



bead
IN HAND

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How
to

Make Anglican Prayer Beads



About Prayer Beads

Prayer beads help bring us into contemplative or meditative prayer. Praying with beads engages body, mind and spirit. For some these beads function primarily to keep count of the number of times a prayer has been said. For others, the benefit of tangible beads has little to do with keeping count and more to serve as a reminder to help stay in the moment, focused in prayer.

When the mind wanders, the fingers call attention to prayer. Rhythm can lead to stillness. When the mind is quiet the heart can be opened to the spirit.

History

People of various faiths including Christian, Muslim, Buddhist and Hindu have used beads, knotted ropes, or stones as an aid for prayer for centuries. The early records of nearly every spiritual tradition contain descriptions of this use.

Within Christian churches the use of prayer ropes or beads goes back thousands of years. The Eastern Orthodox tradition uses the Jesus Prayer and a meditative focus. The Roman Catholic Rosary requires meditation on the life of Jesus, and his mother, Mary. Anglican prayer beads are a relatively new prayer form for Episcopalians dating back to the mid 1980's. A group of Episcopalians, called Praxis, combined the Eastern Orthodox prayer rope and the Roman Rosary to create a new form grounded in Anglican Incarnational theology. They also drew heavily from the Celtic tradition which celebrates the sanctity of all of God's Creation.*

Anglican Prayer Beads: Symbolism

There are thirty three beads representing the number of years in Christ's life. These thirty three beads are divided into four weeks of seven. In Judeo-Christian tradition the number seven represents spiritual perfection or completion. There are also seven seasons of the Christian year.

Between each week is a larger single bead called the Cruciform bead because when looking at the circle of beads the four form a cross.

This reminds us that the cross is central to our faith. The number four also signifies the temporal seasons and the four points on the compass. The Invitational bead between the cross and the wheel of beads brings the total to thirty three.

Selecting Materials And Designing The Prayer Beads

Many design variations are available within the basic structure for prayer beads.

The size of the beads, spacing between them, how uniform they are—these decisions make each set of prayer beads unique.

Prayer beads are meant to be tactile, which accounts for having larger beads, and usually some extra spacing, between each of the "weeks".

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Adding smaller (seed) beads adds visual and tactile interest. Other decorative elements can also be added such as bead caps or chain.



*Adapted from St. Andrews Church website in Harrisville, Michigan: http://www.standrewschurchharrisville.org/anglican_beads.html

SUPPLIES

- 28 Small beads – 6 or 8mm (weeks)
- 5 Larger beads – 10 or 12mm (Invitory and Cruciform)
- 1 Strand size 8/0 seed beads
- 1 Cross
- 2 Feet flexible beading wire
- 1 Crimp bead

These instructions assume one seed bead is between each of the Weeks beads, and three seed beads separate the Cruciform beads. The number of seed beads between each bead can vary, and they don't need to be added at all, but having at least one seed bead between each of the Weeks beads, and at least three between each Cruciform bead, creates a piece that is visually and tactilely pleasing.

PUTTING IT TOGETHER

String your beads in the following pattern:

- 3 seed beads
- Invitory bead and 3 seed beads
- 1st Cruciform bead and 3 seed beads
- String the seven weeks beads, with one seed bead between each
- String 3 seed beads, the 2nd Cruciform bead and 3 more seed beads.
- Repeat the last two steps three more times, ending with the last weeks bead.

Bring the beading wire back through the 3 seed beads, the 1st Cruciform, Invitory and seed beads that were strung so both ends of the wire are exiting the seed beads you started with (see illustration).

FINISHING WITH THE CRIMP BEAD

String the crimp bead onto both wires. Bring both wires through the loop of the cross, back through the crimp bead, and through a few beads at the end.



Lay your piece flat and be sure the wire is pulled snug so there are no gaps, but not so tight that it is stiff. The loop through the cross should be just big enough so the cross moves freely.

Flatten the crimp bead with chain nose pliers, or use crimping pliers if available. Cut the remaining wire as close as possible to the bead it is exiting.

