



WAY OF LIFE

A PATTERN FOR CHRISTIAN LIVING

Praying on the Way

A resource for Home Groups



Written by Bridget Macaulay



DIOCESE OF TRURO
DISCOVERING GOD'S KINGDOM
GROWING THE CHURCH

Praying on the Way

This six session course was written by Bridget Macaulay as a resource for the Way of Life programme in Truro diocese. The course is available on the diocesan website to download for use as a course for small groups (see www.trurodiocese.org.uk). A number of the images, poems and prayers have been written and painted by Bridget Macaulay and you are respectfully requested not to print or otherwise reproduce this material (other than for use as part of this course) without prior permission from Bridget who can be contacted by email: bridgetbraybrooks@googlemail.com

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Praying on the Way: Introduction

This six session course aims to help develop our life as disciples on the Way of Jesus by exploring and deepening our experience of prayer. Prayer is often understood as an activity that is carried out at certain times and in certain places but really it is (or needs to be) our 'Way of Life' as Christians, as followers of Jesus. Prayer is the connective tissue that holds together all four journeys of Way of Life and this course will give opportunities to reflect on how each of these four journeys (UP, IN, WITH and OUT) are in fact four stances for prayer.

This course can be used as a six session course meeting either weekly or fortnightly. The course will ask a level of commitment from participants as it asks them to reflect on their own experience of prayer more deeply and to share their journey with others. Each session opens with a time of reflective prayer which sets the scene for the discussion that follows which usually involves an element of bible study. Each session will then move from discussion into prayer with suggestions of different ways to pray; some individually and some together. It is vital that time is kept for this *experience* of prayer. It is all too easy to spend a lot of time talking about prayer but never actually praying!

The content of the basic six sessions are summarised as follows:

Session 1: What is prayer?

Discussion and reflection around the participants' personal experience and understanding of prayer and exploration of how prayer is described in scripture as well as by those who have written on the subject of prayer.

Session 2: Reaching UP: the prayer of encounter

An exploration of how prayer focuses on who God is and how our images of God affect how we pray.

Session 3: Looking IN: the prayer of discovery

An exploration of how prayer shows us something of who we are in relation to God and how we pray with who we are as human beings.

Session 4: Sharing WITH: the prayer of community

Discussion and reflection about the communal nature of prayer and the way that prayer can build up the community of faith as we pray with and for one another.

Session 5: Moving OUT: the prayer of action

An exploration of how we engage with the world around us through prayer and how prayer makes a difference in the building of God's kingdom.

Session 6: Prayer as a Way of Life

Finding a rhythm of prayer of prayer in everyday life through a new look at the tradition of 'Praying the Hours'.

Each session has the following components:



Equipment for the journey

This lists the things you will need for the session including any printing for participants.



Setting the route

This section sets the scene for the session introducing the main theme and enabling the group to settle, 'arrive' and prepare for the session through some quiet reflection.



Exploring the terrain

This section offers material to discuss and learn together about different aspects of our life of prayer.



Enjoying the view

This section enables the group to look back over the session and take the things that have been learnt into prayer.

Each of the course sessions has material for an hour and a half long meeting. You could spend longer with the material if time allows. In the notes for each session an indication of how long to spend on each component is suggested but groups vary considerably in how easily discussion will flow depending on how well they know one another and how comfortable they are in sharing their thoughts and experience. Group leaders or facilitators will need to rein in or encourage participants to expand as appropriate. However sticking slavishly to a time schedule and material can also deaden discussion and exploration and it is important to be sensitive to the mood of the group and the movements of God's Spirit. The material in this course aims to give a starting place for reflection and discussion and hopefully can be used and adapted creatively to meet the needs of the group. The dynamic of interaction and sharing between the people in the group is the most challenging but potentially also the most formative aspect and so the 'programme' needs first to serve the people rather than the other way round.

Before embarking on this course it is worth giving some thought to the following areas:


1. Commitment

Give plenty of warning that the course will be starting and make sure that potential participants have all the dates. Encourage people to commit to all the sessions if at all possible. A continuity of attendance is important if people are to feel safe with one another and experience this course as something that helps build the community of faith in a particular location. Suggest to participants that they bring a notebook or journal to keep all their hand-outs, notes and reflections in one place. It is also important at the first session to outline the parameters of confidentiality so that participants can know that what they share of their personal circumstances and faith journey will be honoured and protected.

