

FIRST
THIRD

PRAYING FOR

YOUNG

DISCIPLES



strandz

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Introduction

Jesus said, 'Let the little children come to me, and do not stop them; for it is to such as these that the kingdom of heaven belongs.'

Matthew 19:14

The Anglican Dioceses of New Zealand shares the longing that Jesus expresses here in Matthew's gospel - to welcome children and young people into His kingdom.

Embracing ministry and mission with the **First Third** (children, young people and young adults) is both a wonderful and challenging focus for the church. And it has to, and must remain, a key priority for the future.

Many of our churches have no children, young people or young adults in their midst at all. In others, there are just a few, whilst others struggle to retain the children that they do have once they go to high school, or move on to tertiary study.

It is a tragedy that so few of our tamariki and rangatahi know they that are loved by God; that they can find meaning and purpose in being followers of Jesus Christ; and know both forgiveness and a secure identity in God's love for this life and all eternity. Yet we also remember that God can 'accomplish abundantly far more than all we can ask or imagine'. (Ephesians 3.20)

Thy Kingdom Come is a great time to pray specifically for the work with children, families, young people and young adults in our churches.

Join us in praying for a renewal of ministry amongst the First Third

He Honore, He Kororia,
Diana & Lorna



Day 1 Pray for Discernment

If any of you is lacking in wisdom, ask God, who gives to all generously and ungrudgingly, and it will be given you.

James 1:5

Over the next 11 days, we will focus on asking God for wisdom and help in our work with the **First Third** of life: children, young people, young adults, and their families.

Whether you have no contact at all with younger people, or have contact with many of them, there is always more to discover of God's good plans and dreams for your work with them as a church or group of churches.

However, whether you're starting from scratch or longing to grow what you have, you may not know where to begin.

Maybe you're struggling for leaders or other types of resources. You may be discouraged by the situation you see around you.

So, today, pray earnestly for God's wisdom – remembering, as we see in this verse, that God loves to give wisdom generously when we ask.

Pray for God's wisdom for yourself and for others in your church or churches who long to see your work with the First Third grow.

Start to pray daily for God to show you what to do. Start to dream with others about what might be possible.



Day 2 Pray for Five

Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.

Philippians 4 :6

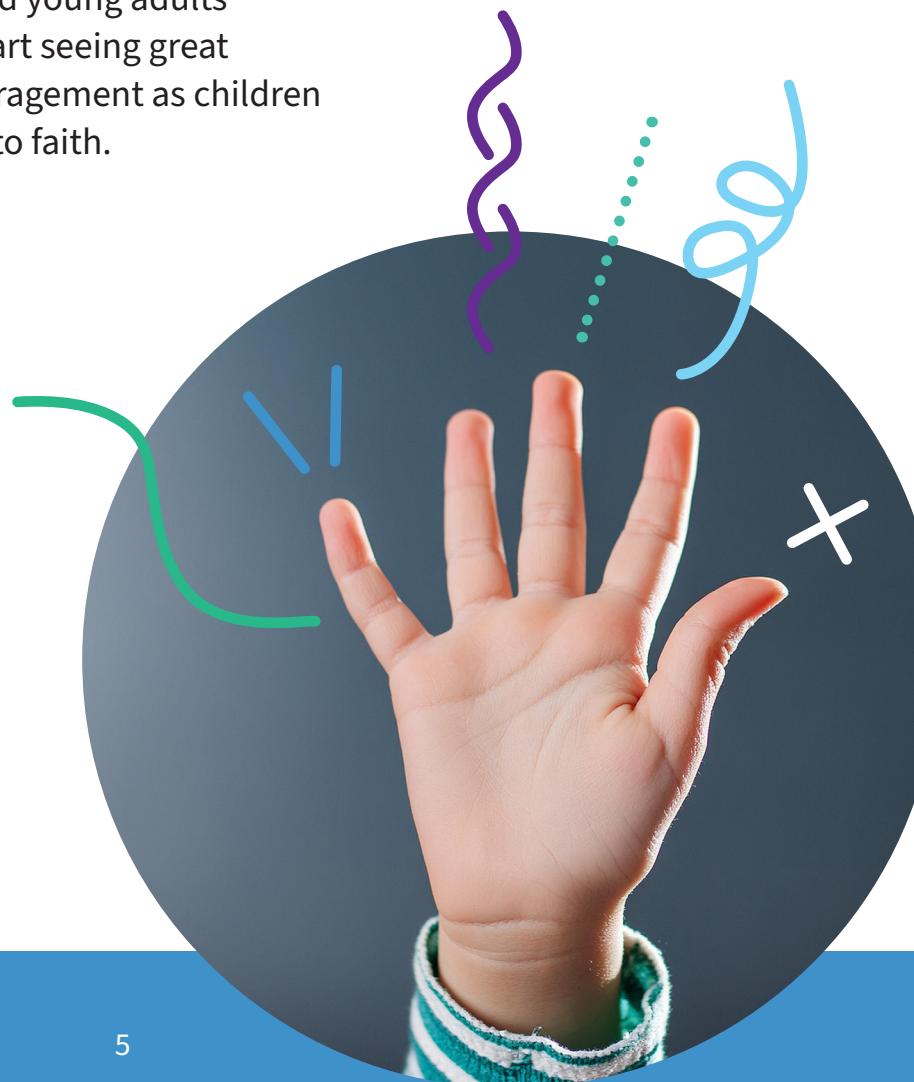
Thy Kingdom Come has always encouraged us to pray for five people to come to faith. In this resource, we ask you to start praying for five children, young people or young adults who are yet to discover God's love for them in Jesus.

