What is a Prayover?

### General information

* A Prayover is an all-night event for a group of young people aimed at introducing them to a variety of different forms of prayer.
* Different people lead the group in prayer every hour, on the hour. These prayers may last between 10 and 45 minutes and may take any form.
* Prayer leaders can be local clergy, local parishioners, school staff, special guests (prayer ‘specialists’) or the young people themselves. The ideal is to have a mixture of all five!
* You may choose to ask prayer leaders to relate their prayers to a particular theme or you may choose to give them free rein.
* In between prayer sessions, games are organised and food is provided.

### Model timetable

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| 18.30 | Arrivals |
| 18.45 | Introduction and fire drill |
| 19.00 | Prayer session 1 |
| 20.00 | Prayer session 2 |
| 21.00 | Prayer session 3 |
| 22.00 | Prayer session 4 |
| 23.00 | Prayer session 5 |
| 00.00 | Prayer session 6 |
| 01.00 | Prayer session 7 |
| 02.00 | Prayer session 8 |
| 03.00 | Prayer session 9 |
| 04.00 | Prayer session 10 |
| 05.00 | Prayer session 11 |
| 06.00 | Final prayer session followed by bacon sandwiches |

### Ideas for prayers

*These have all been tried and tested with young people. Don’t assume they won’t appreciate more traditional forms of prayer but mix them in with more modern approaches!* *Make lots of use of candles and music, especially in the early hours.*

* Write prayers on tissue paper and tie them onto helium balloons or Chinese Lanterns
* The Divine Office
* Praying with clay
* Lectio Divina
* Praise and worship music
* Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament
* Improvised gospel dramas
* ‘Living’ rosary (young people form the rosary beads, each saying the relevant prayer in turn)
* Make some prayer flags and string them across the church

### Practicalities to consider

* All young people are different but this event tends to work best with young people in Year 10 and up.
* This may sound silly but you may need to remind prayer leaders to actually pray! Inspirational stories, video clips, music and games are all great but should lead into prayer. Some leaders may need a bit of help in planning their session.
* It’s worth checking with prayer leaders a couple of days before the event that they or you have the equipment they’ll need.
* Prayer leaders don’t need to stay all night (although the event leaders will)- they can just turn up for their sessions.
* Be prepared to be flexible. Prayers can over-run, prayer leaders forget to set their alarms and people just get tired. You may need to change your plan to account for all of these and other unexpected happenings!
* Plan more games than you think you might need and make sure you have the necessary equipment to play them.
* Make sure you are in a safe and comfortable environment and, ideally, have access to a kitchen. If you’re doing this in winter, make sure the heating works!
* Do you need to make a charge for food?
* Without being too unkind, don’t let people go to sleep. It tends to spoil the atmosphere.
* Try and find additional helpers who are willing to cook breakfast for you at 6 a.m. You’ll be tired at the end of the night and, in any case, trying to make sure the young people get away safely.

### Things to mention in your introduction

* Get everyone in the group to introduce themselves.
* Explain what’s going to happen.
* Explain that you are all going to get tired and that people sometimes get grumpy when they are tired. Ask them to look after each other and be understanding towards anyone who might be struggling.
* ‘Don’t go to sleep!’
* Point out where the toilets are.
* Explain what to do in the event of a fire. Practice the drill.
* Explain what to do if someone gets hurt and feels sick.
* Explain arrangements for food throughout the night.

### Safeguarding

* Depending on the age of the young people in the group, make sure you have 1 event leader for every 10 young people with at least one leader of each gender. Make sure all event leaders are DBS checked.
* Ensure at least one event leader is 1st Aid trained and you have a fully-stocked 1st aid kit on the premises.
* Brief event leaders beforehand regarding safeguarding and health & safety issues. Check with leaders at the end of the event regarding any issues.
* Control access to your venue, especially in the early hours and if you are near a pub or club at closing time.
* Practice a fire drill with the group before you begin.
* Make sure that parents know when the event ends and the young people have a safe way of getting home at the end of the event.