2. Venue

If at all possible arrange to meet in participant's homes rather than a public building. This can be a single venue or can be moved around to different homes to share the load. Arrange that there will be coffee as people arrive. The hospitality and comfort of an open home goes a long way to setting the scene for the hospitality of open ears and hearts that this course invites. Sharing a meal together (perhaps at the first and final sessions) will also help people to feel comfortable with each other and deepen relationships. To meet in people's homes and to share a meal together requires forward planning and some commitment but the effect on the group will be well worth the effort. The practicalities of how warm and comfortable people are can have a significant impact on how much they respond to the content of the material and the group process.

3. Preparation

Whoever facilitates the meeting needs to look over the material well in advance and gather the relevant resources eg bibles, papers, pens, coffee, biscuits as necessary. It can be helpful to have a simple visual focus of a candle, a relevant image or some flowers as well. Facilitators will also need to print out (or arrange to have printed at church offices) the participants sheets for that session. These sheets are marked with the printer sign and 'Print for Participants' title and are located within the material for each session. 

4. Prayer

Write out the names of the participants and put them up somewhere that you will see them in the days running up to the meeting. Remember to pray for them (and yourself!) that meeting together for this course would give them a richer understanding of prayer and deeper experience of the God who calls them to pray and prays in them and through them for the world.

N.B

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
Session 1: What is Prayer?

Aim: Through discussion and listening to one another, participants will explore their own understanding of prayer. Exploration of how prayer is described in scripture, as well as by those who have written on the subject of prayer.



Equipment for the journey

You will need for this session:

- Bibles, pens, paper,
- a copy of these session notes for the group facilitator and
- a copy for each group member of the pages marked with the symbol  'Printing for participants' including

'Alternative form of the Lord's prayer'

'What is prayer?' list of quotes (you could either print out a copy for each group member or if you are able to enlarge the quotes and cut them out so that you can arrange them on the floor or table for people to look at).

'Prayer Poem'



Set the route (preparing together)

(20mins):

- After everyone has been welcomed, invite the group to spend a few minutes in quiet prayer during which the events and encounters of the day can be handed over to God
- Now ask each group member to write down the words 'Prayer is...' and add five words which sum up or describe prayer for them. Encourage them to do this quickly without censoring their responses too much. It is important to reassure them that there are no right or wrong answers rather this is a way to begin to think about what they think prayer is and how they experience it. Now ask the group to reduce this list of words to three and if possible down to one. Share round the group the words written down and say which word would sum up prayer for them if they are pressed to use just one word.
- Some thought may also be given to hopes and expectations as they begin this course on prayer and they can be invited to share these hopes briefly with the group.
- Conclude this section by reading the alternative form of the Lord's Prayer from the New Zealand Prayer Book. Read this prayer round the group slowly taking a line each and let it be a prayer of commitment at the start of this course.
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Exploring the terrain (learning together)

(45-50mins):

- Begin by asking the group to read the quotes and definitions of prayer on the following page and let them choose one that they respond to (either positively or negatively) and say why. Spend some time discussing these different definitions of prayer as a way to explore what prayer is or can be.
- Now ask the group to reflect about and discuss if and how they have been taught to pray. What has been useful and what has been unhelpful?
- Read out together the following passages that teach us about prayer and ask each group member to identify one aspect of prayer (or instruction about prayer) that is new to them or which they need to be reminded of.

James 5: 13-16, John 15: 7, Ecclesiastes 5: 2, Matthew 21:12-17

Matthew 6: 7, Luke 11: 1-4, Ephesians 6: 18

Matthew 26: 41, Philippians 4: 6-7, Romans 8: 2-27



Enjoying the view (praying together)

(20-25mins):

Hand out the poem entitled 'Prayer' by George Herbert. Read it through together perhaps taking a phrase each as you go round the group. Spend about 10 or 15mins discussing what the different phrases might mean and encourage the group members to say which phrases particularly catch their attention or are helpful to them personally and why. You will only begin to scratch the surface but the idea is to whet appetites to take the poem away and reflect further with it! Now ask the group members to make themselves comfortable, close their eyes and to become aware of their breath as you share silence for a minute or two. Explain that you will read the poem again as a prayer and encourage them to listen carefully and if a particular phrase or image intrigues them or resonates with them to stay with that one phrase, perhaps repeating it quietly and slowly in their mind and heart and using it as an image to pray with. Now read the poem as it is written out below slowly leaving a good five or more minutes in silence before drawing this time of prayer to an end by reading the poem once more.