So, today, choose five children, young people or young adults you know, and start to pray for them.

Write down their names or initials and put them in places that will remind you to pray during the day.

They may be family members, children of friends, children, teenagers, or young adults you know through your work or community.

Then encourage others who are part of your church to start praying for five young people too. Even a small church with each person praying daily for five under 18s and young adults can start seeing great encouragement as children come to faith.



Day 3 Pray for Schools and Relationships

*Train children in the right way,
and when old, they will not stray.*

Proverbs 22:6

The work of Strandz, National Youth Ministries, and the Anglican Schools network helps churches, schools, and households to work together to help children, young people, young adults and families have life in all its fullness.

So, today, please pray for the churches, schools, and households in your local communities. What schools are in your local community? If you are unsure, take a moment to find out what schools are nearby.

Today, please pray for good three-way relationships between church leaders, school staff, and parents. Pray for ideas on how to creatively work together to help children explore and discover the Christian faith.

Pray for schools under pressure with the cost of living crisis. Pray for teaching staff, and for those impacted by the national teaching shortage. Pray for our young people leaving school and for our young adults as they search for new career pathways.

Pray for churches longing to grow younger. Pray for parents facing multiple demands in bringing up children and teenagers.



Day 4 Pray for Praying

And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the Lord's people.

Ephesians 6:18

Today, please ask God to raise up many people to intercede and pray for the First Third (children, young people and young adults) across Aotearoa New Zealand.

People who will pray for children, young people, young adults and families. So many faithful older Christians long to see their children and grandchildren come to faith in Christ and live as His committed followers.

Today please pray for a powerful, long-lasting, and effective wave of prayer for under 18s, young adults and their families.

Please pray for all the many prayer initiatives around the world for younger generations.

Please ask God to raise up committed intercessors across the world to see a new great work of the Holy Spirit in the lives of younger people.



Day 5 Pray for Prioritising

*One generation shall laud your works to another, and shall declare your mighty acts.
Psalm 145:4*

Today, please pray for your church or missional community to make ministry with the **First Third** a key priority: beyond the everyday treadmill of keeping people happy, or dealing with buildings, administration, money, and rosters.

Research shows that the churches that prioritise their work with the first third are the ones that grow.

Pray not only for your own local church or churches, but also for the churches across your diocese, tikanga and province.

Ask God to put on the hearts of church members in all the churches a willingness to prioritise sharing their faith down the generations.

Ask God to give wisdom and inspiration to those who are disappointed or worn down.

Please continue to pray every day for the five

children, young people and young adults who you long to see become followers of Christ.



Day 6 Pray for Resourcing

For the Lord is good; His steadfast love endures for ever, and His faithfulness to all generations.

Psalms 100:5

Psalms 100, a great and noisy hymn of praise, underlines the love for God for 'all generations'. There are no generations that God ignores. His love is for all people, of all ages, everywhere.

Today, then, please pray for an outpouring of love, through God's people, to the First Third. Ask God to give His followers all the resources they need of time, money, energy, and commitment, to help children, young people and their families become disciples and then grow in their faith.

Ask for wisdom for all who provide materials and resources to help disciples of all ages.

Ask for wisdom for leaders – experienced ones and new ones – as they explore faith with the tiniest of children, with the oldest of teenagers, the smartest of young adults, and with everyone in between.



Day 7

Pray for Adapting

As God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience.

Colossians 3:12

These verses are a reminder of the types of character traits God longs to see in His people.

And, if our churches are to be places of welcome, of encounter with God, of growth as disciples for people of *all* ages, we will need to be people of grace and compassion.

So, today, please pray for churches who have few younger people to know how to adapt and change to become places of great warmth, manaakitanga and welcome to younger generations wanting to explore Christian faith and community.

Changing and adapting can be painful, so ask God for extra grace and vision for all those seeking to do things differently, and make difficult decisions about where to put time and energy.



