

Community Liturgies

In one parish, older people have been organizing a monthly mid-week community liturgy and lunch in the parish hall for nearly 5 years, regularly attended by 15-25 people.

Volunteers take it in turn to prepare and lead a short service of prayers and readings; others prepare a simple lunch of soup, bread, cake, fruit and tea; those with cars bring friends who need help to get to the parish hall.

Cath, one of the volunteers, says *“It does need someone to organize a rota of people willing to prepare a short service – and to encourage people who haven’t done it before to have a go. And of course, we rely on soup makers, someone to buy the bread, cake etc and to lay the tables – and we find that people are very generous with their time and skills.”*

The theme of the prayer service is left in the hands of the person leading it. Often the theme follows the liturgical season or the special monthly devotion. There is an opening prayer gathering people together, followed by one or two readings – from Scripture or a poem. Sometimes people want to share their thoughts on the readings. There is always a time for everyone to make their own prayers of the faithful, bringing to the community concerns for those they love, for themselves and for the wider world. There is generally a short prayer to close, sometimes the Lord’s prayer, a blessing or grace and a sign of peace, and then move to eat.

Cath advised, *“We find that about half an hour is long enough for the service, with an hour or so for eating, chatting and clearing up.”*

Useful resources for prayer services:

- Readings and prayers from the Missal for feasts around the time of the service
- Favourite hymns can be used as readings (or sung if people wish)
- Psalms
- There are lots of lovely blessings and graces that can be used or adapted
- Everyone has their favourite prayers and prayer books. Among those that we have found useful: Edwina Gately, Psalms of a Laywoman, Sheed and Ward; Praying the Rosary (which takes a Scriptural approach), Denis McBride CSsR, Redemptorist Publications