

Prayer Ribbons Ceremony

Ribbons To Carry Our Prayers

Prayer ribbons are based on the Tibetan and Native American traditions. To indigenous peoples, all of Creation breathes with the Breath of God. Through our prayers, we remember how Spirit sustains us in our journey through life.

Unity Church of Bozeman, Montana, has flown prayer ribbons for several years. Prayer ribbons were also flown by the students at Unity Institute for the 2007 World Day of Prayer. Feel free to adjust this activity to meet your needs.

Preparation

You may make the prayer ribbons ahead of time or, for a longer activity, invite participants to make the ribbons at the beginning of the service [see instructions at right].

Set chairs in a circle. At its center place a sacred altar. Drape prayer ribbons over the altar. Four colors are pointed to the compass direction each represents: yellow - east, red - south, black - west, white - north. In the center cross green and blue ribbons, which represent earth and sky.

The Ceremony

Open with prayer.

Thank everyone for coming to bless Creation with their prayers. Then speak about the gifts of Spirit expressed as air [*the following are suggestions*]:

- ❖ Air is literally the breath of life. We can only live a few minutes without air.
- ❖ Air gives us voice—speaking our prayers gives them power!

Invite everyone to take several deep breaths. With each breath we pray, and Creation breathes with us. How does God breathe through us in our sacred journey? Reflect on this with gratitude.

Explain the tradition of Tibetan prayer flags and Native American prayer ribbons: we infuse the ribbons with prayers, and the wind will carry our prayers. One set will be flown at the church for at least six months to one year. Participants may carry a second set of ribbons home with the intent to fly them outside for the same period of time.

Have six people describe the six directions, including their colors and energies. Invite everyone to “breathe in” each direction:

- ❖ East is yellow and represents new birth.
- ❖ South is red and represents fertility, growth, and fruiting.
- ❖ West is black and represents inner work and healing.
- ❖ North is white and represents wisdom.
- ❖ Sky is blue and represents inspiration and intuition.
- ❖ Earth is green and represents grounding.

[See the activity sheet *Native American Spirituality* for more detailed descriptions of the directions.]

Invite each person to choose one or more prayers they want to share, and to decide which direction each prayer belongs to. You may also invite them to pick a place, animal, plant, or person as a prayer partner for the next six months to one year.

Distribute the ribbons to each person, including those he or she wants to take home. After everyone has their ribbons, invite each to speak their prayers.

Close the ceremony with prayer.

Flying the Ribbons

After the ribbons are infused with prayers, invite everyone to go outside and tie their ribbons on one tree where they will fly for the next six months or one year.

At the end of the season, take down the ribbons and gather them into bundles for a burning bowl service, at either the new year or summer solstice.

Making Prayer Ribbons

Get 1-1/2 yards of cotton fabric (48 inches wide) of each of six colors: yellow, red, black, white, green, blue (9 yards total). Tear the fabric into 1.5 inch strips. This makes enough ribbons for 50 people.

If you have questions or want more information on how to conduct this service, please contact us at unityearthcare@yahoo.com.