Prayer: the Churches banquet,

Prayer: the Angel's age,

Prayer : Gods breath in man returning to his birth,

Prayer: The Soul in paraphrase,

Prayer: the heart in pilgrimage,

Prayer: The Christian Plummet sounding heav'n and earth;

Prayer is Engine against th'Almightie,

Prayer is the sinners tower

Prayer is Reversed Thunder,

Prayer : the Christ-side-piercing spear,

Prayer I: the six-days world-transposing in an hour,

Prayer is a kind of tune which all things hear and fear;

Prayer is softness, and peace, and joy, and love, and bliss,

Prayer is Exalted Manna,

Prayer is gladness of the best,

Prayer is Heaven in ordinary,

Prayer is man well drest,

Prayer: The milky way,

Prayer: the bird of Paradise,

Prayer: is Church-bells beyond the stars heard,

Prayer: is the soul's blood,

Prayer: The land of spices;

Prayer is something understood.



A version of the Lord's Prayer (The New Zealand Prayer Book)

Eternal Spirit: Earth-Maker, Pain-bearer, Life-giver,
Source of all that is and that shall be, Father and Mother of us all.
Loving God, in whom is heaven.

The hallowing of your name echoes through the universe!

The way of your justice be followed by the peoples of the earth!

Your heavenly will be done by all created beings!

Your commonwealth of peace and freedom sustain our hope and come on earth.

With the bread we need for today, feed us.

In the hurts we absorb from one another, forgive us.

In times of temptation and test, spare us.

From the grip of all that is evil, free us.

For you reign in the glory of the power that is love,
now and forever. Amen.



Prayer is getting into perfect communion with God. I tell him what I know he knows already in order that I get to know it as he does. (1)

Prayer is a solemn request for help or expression of thanks addressed to God as an object of worship. (2)

Prayer is the practice of the presence of God. It is the place where pride is abandoned, hope is lifted, and supplication is made. Prayer is the place of admitting our need, of adopting humility, and claiming dependence upon God. Prayer is the needful practice of the Christian. Prayer is the exercise of faith and hope. Prayer is the privilege of touching the heart of the Father through the Son of God, Jesus our Lord. (3)

Prayer may just be the most powerful tool mankind has, the 'most potent instrument of action'. (4)

The function of prayer is not to influence God, but rather to change the nature of the one who prays. (5)

When every hope is gone, 'when helpers fail and comforts flee,' I find that help arrives somehow, from I know not where. Supplication, worship, prayer are no superstition; they are acts more real than the acts of eating, drinking, sitting or walking. It is no exaggeration to say that they alone are real, all else is unreal. (6)

"Help" is a prayer that is always answered. It doesn't matter how you pray--with your head bowed in silence, or crying out in grief, or dancing. Churches are good for prayer, but so are garages and cars and mountains and showers and dance floors. Years ago I wrote an essay that began, Some people think that God is in the details, but I have come to believe that God is in the bathroom. (7)

Prayer makes your heart bigger, until it is capable of containing the gift of God himself. Prayer begets faith, faith begets love, and love begets service on behalf of the poor. Prayer is not asking. Prayer is putting oneself in the hands of God, at His disposition, and listening to His voice in the depth of our hearts. (8)

I found my God in music and the arts, with writers and musicians. In some way, in some form, my God was always there, but now I have learned to talk to him. This is prayer (9)

Is prayer your steering wheel or your spare tyre? (10)

Be not forgetful of prayer. Every time you pray, if your prayer is sincere, there will be new feeling and new meaning in it, which will give you fresh courage, and you will understand that prayer is an education. (11)

The real 'work' of prayer is to become silent and listen to the voice that says good things about me. To gently push aside and silence the many voices that question my goodness and to trust that I will hear the voice of blessing-- that demands real effort. (12)

True prayer is measured by weight, not by length. A single groan before God may have more fullness of prayer in it than a fine oration of great length. (13)

The Christian life is not a constant high. I have my moments of deep discouragement. I have to go to God in prayer with tears in my eyes, and say, 'O God, forgive me,' or 'Help me.' (14)

True contemplation looks for the place of perfect simplicity. You can't stay there, but if you know this simplicity once, it is enough for a whole lifetime. You know your life is radically okay; that you are a child of God. You are in union. There is nothing to prove, nothing to attain. Everything is already there. (15)

