carefully. Repeat back to them the key points of what you heard them say.
5. Some may be unsure what they want prayer for. Areas you might want to suggest include:
  - a. Prayer for blessing
  - b. Relationship matters
  - c. Emotional and spiritual matters
  - d. Work related concerns
  - e. Knowing God more fully

- f. Receiving Christ as Lord
  - g. Friends and relatives
  - h. Healing (see Appendix G below)
  - i. Receiving spiritual gifts
  - j. Guidance
6. At the end of the prayer ask, 'Is there any other way that we can serve you?' If they have other needs, ask their permission to record things on a contact card and advise them that someone from the church will make contact with them in the week. The contact card should be passed directly to a member of the Leadership Team.

## G. Praying for healing (physical or mental)

1. Be expectant! Extraordinary miracles do happen.
2. Healing is often gradual. Do not pressurise people into claiming they have been healed, nor declare that an unseen miracle has happened. Prayer for healing is often answered through successful medical treatment.
3. Never question a person's faith, or imply blame for an illness or need. Encourage trust in God's love and mercy.
4. Never advise a person to stop taking medication or cease seeing professionals involved in their care or welfare.

## H. Praying with children, young people and adults at risk of harm

Some of the main ingredients that underpin any effective ministry to children and young people are acceptance, respect, listening, sensitivity, discernment, and patience. In applying these values to prayer, not only will we build trust and respect, but we will also be providing a good prayer "model", so that children and young people can learn how to pray for others in a sensitive and responsible way.

The guidelines below are **in addition** to those already stated in this document. **Only those trained** should be involved in this ministry. If there is a general invitation to come forward for prayer in or after a family service, then it will be helpful to have Sunday Club/DNA leaders available to pray with the children/young people rather than relying on other leaders who may be used to dealing with adults.

1. Be alert to safeguarding concerns. You have a duty to pass on to the Designated Person any suspicions or disclosures of abuse. Do not delay taking appropriate action once you have finished praying with that person. Should they wish to disclose

something to you, never promise total confidentiality (see Section C.10 above).  
Follow the procedures in our safeguarding policy.

2. Prior to praying, make sure you ask their permission first, and always pray in an open area where others are around.
3. Ask them what they are requesting prayer for and remember to listen to their reply. Use clear uncomplicated language. Reflect back what they have said to you, to show you have understood their prayer request.
4. Don't laugh at or dismiss out of hand something you consider trite or irrelevant. If they do not have specific needs or requests then simply ask God to bless them.
5. If they become distressed, do not prolong the prayer time, but stay calm and supportive. Afterwards advise the parents/carers of what happened, assuming you have no safeguarding concerns (then see para 1 above).
6. Consider your body language. Try to ensure you are on their level rather than towering over them. Offer to sit together and avoid crowding them. Follow general guidelines above regarding personal space and physical contact. Ensure that another leader is always present if you touch a child.
7. Do not use "tongues".
8. Avoid giving specific advice about problems involving decisions. People at risk of harm could be very susceptible to suggestion, particularly if they are distressed.