Day 8 Pray for you

Then He took a little child and put it among them; and taking it in His arms, He said to them, 'Whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me, and whoever welcomes me welcomes not me but the one who sent me.'

Mark 9. 36-37

Today, please consider your own role in helping churches become welcoming places for children, youth, young adults and families.

It may be that your primary calling is to pray for the First Third. It may be that you can support others in what they are doing.

It may be that God is asking you to step up into a new role, or a new level of responsibility in this area.

It is certainly true that each of us has our part to play if our churches are to be fully multi-generational, reflecting God's powerful love for people of all ages.

These words from Jesus bring us up short – in welcoming little ones, we actually welcome Him; and, even more, we welcome God the Father who sent Him. Being open to people of all ages is a sign of the Kingdom and a way of making space for the presence of God with us.

What might we need to change in our own lives of prayer, worship and involvement in our church, or groups of churches and our community, in order to welcome God Himself in these younger ones?



Day 9 Pray for Growth

Take care that you do not despise one of these little ones; for, I tell you, in heaven their angels continually see the face of my Father in heaven.

Matthew 18 .10

There is no doubt that embracing the First Third into our churches is a messy, noisy, challenging business. Life is never straightforward when they are around. And yet, without them, our lives, our churches and our communities are so much the poorer.

So, please pray today for all of our churches to treasure these younger people, to delight in them, and give thanks for them.

Pray for opportunities in families, in schools, and in churches for parents, grandparents, friends, and relations to share faith with the young people they know, in kind and respectful ways.

Please pray that your church can be a safe place for children and young people to grow up in, with lots of space for them to discover God's call on their lives and to explore it, as other generations cheer them on.



Day 10 Pray for leaders

So Jesus called them and said to them, 'You know that among the Gentiles those whom they recognise as their rulers lord it over them, and their great ones are tyrants over them. But it is not so among you; but whoever wishes to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wishes to be first among you must be slave of all. For the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many.'

Mark 10.42-45

There is no doubt that working with children, young people and young adults to help them become disciples of Christ and grow in their faith is both profoundly rewarding and immensely demanding.

Today, please pray for many people - young and older - to take up this challenge.

Pray for those who are volunteers already, and for those who are wondering if they can join in.

Pray for those who are employed as children and youth workers, university chaplains, and those advocating for the First Third, that they will thrive in their role and see great fruitfulness.

Pray for church leaders, lay and ordained, for vision and enthusiasm for this work, for welcome and delight in people of all ages.

Pray for the children, young people and young adults themselves, that those with leadership gifts will be given opportunity to explore those gifts and take on appropriate responsibility as they grow up.



Day 11 Pray for the Future

Now to Him who by the power at work within us is able to accomplish abundantly far more than all we can ask or imagine, to Him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations, for ever and ever. Amen.

Ephesians 3. 20-21

On this last day of *Thy Kingdom Come*, please give thanks for all the prayers that have been prayed for children, families, young people and young adults over these last eleven days.

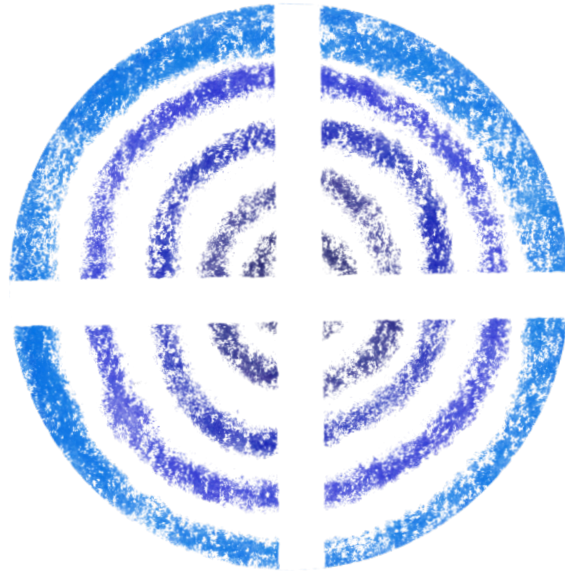
Remember that God's plans are greater than we can imagine, and maybe commit to continuing to pray for the First Third in the weeks to come.

Ask God to give you the courage and discipline to keep praying and give thanks for every answered prayer.

Pray again for the five people you have been thinking of, and ask God to do far more than you can ask or imagine in their lives – that they will each be devoted to Jesus, and whose lives are richly fruitful in the Kingdom of God.

Thank you for traveling this journey of praying for our tamariki, rangatahi, young adults, and their families. May God bless you, especially in your praying.





FIRST THIRD

This prayer resource is based on the 'Praying for Young Disciples' resource from *Thy Kingdom Come*, adapted and designed Strandz and the National Youth Ministries for the Anglican Dioceses of New Zealand.

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