

Leader Let us read out to each other things that are on our hearts.

Let each person from their sheet in turn. After each one has finished, lead everyone in saying:

Lord have mercy.

Christ have mercy.

Lord have mercy.

After the last person has finished, and after the ‘ Lord have mercy... ’ say:

Leader Let us pray:

May almighty God have mercy on us,
forgive us our sins and bring us to everlasting life.

Amen.

Leader Like the family in the gospel of the Prodigal Son,
we need to celebrate the fact that
God is ready to forgive us,
and that we are ready to forgive each other.

Let us offer each other a sign of peace.

Hug, shake hands or kiss each other

And may God bless the food we now share in
celebration – in the name of the Father, the Son
and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

All join in the family meal...

A Family Reconciliation Service for Advent

1. *As soon as you can*

Meet with the family and introduce the idea of the time of prayer to them in words like these:

During the season of Advent we begin to get ourselves ready for celebrating the birth of Jesus. But as we prepare for that, it is good also to make time to think whether we are trying to live as Jesus taught us to live.

If we have not been then there are probably things we need to ask God's forgiveness for. And we will also need to ask God for help to try to live more faithfully, more lovingly.

Agree with the family when your family prayer service will be – try and arrange it so that you can have your time of prayer immediately before a family meal time.

Agree who is going to lead the service. Probably it would be better if an older person led it.

Agree who is going to read the scripture reading. It is short and the language is simple. It might be most effective if it is read by a younger member of the family.

2. Preparation...

- Prepare an A4 sheet of paper for each member of your family and draw on it the outline of a heart shape.
- On the day before the prayer celebration give their 'heart page' to each family member. Ask each of them to write or draw in 'their' heart some things that they are sorry about. And to bring their picture to the time of family prayer.
- A shortened reading has been prepared so a younger child can read it to the family. Perhaps you could write out the words on a card and place it in a Bible to be read from.

A reading from the Holy Gospel according to John

Jesus said to his disciples:
**As the Father has loved me,
So I have loved you.**

**This is my commandment:
love one another as I have loved you.**

This is the Gospel of the Lord.

- Remind them of the time when you will be meeting together for prayer, and that there will be a family dinner afterwards.

3. On the day of the celebration...

Make sure there's some food for the family meal ready in the kitchen for afterwards – with maybe something a bit special to make it more of a celebration.

Prepare your prayer table. Perhaps there is a clean cloth you can lay over it? Maybe there is a candle you could light? Perhaps some flowers to decorate the table? Perhaps a crucifix?

Make sure that everyone is present – and then to begin.

4. Prayer Service

Leader: Let us pray that the Lord Jesus,
who calls us all to be peacemakers
will be with us as we come together
to remember his love and mercy.

(Light the candle)

Lord Jesus, you are light of the world
be light in our hearts and in our lives.
Help us to listen to all you say,
to know how much you love us,
and how much we can love you in return.
We ask this of you, Jesus our Lord. **Amen**

All sing: *The light of Christ has come into the world*
or another similar song about Christ the light which
is well known to the children.

Reader A reading from the Holy Gospel according to John...

Leader We have brought our paper hearts
to show to each other, and to the Lord,
We have written on them things
that we are sorry for.

- Things we have done that have hurt each other.
- Things we have done which have hurt other people.
- Things that will have made God sad.