Prayer is a strong wall and fortress of the church; it is a goodly Christian weapon. (16)

The only thing to seek in contemplative prayer is God; and we seek Him successfully when we realize that we cannot find Him unless He shows Himself to us, and yet at the same time that He would not have inspired us to seek Him unless we had already found Him (17)

Prayer can be compared to sunbathing. "When you're lying on the beach something is happening, something that has nothing to do with how you feel or how hard you're trying. You're not going to get a better tan by screwing up your eyes and concentrating. You give the time, and that's it. All you have to do is turn up. And then things change, at their own pace. You simply have to be there where the light can get at you. (18)

God does nothing except in response to believing prayer. (19)

It is our love that brings us into communion with God, not our knowledge about God. It's the difference between looking at a photograph of someone you know and looking into the eyes of someone you love. To navigate this ancient way of prayer is to "put out into the deep," as Luke says, let down our nets for our catch. Paradoxically, we discover that it is we ourselves who are caught and held in this net... (20)

(1) Oswald Chambers

(2) Wikipedia dictionary

(3) Matt Slick

(4) Ted Dekker (author)

(5) Søren Kierkegaard

(6) Mahatma Gandhi

(7) Anne Lamott, Plan B: Further Thoughts on Faith

(8) Mother Teresa

(9) Eric Clapton

(10) Corrie ten Boom

(11) Fyodor Dostoyevsky, The Brothers Karamazov

(12) Henri J.M. Nouwen, Life of the Beloved: Spiritual Living in a Secular World

(13) C. H. Spurgeon

(14) Billy Graham

(15) Richard Rohr OFM

(16) Martin Luther

(17) Thomas Merton

(18) Rowan Williams

(19) John Wesley

(20) Martin Laird



Prayer Poem

The following poem by 'Prayer' by George Herbert is a kaleidoscope of pictures of what prayer might be. Rather like looking through a stained glass window, each little fragment of coloured glass reveals the light in a slightly different way and together makes up the whole image. It is also a poem dense with theology and some of the descriptions of prayer are fairly obtuse! Despite this it is a poem that rewards time and reflection spent on it and lends itself to being used in prayer in a meditative way. One way to do this is to take a phrase each day for a month, perhaps writing it out (each day a different phrase : 'Prayer is the churches banquet' or 'Prayer is the heart in pilgrimage' etc) and pinning it up around the house where it will be seen frequently throughout the day. Alternatively you could write out a phrase at the start of each week in your diary so that you are reminded of it and can ponder on it as you go through the week. Keep a note of any questions or insights that surface as you pray with this poem over time. If you need some help to get going it is worth looking at Malcolm Guite's commentary on the poem at: www.malcolmguite.wordpress.com and put 'commentary on George Herbert Prayer' into the search box. He also makes reference to it in his book 'Faith, Hope and Poetry' Ashgate Publishing Ltd 2012

Prayer the Churches banquet, Angel's age,
Gods breath in man returning to his birth,
The Soul in paraphrase, heart in pilgrimage,
The Christian Plummet sounding heav'n and earth;
Engine against th'Almightie, sinner's tower
Reversed Thunder, Christ-side-piercing spear,
The six-days world-transposing in an hour,
A kind of tune which all things hear and fear;
softness, and peace, and joy, and love, and bliss,
Exalted Manna, gladness of the best,
Heaven in ordinary, man well drest,
The milky way, the bird of Paradise,
Church-bells beyond the stars heard, the soul's blood,
The land of spices; something understood




Session 2: REACHING UP: the Prayer of Encounter

Aim: To explore how prayer helps us to focus on who God is and how our images of God affect how we pray.



Equipment for the journey

For this session you will need:

- Bibles, pens, paper,
- a copy of these session notes for the group facilitator
- one copy of the sheets entitled 'Images for God' (enlarge this if possible).
- a copy for each group member of the pages marked with the symbol  'Printing for Participants' sections entitled:
'REACHING UP: The Prayer of Encounter' (including the verses from Psalm 27)
'REACHING UP: Encountering God in Prayer' (including the TREE image and notes and poem and REACHING UP prayer that follow)
- If you are able to also print out an enlarged copy of the 'Tree' picture and either pin it up where everyone can see it or mount it in the top left corner of a backing board that can then be displayed and brought out for each session, adding three other pictures to it as the course progresses
- You may like to have a candle as a focus



Set the route (preparing together)

(15-20mins)

Display the enlarged copy of the 'Tree' picture where everyone can see it. You may also like to light a candle as a symbol that Christ the Light of the world is present by his Spirit. Ask the group to make themselves comfortable taking a few minutes to settle themselves and arrive for this session. Read slowly the points in the printing for Participants section entitled: REACHING UP: the Prayer of Encounter, perhaps reading round the group. Finish this setting the scene section by reading the verses from Psalm 27 the group leader reading the parts in plain type and the group responding with the lines in bold. Read these verses slowly together as a prayer of approach to God at the start of this course.



