**CREATIVE PRAYER TIME**

**Introduction**

‘Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God – this is your true and proper worship. Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is – his good, pleasing and perfect will.’ (Romans 12:1-2)

The passage is urging us to allow God to take our hearts, souls, everything about us, to transform us (not conform us) into the people God intends for us to be.

To offer our bodies as living sacrifices is committing to doing things God’s way, as opposed to conforming to the world’s corrupt ways.

**Illustration**

Get a large vase or a large jug and fill it three-quarters full of water.

Then place an orange into the vase/jar.

Encourage the congregation to consider how the water represents God, and the orange represents us and our lives.

As you place the orange into the jar, it will float, but we would hope for our experience of God to be an all-encompassing experience – and God wants this for us too! God wants for us to be fully immersed in his love and in his holy presence – and we can be! (John 10:10). But we must ask ourselves, do we want to be?

On Candidates Sunday, and hopefully each and every day, we can be encouraged to consider what it means for us to make ourselves fully available to God, to offer our lives as a living sacrifice that is holy and pleasing to him.

Ask your congregation what we might do to make the orange stay fully submerged in the water. (Some suggestions might be: hold it under with your hands; put another orange/item on top to weigh it down; does the amount of water make a difference?)

After hearing the suggestions, begin to peel the orange and speak again about the barriers that we can be guilty of putting in the way of God, the sin in our lives that gets in the way, or perhaps the excuses we try to conjure up in attempt to have control over our own lives rather than fully trusting in Jesus. As you peel the skin, explain that the skin of the orange needs to be stripped/peeled away in order for it to become fully submerged.

Romans 12:1 in *The Message* translation acknowledges just some of the different segments that make up our ‘everyday, ordinary lives’, our ‘sleeping, eating, going-to-work, and walking-around lives’, and encourages us to bring every part of who we are before God, to be used wholly for him.

As we peel back the skin of the orange, we are reminded again that, like our own lives, the orange is made up of many segments. But by peeling back the skin, by removing that outer barrier that we often put up, we see the water submerging every inner part of the orange. We experience God’s full and wonderful love, grace and power reaching every aspect of who we are, leaving no area of our life untouched.

Then drop the peeled orange into the water and watch it sink right to the bottom.

**Prayer Time Ideas**

* Offering Plate/basket

An aspect of our worship to God, and a part of our corporate worship, is to make sacrificial financial offerings, responding to God’s generosity to us by giving something back to him in ways that would bring glory to Christ Jesus in the Church and in our communities.

Perhaps today there are elements of our own lives that we need, or want, to offer to God so that he can use us, his people, ‘for the extension of his Kingdom …’, wherever he might be calling us to.

As well as giving in our financial offering, what aspects of our lives might we need to sacrifice and offer up to God? We have each been made unique and with purpose, and God has placed within us different gifts that enable us to serve him and those around us. What do we commit to today to offer as our true and proper worship, so that Jesus will be glorified in our living, and so that transformation might come about in us as well as around us, and that we might then truly begin to know his good, pleasing and perfect will?

Encourage people to pray privately about what they need to offer up, in order to become all that they have been created to be in Christ.

Using paper people templates, invite the congregation to write down their prayers. Pass around an offering plate during this prayer time and invite the congregation to place their paper person into the offering plate, offering themselves to him.

* Wipe-clean board prayers

Distribute small chalk boards / whiteboards, pens and cloths to your congregation.

Do you need to pray for a fresh start with God? Invite your congregation to consider any issues, people or situations that come between them and God. Encourage them to reflect particularly on any personal habits, traits or relationships that hold them back and prevent them from thriving in freedom with Christ.

Using words or pictures, what prayer of confession might we need to make before God today, to enable us to grow closer to becoming who God has called us to be?

Offer these prayers to Jesus and encourage your congregation to make a heartfelt commitment towards this new way by wiping away all that they have written or drawn. Be encouraged that God does the same whenever we turn to him with our failings with honest and searching hearts. He wipes away our sin, and the Holy Spirit enables us to live transformed. God has the power to forgive and give us a fresh start.

End the prayer time with the assurance that we are free to live in the grace of forgiveness and that God can and will help us in the journey of our becoming.