

Arrangements for the Day of Prayer 2021

Some Questions and Answers – updated 13th November 2020

The Day of Prayer has NOT been cancelled. It will happen – but certainly in this country, the services will be different from usual.

Not surprisingly, branch secretaries have lots of questions. This page is an attempt to answer the most common ones. Please note that, whilst the answers are correct today, because Government regulations change so frequently, they may need to be altered tomorrow.

Thank you to everybody who has contributed ideas and suggestions, which have been incorporated into these pages.

About the Service

1. The Music:

- a. Are we allowed to sing?

Currently, no – but you can get someone to play the tunes whilst the congregation listens

- b. Is the music available for us to listen to?

Yes, it will be – although it may not be available until early next year.

- c. Why couldn't you put the music on a memory stick and send us one each?

Well, we could – in theory. But there are 3,000 branches in England, Wales & Northern Ireland. Think of the cost in money and in time, compared with arranging for you to download it yourselves. When we consider that our income from the next service is uncertain (see below), this would be a large unbudgeted-for expense that we could not justify.

- d. The first two songs are not known to us; could we change them?

Well - I guess we can't stop you! But we would strongly advise you not to: the first one was composed by Christian women from Vanuatu specially for this service.

2. The Offering:

- a. We cannot pass round the collection plate, can we?

No – but it is perfectly OK to have a plate or box or bucket at the exit and to ask people to put their money into that. The Treasurer could take the bucket home

and open it at her leisure. Don't forget to remind people to fill in their Gift Aid envelopes.

- b. If we have to leave the money for a few days before counting it, how can we arrange for two people to count the offering?

Of course, it is right that two people should count the offering, not just one. However, **for 2021 only**, if this will be a problem, it will be okay for one person to count the offering and sign the declaration.

However you decide to hold your service (see below), please, please, please encourage people to give their offering. The Day of Prayer is virtually our only source of income. If you cannot hold a collection or persuade local churches to give a donation, then encourage people to give donations online via our website

3. Exchanging stones may not be permissible?

True – but it will still be possible for people to collect a stone on arrival or you could place a stone in each seat in advance.

Giving up the stone you have chosen is an important symbolic action in the service which is difficult to replicate. If you cannot physically exchange stones, why not encourage the congregation to take their stone home and leave it on the doorstep of a neighbour who was not at the service? This would be one way of sharing the good news and God's love.

Another idea: instead of giving people stones, ask everyone who attends to bring with them a Lego brick, which you can all build into a wall. In that way, everyone present will have left behind in the church their commitment to build together on a strong foundation.

4. The Display:
 - a. We normally make a display of pictures and artefacts from the writing country; we use the picture packs you sell and copies of Together in Prayer. But we shan't be doing that this year, shall we?

Why not! Here is your chance to be imaginative and creative in new ways! You could put a display in any of the local churches that are open for prayer or for services. You could make a picture display for a church notice board. Or you could use it as a background (or even a foreground) at a Bible Study or meeting on Zoom. Please do purchase the resources we provide: we don't want to see them all pulped. Note that we make very little profit from the resources we sell; unsold stock does not mean only loss of profit; it means more than that.

5. The Service Booklet:
 - a. If we copy the service booklet for the computer screen - so those who do not have one, can follow the service -are we in trouble with copyright?

You will need to check with the church you are using: if they have all the permissions and licenses, then you are OK.

Every year, we have to apply to the copyright holders for permission to print the chosen hymns in the service booklet; often we have to pay for this. We cannot apply for blanket permission for projection onto screens; individual churches have to do this.

The office can supply you with a copy of the service for projection but you will have to add the hymns yourselves.

But – remember that the service booklet contains a great deal of interesting and useful information in addition to the service itself, so please do all you can to ensure that the booklets are distributed widely.

- b. We will not be holding a service in a church this year. Why did you send us so many service booklets?

Come on, be fair! We are not prophets! We are planning about a year ahead. At the moment, rules and regulations change every few weeks, so we cannot say even now whether or not it will be safe to hold a service on 5th March.

- c. What should we do with the service booklets if we do not hold a service in a church?

As you know, the service booklet contains a great deal of interesting and useful information in addition to the service itself, so please do all you can to ensure that the booklets are distributed widely.

Why not distribute the booklets with an invitation to all recipients to follow through the service themselves in their homes at a set time, perhaps the time when your service would have been held? Then your local community would together be part of the global wave of prayer.

You might consider holding a service later in the year as well, maybe out of doors (see below)

- 6. Can we livestream the service via Zoom/You Tube?

Yes – if you have the facilities and the correct permissions and licences. Don't forget to ask those who take part to contribute to the offering.

If you are planning to livestream your service, please let the office know – so that we can tell others about it.

- 7. Could we postpone our service until the spring and hold it outdoors?

Why not? Postponing the service is not ideal but it is always preferable to cancelling it. Many branches postponed their services in 2018, when it snowed. You might like to think about distributing the service booklets beforehand and asking people to follow the service at home at a set time on 5th March so that you will be worshipping together and will also be part of the global wave of prayer.

If you do decide to hold your service on a different date, don't forget to let the office know and get it changed on the website.

8. If we are unable to meet at all, is the National or International Committee producing a service for online, so that the work isn't repeated several times?

This is a question that members of the National Committee have thought and prayed over for many weeks but we have regrettably come to the decision that it is simply not practical for us to do this.

Please remember that, whilst it is truly a women-led, global, ecumenical movement, it is also a coming together of local ecumenical groups for prayer. In some parts of our countries, it is still regrettably the only regular ecumenical service in the area. We believe that it is important that all branches do everything they can to keep going through these strange and difficult times. So please – do something in your area.

Most churches have been holding some kind of zoom service or livestreaming throughout this current period so why not use the local expertise? This could be a way of helping to integrate the Day of Prayer service more securely into your local ecumenical community's calendar – and therefore useful for next year and subsequent years.

If the churches in your village or suburb have not been doing this, why not combine with neighbours who have?

If you do go down this route, please don't forget those who do not have computers and the internet.

We are delighted to learn that several branches are planning to livestream their services and, nearer the time, we shall be producing a list of these on the website so that people from other areas may take part in these.

Whatever you plan to do, please make sure that the information on the website is correct.

Whatever you decide to do regarding the service in 2021 remember World Day of Prayer is a 365 day a year prayer movement. The materials you have received can be

used throughout the year, helping you to continue to pray for the country involved in the service; for Bible study and remembering the wider World Day of Prayer family.