Exploring the terrain (learning together) (45-55mins)

- Ask the group to sit comfortably and close their eyes. Ask them to think about God. What images or words or feelings come to the surface? How do they see God? How do they imagine God as Father? Son? Holy Spirit? What is the sense they have of God when they pray? Reassure them that there are no right or wrong answers and it is ok if they experience an emptiness or blank space. That in itself is an aspect of our God who is mystery and beyond all our images of him! Now ask them to share their images of God (or lack of them) in pairs for a few minutes.
- Spread out the printed images (entitled 'Images for God') with their scripture references on the floor or table and ask the group to look at them for a few minutes.
- Ask each person to say which image of God (Father, Son or Spirit) speaks most to them and why.
- After letting everyone choose one or more images move the discussion on to thinking about how these images of God shape our prayers and enable us to approach God in different ways. You may find it useful to look up the relevant scripture passages to help inform your discussion.
- As well as thinking about the group's prayer as individuals, encourage them also to think about the images we have of God in our church buildings and whether this plays any part in shaping the style of prayer, praise and worship that takes place there.
- We may carry around negative as well as positive images of God (early experiences of parents and church leaders, teaching in Sunday school, pictures in childhood bibles or around the home, church tradition, even nationality and culture may all have affected our understanding of God and therefore the way we feel able to pray). Encourage group members to share their experience especially if they have spent time in another culture which prays with different traditions and approaches but be aware this may be painful for some.



Enjoying the view (praying together)

(20-25mins)

This section gives an opportunity to prayerfully read the passage from scripture of Jacob's encounter with God at the ford of Jabbok. The resources you need are in the Printing for Participants section following entitled 'Encountering God in

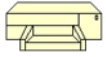
prayer'. Encourage the group to hold a quiet space for each other as they read the passage and pray with the poem and image reflection.

Finish this session by praying the REACHING UP Prayer (ideally group leaders read this prayer out as the group adopts the 'reaching up' stance for prayer described earlier ie standing with arms reaching up above their heads and heads looking up...encourage a good stretch if people are able!).



REACHING UP: The Prayer of Encounter

- REACHING UP is the first stance to adopt in prayer as it recognises God's sovereignty and power, his glory and his 'otherness' and that we need God's Spirit to teach us to pray. To pray a body prayer of reaching up with our arms stretching to God also lifting our heads to look up to him can be a powerful way to remember who God is. This stance is that of a child reaching up in response to a loving parent, or reaching up because he or she is in need, or is fearful and recognises the power of the parent to protect or provide. Children also reach up to the parent because they want to be lifted up so that they can see from the parent's perspective. It is also a stance that makes the body into the shape of a chalice. When we pray this way we ask God to refresh us, fill us and use us to refresh others. To pray with our bodies it is an oft neglected but helpful way to move our prayers from intellectual exercise to earthed reality.
- God is bigger than all our images and definitions of him but scripture and church tradition give us pictures to show us something of who God is. Prayer asks us to REACH UP, to stretch through and beyond the ideas we have about God to encounter him in new ways; sometimes leaving unhelpful images behind.
- We are called to a relationship with God that names and calls us, and shapes the purposes of our lives. We need to be shaped by the power and presence of the God we worship, pray to and seek to follow. The windswept trees around our countryside here in Cornwall are a wonderful picture of what happens to us when we pray! We are shaped by God into particular patterns of living and being as we encounter him in prayer. Like these trees we need to reflect the power of the God that we wrestle with and who blows through us. We need to be bended to God for life; the very core of our life shaped and brought to its knees (in more ways than one!) by this God who is always more than our neat definitions of him.
- These trees are rooted at their core but growth takes place at the edges; the ends of the branches are always stretching out for life, opening to the sun, bending with the gales that blow, changing with the seasons, allowing the cycles of life, death and re-birth. Perhaps our growth in faith and prayer as followers of Jesus can unfold in similar ways.



