

Written prayers

A liturgical framework based on asking for softened hearts

This simple framework provides an opening gathering prayer; a general prayer of preparation to use to lead into a time of intercession; and a closing blessing prayer. The theme behind each section of this liturgy is the desire for God to soften our hearts towards the needs of others, ready to move us into action and compassion, based on these verses from Ezekiel 36:26-27:

“And I will give you a new heart, and I will put a new spirit in you. I will take out your stony, stubborn heart and give you a tender, responsive heart. And I will put my Spirit in you so that you will follow my decrees and be careful to obey my regulations.”

Please use and adapt these prayers for your own setting as you see fit.

A gathering prayer based on Ezekiel 36:26-27

Creator of life and love,
And maker of every heart,
We come before you today,
Ready and prepared for your transformation.
For we know that suffering, weariness and worry can make our hearts heavy,
And that hurt, anger and fear can harden them into stubborn stones.

We dedicate this time to you,
Asking you to place new hearts of love within us,
Transforming them to be tender to your touch
And responsive to the needs of others.
And as we open these newly softened hearts to you,
Fill them again with your Spirit,
So that we may obediently choose the path of your kingdom,
And trust you as we live out the lives of love you have called us to – from the heart.
Amen.

A prayer of preparation to use leading into a time of intercession

Heavenly Father, we praise you for your heart of love.
For your love that is so wide, so long, so high, so deep,
That we find ourselves your treasured possession, fearfully and wonderfully made,
Embraced and sung over with rejoicing.
For your heart that turns towards us in mercy and grace,
Bringing beauty for ashes,
And light and hope where we thought only darkness could dwell.

Heavenly Father, we praise you for your love made known,
Embodied totally, truly and gloriously in your Son, Jesus Christ.
And on that cold, dark day when love seemed to have been lost forever,
When the very core of heaven was torn apart,
Love beautifully and wonderfully conquered all,
Rising again to bring new life and the promise of love eternal.

But today, Father, we come before you and confess that we need your softening touch.
Where our hearts have become cold and distant, choosing comfort over commitment, please remind us of the wonder of your love and the conviction of your call;
Where we've become tired and weary, forgetting that we are your precious child, please help us feel your embrace and hear your rejoicing over us;
Where our hearts have become hardened, ignoring the cries of those who need our help, please move us to act in mercy and grace, powered by your compassion and a deep desire for justice;
And where we've become doubting or despondent, deciding that change will never come, please fill us with your passion, declaring that beauty will come where ashes lie and that light and hope will breakthrough into the darkness.

Because Father, we know that just as your heart reaches out in love to us, it reaches out in love to every one of your children;
And if we are to receive your love fully, and live lives worthy of your love, we must keep returning to you, asking you to fill us and move us,
Allowing our hearts to be kept tender and responsive,
Grieving over the lost, the hungry and the hurting,
Caring for our neighbours, close and far,
Acting to end suffering and injustice,
And sharing all we have with each one of your children,
Until our hearts – and our lives – reflect you and your love alone.

And with our hearts now soft, ready for your guiding touch,
We turn to intercede for...

[Insert your own prayers here for specific needs/issues]

In the precious name of your Son, our Saviour and Redeemer,
Amen.

A prayer of blessing and sending

Lord Jesus,
We thank you for loving us, for calling us to lives that sing of your light, hope and joy.
We thank you for every heart here that has softened to your touch;
For every choice that has been made to loosen the chains of injustice;
For every action that has freed the oppressed, fed the hungry, sheltered the homeless, and clothed the naked;
For every time the precious perfume of worship has been poured out in sacrificial praise of you.

Lord Jesus, on each of these your treasured children,

Shower your blessing of light and joy where darkness and sorrow threaten to steal and destroy.
Guide them always, satisfying every need,
And fill them with your strength.
Pour out the refreshing water of your Spirit,
So that they may be abundant gardens flowing with creation life,
Bringing healing for brokenness,
And partnering with you to rebuild and restore.

And Lord Jesus,
Where we need to hear your call again,
To be reminded of the depth of your command to love you and to love others,
We ask that you would bless each one of us with a new revelation of how you wish us to live.
Fill this church Lord with a people passionate about pursuing your Kingdom,
In worship and praise,
And in justice and righteousness.
Send us out now, in the power of your Spirit,
To learn together, step by step, what it means to be fully loved and to fully love.
Amen.