

## How to organise a Week of Accompanied Prayer

Choosing the right co-ordinator is key: it needs to be a person who is good at organisation and sticking to deadlines, and has the time to keep checking back by telephone with guides, pilgrims and keyholders.

### Six months before the WAP

**Agree a venue** for the WAP and work out how many meeting spaces you will have available, therefore the maximum number of guides you can offer at the same time.

For example, if you can find six available spaces (e.g. vestry, church office, three spaces in church, vicar's study), you can have six guides available at any time. If each guide is willing to take four pilgrims (some will not be willing to take more than two), that gives you a maximum number of places on the WAP of  $6 \times 4 = 24$ . In practice, some guides will not be available all day, so you can have more names on your list. Also, not all pilgrims will be free at all times of day: if all your pilgrims want to be seen in the evening, then you may not be able to take on more than  $6 \times 2$  (with 2 evening slots being offered). The document 'Outline timetable for each day in the WAP' gives suggestions for how many slots you can put into the day.

**Approach potential WAP guides now** so that they get the dates in their diary. As well as asking when they will be available to see pilgrims, make it clear that they will need to be available for supervision every day (best times are lunchtime, e.g. 1.30-2.30, or evening). Approach potential supervisors too! In order to keep the supervision sessions a manageable length, each supervisor shouldn't see more than 4 or at most 5 prayer companions.

A prayer guide should not know the person they are guiding; ideally should not know them at all, but certainly should not know them well. An experienced guide will tell you immediately if they feel they ought not to be seeing the pilgrim you are proposing to pair them up with. In a big deanery you can use guides from within the deanery as long as they see people not from their own church. But expect to need a fair proportion of guides from beyond the deanery boundaries; this will have implications for mileage costs.

**Be aware that a WAP is a huge time commitment for the guides and entails them clearing seven whole days in their diary. If you leave it later than 6 months ahead you are not going to get any guides! Be warned.**

Talk to the area dean and/or deanery chapter about bearing the cost of the WAP. Costs will be incurred for expenses claims on the part of the WAP guides: some will be willing to pay their own petrol, but we shouldn't assume this, and even a short drive will mount up if they're doing it every day for a week. For this reason, as well as in order to encourage people to be serious about their commitment to the WAP, it is necessary to make a small charge to the pilgrims: I would recommend £10 or perhaps even a little more. If the hosting church is willing to bear the cost of heating, then hopefully the money coming in from the pilgrims will more or less offset the cost of the guides' mileage. (NB I wouldn't expect it to cover the cost of my mileage.) I would be very happy for the deanery to run the finances and keep any surplus.

### **Three months before the WAP** (four months if Christmas or Easter comes between)

Get advance publicity material ready (I can help drafting this) and circulate to parishes, to go into pew leaflets/parish magazines two months before kickoff (be aware of early press deadlines before Christmas). Identify volunteers to stand up in church and talk about their experience of a WAP and make sure you have covered every church/benefice in the deanery.

### **Two months before the WAP**

Get application forms out with a clear application deadline (suggest 4 weeks before the WAP). Volunteers talk about WAP in churches.

### **One month before the WAP**

Put a reminder in every pew leaflet/ parish magazine. Allocate applicants to guides and keep in touch with all potential guides as to whether or not they will be needed. (You will probably be juggling applications till the very last minute). Agree who will lead the opening and closing sessions on Sunday and Saturday (asking the supervisors to do this is a good idea, and I can be involved too even if you would rather use me as a guide rather than a supervisor).

### **Two weeks before the WAP**

Make sure arrangements are in place for keys for venue, coffee/tea for opening and closing events (Sun afternoon and Sat either morning or afternoon, as suits you). I recommend that you have people running the hospitality who are not involved with running the session.

### **After the WAP**

Run your follow-up events (Soul Spark or other prayer course, quiet day, retreat) and make people aware of the Inspire course if they want to take prayer further. They will have been introduced to the idea of spiritual direction and told how to get a spiritual director, if they would like one, during the WAP.

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October 2019