Psalm 27 (New Living Translation)

A psalm of David

The Lord is my light and my salvation—

so why should I be afraid?

The Lord is my fortress, protecting me from danger,

so why should I tremble?

When evil people come to devour me, when my enemies and foes attack me,

they will stumble and fall.

Though a mighty army surrounds me,

my heart will not be afraid.

Even if I am attacked,

I will remain confident.

The one thing I ask of the Lord— the thing I seek most—

is to live in the house of the Lord all the days of my life,

delighting in the Lord's perfections

and meditating in his Temple.

For he will conceal me there when troubles come;

he will hide me in his sanctuary.

He will place me out of reach on a high rock.

Then I will hold my head high above my enemies who surround me.

At his sanctuary I will offer sacrifices with shouts of joy,

singing and praising the Lord with music.

Hear me as I pray, O Lord.

Be merciful and answer me!

My heart has heard you say, "Come and talk with me."

And my heart responds, "Lord, I am coming." Amen

Images for God: print 1 copy and enlarge if possible





John 10: 9



Malachi 3:2



Psalms 135:14



1 Tim
2:1-6



John 7:37,38



Matthew 23:37



Zechariah 14:9



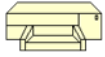
Isaiah 53:2-4

Hosea 11:9-11



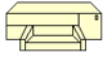
Isaiah 66:13





‘REACHING UP: Encountering God in prayer’





Read the account of Jacob's encounter with the Divine in Genesis 32. Read it slowly and carefully and pay attention to the feelings, thoughts or questions it raises for you.

- If we understand the figure Jacob wrestles with as God, what surprises you about their encounter?
- Are there any ways that you feel you wrestle with God? Is it possible that these wrestles are in fact prayer?
- What is stretching you at this time?
- What forces are shaping you?
- Do you have a sense that God is growing you into a particular stance or shape for work, ministry, service of others?
- What do you want to reach for? Jacob asked God to bless him....what do you want to ask God?
- Use the following poem as a prayer

‘LEAN: LESSONS FROM THE FORD OF JABBOK ‘

Will we create a shape, you and I?

like wind-torn blackthorn against a Cornish sky?

with your gales and my resistings.

In this dance of diversity, this energy of inequality

will I be blown into love's shape, a pathway for your purpose?

Battling, we both know you will win.

But smiling into the dark you seem to invite the fight.

You who shape, remake all things resist my hold on your name.

Instead you trip me, flip me, unhip me,

wound and bless me.

So I learn to lean into your force gale,

knowing any minute you could become a breeze,

and I will find myself again, thrown to my knees.



Printing for Participants'

REACHING UP Prayer

Lord, thank-you for you being bigger than our images of you.

Thank-you for engaging us in the encounter that is prayer.

You are ours but we will never own you.

Help us to keep reaching up for you.

Keep us rooted but willing to stretch out in growth.

May we be open to your surprises because surprise is the pulse of love.

And you have loved us and called us to this journey of faith.

We want to travel with you.

Amen

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Session 3: LOOKING IN: the Prayer of Discovery




Aim: To explore how who we are affects the way we pray and to understand that we can discover more about ourselves and God as we LOOK IN in prayer.



Equipment for the journey

For this session you will need:

- Bibles, pens, paper,
- a copy of these session notes for the group facilitator
- a copy for each group member of the pages marked with the symbol  'Printing for Participants' sections entitled:
 - 'LOOKING IN: The Prayer of Discovery' including the print out of Psalm 139
 - 'We pray with who we are'
 - 'LOOKING IN: Discovering ourselves in Prayer' (including the WELL image and notes and poem and LOOKING IN prayer that follow)
- If you are able to also print out an enlarged copy of the 'WELL' picture and either pin it up where everyone can see it or mount it in the top right hand corner of the backing board if you used it for the last session. This can then be displayed and brought out for each session, adding two other pictures to it as the course progresses
- You may like to have a candle as a focus



Set the route (preparing together)

(15mins)

Display the enlarged copy of the 'Well' picture where everyone can see it. You may also like to light a candle as a symbol that Christ the Light of the world is present by his Spirit. Ask the group to make themselves comfortable taking a few minutes to settle themselves and arrive for this session. Read slowly the points in the printing for Participants section entitled: 'LOOKING IN: the Prayer of Discovery', perhaps reading round the group. Spend a few minutes quietly

reflecting on the themes outlined in these notes. Finish this time of preparation by reading the verses from Psalm 139 as a prayer, echoing the psalmist's wonder at God's complete knowledge of him.



