

Prayer Bead Necklaces

MAKE Unitarian Universalist Prayer Bead necklaces

with each bead representing a common type of prayer: praise (gratitude bead), confession ("I'm sorry" bead), petition (wish bead), and intercession (loving wishes on behalf of others bead). We encouraged the children to think about actions we can take that help make our gratitude be felt by others, our apologies be heard by others, our wishes and hopes to become real, and our loving (healing) wishes to be felt by others. Actions that help care for the Earth, caretaking of animals, and thoughtful expressions of caring toward other people were some examples.



Consider using the prayer bead necklace as part of your child's bedtime ritual. As energy winds down, bedtime can be an ideal time to think about one's day, as well as one's hopes. The prayer beads can become a tool for naming the important things in one's heart. Have your child hold each bead in turn and name something he or she is grateful for, sorry about, wishes for, and hopes for the world or for someone else. Encourage your child to take a moment to name the things that he/she has done during the day to make things he/she wishes for really happen and what he/she could do in the future.

Materials for Activity

- Four distinct types or colors of large beads, one of each type for all participants, including adults
- Stretchy cord, yarn, string or other necklace material
- Four bowls
- Optional: Prayer beads used in practices of other religions such as Buddhism, Hinduism, or Catholicism

Preparation for Activity

- Make a prayer bead necklace in advance, including one of each type of bead, to show the group.
- Optional: Use the links and books suggested in Leader Resources to learn more about the use of prayer beads in different faiths.
- Sort the beads by type and/or color and place them in bowls.
- Place all materials near your storytelling area.

Description of Activity

Gather your family or group a circle. Tell the group that prayer is a part of all of the major religions in the world. Ask if any of the children pray at home or have ever seen anyone praying. After a brief response time for the question, you may say:

People can pray in lots of different ways. Someone sitting quietly alone with their eyes closed might be praying. Some people pray by thinking thoughts in their head. Other people pray by saying words or singing a song together with other people. Some people don't pray at all.

In some religions, like Buddhism, Hinduism and Christianity, some people use a necklace or a bracelet of beads to pray.

If you have examples of prayer beads from another religion, show them to the group and identify each one. Then show them the prayer bead necklace you made in advance.

Say:

"Today we are going to make our own Unitarian Universalist prayer bead necklaces."

Give everyone a necklace cord. Co-leaders and adult volunteers should participate in this exercise as part of creating a community of lifelong learners, as well as to help model possible prayers.

Pass around a bowl with one type or color of large beads in it. Ask each participant to take one bead and roll it around in his or her hands. When everyone has a bead, invite everyone to close their eyes. Say:

This will be your **gratitude bead**. One way that people pray is they say "thank you" for things that they are grateful for. Right now, while you are holding your bead, think about what you are grateful for.

Pause for a few moments and then invite everyone to open their eyes and briefly share what they are grateful for. You can get the sharing started.

When all who wish to have shared their prayers, have the children put the bead on their cord. Help children knot their cord around the first bead, leaving a tail of cord to secure the necklace with later.

Pass around a second bowl with a second type or color of beads. Ask each participant to choose a bead and roll it around in his or her hands. When everyone has a bead, say:

This is an **"I'm sorry" bead**. Sometimes when people feel really sorry about something they've done, they pray about it. Close your eyes while you hold your bead. Do you have something you've done that you are sorry for?

Pause for a few moments. Then invite everyone to open their eyes and briefly share the things they are sorry about. When all who wish to have shared their prayers, have the participants put the second bead on their cord.

Repeat the process with a third bowl containing a third type or color of beads. This time, say:

This is a **wishing bead**. Sometimes when people pray they say things that they really hope for. Close your eyes, and hold your wishing bead. Is there something you really wish?

Pause for a few moments and then invite everyone to open their eyes and briefly name their wishes.

Have the children put the third bead on their cord and then pass along the final bowl of beads. While their eyes are closed, say something like:

This is a **loving wishes bead**. Sometimes when people pray they think about all the things they wish for the world, or they think about someone they love and make a wish for that person. Do you have anything you wish for the planet Earth, for any animals, for other people, or for anyone you love?

Pause for a few moments and then invite everyone to open their eyes and briefly name their loving wishes.

Now invite and help the children to secure the ends of their cords to make a necklace.

As they work, you may like to challenge the children to think of things they, themselves, can do to help their wishes happen. Use examples from your own prayer statements, rather than theirs. For example, you might say, "I do feel sorry I did not buy the snack my daughter wanted for lunch last week. Next week, I will try to buy the snack she asked for." Or, "I was wishing for my friend who is sick to get better. If I send her a get well card, at least maybe she will feel a little better." Or, "I was wishing for the playground down the street to have no litter. On my way home today I am going to stop and pick up some of the trash there and throw it away."