

# Lead story

## Local Prayer Spaces

Today sees the launch of Local Prayer Spaces as a way to encourage prayer - even if you can't open your church.

While all our churches will be allowed to open up for private prayer next week, many - especially those who look after our rural churches - will find this difficult or impossible to achieve, and so our Rural Hope Team, with the help of Bishop Karen, has developed a way to make sure everyone can find a place to pray.

So today we are launching 'Local Prayer Spaces' for our Diocese.

Bishop Karen explains how the concept came about:

"Giving people the invitation to ponder and pray is a simple gift for us to share.

"Many people have been using our churchyards and open spaces to say their own prayers during this time of pandemic and communities have created in some places symbolic reminders of hope and peace. It will not be easy for all our churches to open, and often people need reminders that they are welcome, and that they can pray.

"This is a simple idea whereby local communities can set aside that outside space in a very visible way."

Two signs have been created, one a simple 'praying hands' by Margaret Preuss-Higham, and another with a more formal logo by ordinand and stone carver Robyn Golden-Hann, which can be downloaded from [here](#) and printed out.

Churches, individual land-owners and schools are encouraged to laminate a sign and set it near a churchyard bench, a space overlooking a stream, near a footpath or where there is a view or a place to sit to remind people of God's peace and invite them to pray.

Rural Field Officer Rhona Floate says:

"Some of us find prayer comes more naturally out of doors, while others find the atmosphere of a building in which prayer has been offered for centuries helpful. I hope these beautiful signs and the creation of local prayer spaces will encourage those who are seeking a place to pray."

Health and hygiene are essential in all that we do now, so by setting up a Local Prayer Space we ask that people take responsibility for keeping any surfaces clean and the area tidy.

Bishop Karen adds:

"If this is successful, we can maybe think about permanent signage going forward, using local craftspeople, particularly in a diocese which attracts so many visitors to our towns, villages, coast and country as well as to our churches."