Exploring the terrain (learning together)

(45-55mins)

Hand out the sheets entitled '**We pray with who we are**' and give time to read through the notes and then share in the discussion questions both in smaller groups of two or three as well as in the wider group. Encourage everyone to identify one insight from this that they can turn into a practical intention about how they might approach prayer, perhaps committing to trying a different way to pray in the coming week or month or exploring a practical way to include different approaches to pray in communal worship.

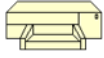


Enjoying the view (praying together)

(20-25mins)

Hand out the sheets entitled '**LOOKING IN: the Prayer of Discovery**' (this includes the WELL image and reflection questions and poem)

Armed with some of the insights from the section above, encourage people to approach the prayer time outlined in these sheets in a way that is meaningful for them. Some may wish to spend time wordlessly with the image, others may wish to meditate with the scripture story or pray with the words of the poem, others may wish to imagine themselves at the well of their lives like the Samaritan woman and to simply listen to what Christ may wish to say to them as they look at the reflection together. Encourage each person to be aware of what they respond to and what they find more challenging in this prayer time and let the engaging with this prayer exercise be a journey of discovery in itself! Finish this session by asking one of the group members to pray the **LOOKING IN Prayer**.



Printing for Participants also Psalm 139 on following page

LOOKING IN: the Prayer of Discovery

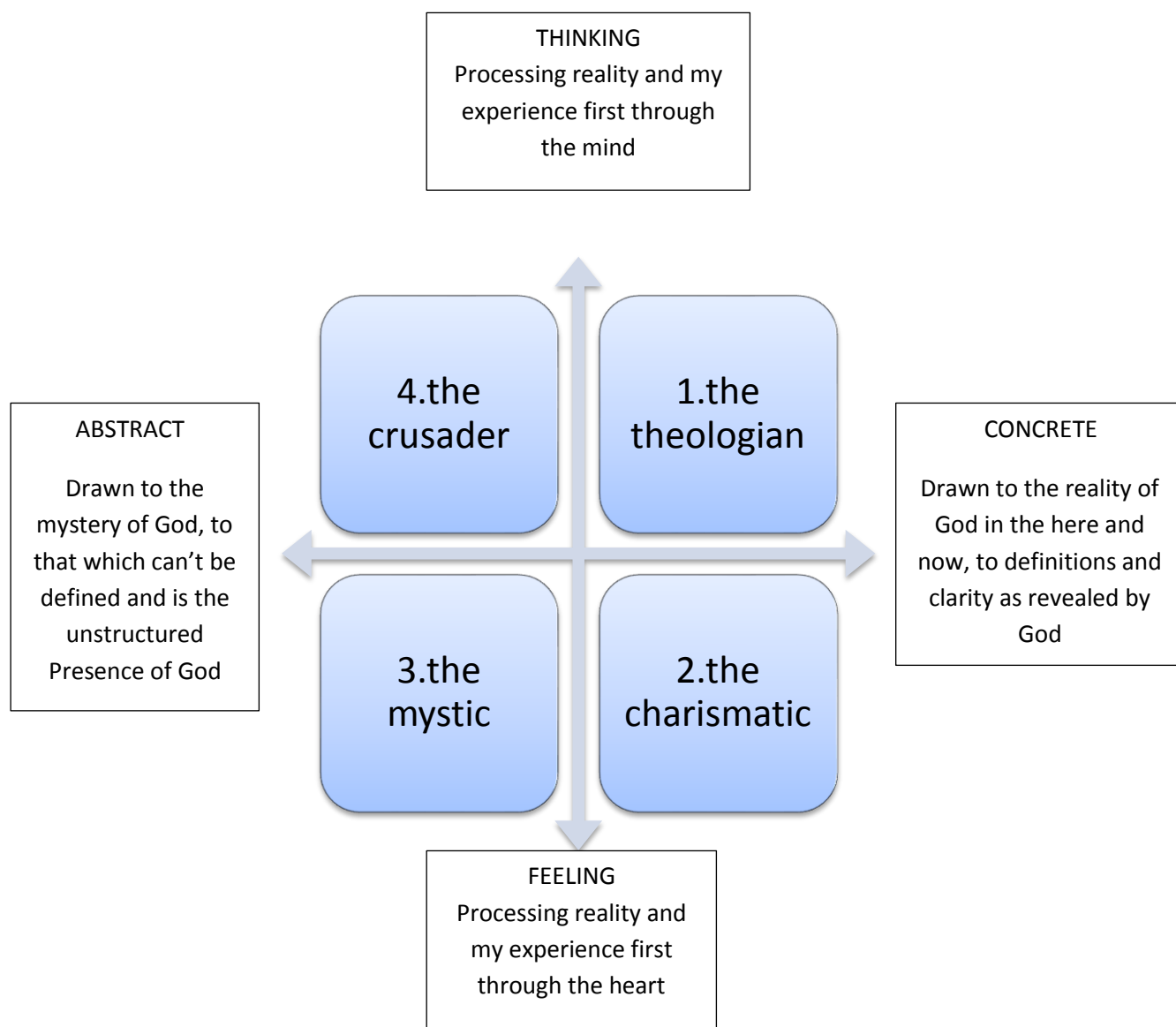
- To pray is to enter into a journey of discovery. Our approaches to prayer and our ways of praying need to take into account our preferences and personalities if we are to pray with who we are.
- 'LOOKING IN' in prayer is rather like leaning over the well of our lives, seeing our reflection with God at our shoulder. In prayer we are invited to look beyond the surface reflection to deeper layers of thinking and feeling.
- In prayer we need to create a bordered and safe space in which to look and listen to God and to learn about ourselves. We find this space by creating a boundary (rather like the wall of a well). We can do this by setting aside a period of time or by using a physical place for prayer or by entering into silence.
- Prayerful self-reflection can enable us to discover more about God as well as ourselves because we are made in his image
- Prayer can renew and refresh and heal us when we connect with God as the source of our life and receive the living water he offers.
- LOOKING IN can be a useful stance in prayer. We can sit with our head bowed and our arms making a circle in front of us, as if we are looking into the well that is our life in God.

Psalm 139. A David Psalm

God, investigate my life;
get all the facts first-hand.
I'm an open book to you;
even from a distance, you know what I'm thinking.
You know when I leave and when I get back;
I'm never out of your sight.
You know everything I'm going to say
before I start the first sentence.
I look behind me and you're there,
then up ahead and you're there, too—
your reassuring presence, coming and going.
This is too much, too wonderful—
I can't take it all in!
Is there anywhere I can go to avoid your Spirit?
to be out of your sight?
If I climb to the sky, you're there!
If I go underground, you're there!
If I flew on morning's wings
to the far western horizon,
You'd find me in a minute—
you're already there waiting!
Then I said to myself, "Oh, he even sees me in the dark!
At night I'm immersed in the light!"
It's a fact: darkness isn't dark to you;
night and day, darkness and light, they're all the same to you.
Oh yes, you shaped me first inside, then out;
you formed me in my mother's womb.
I thank you, High God—you're breath-taking!
Body and soul, I am marvelously made!
I worship in adoration—what a creation!
You know me inside and out,
you know every bone in my body;
You know exactly how I was made, bit by bit,
how I was sculpted from nothing into something.
Like an open book, you watched me grow from conception to birth;
all the stages of my life were spread out before you,
The days of my life all prepared
before I'd even lived one day.
Your thoughts—how rare, how beautiful!
God, I'll never comprehend them!
I couldn't even begin to count them—
anymore than I could count the sand of the sea.
Oh, let me rise in the morning and live always with you! Amen



We pray with who we are



Type 1: the **'theologian'** has a preference for an intellectual, thinking spirituality that enjoys doctrinal and theological concepts such as the incarnation or salvation. They prefer active and corporate gatherings for prayer and worship where there is an emphasis on the spoken and written Word. They will value good preaching and study groups where there is an opportunity for theological reflection, ethical debate that seeks to understand experience and name it. They are able to articulate and preserve the faith story so that it can be passed on to the next generation. As they experience God communicates with them primarily through the written word they will favour scripture based prayer and reflection and liturgical forms of prayer and worship. Personal prayer will tend towards reflective reading and journaling as meaningful tools for deepening life in God. The dangers for this

type are over rationalism and a loss of feeling and they can benefit from the fostering solitude with unstructured silence as a means to experience God and know God not just by knowing about God.

Type 2: the 'charismatic' experiences the personal nature of God through their own particular encounter, gift or experience (charism). They also highly value scripture but the emphasis is on making God's word personal. Their prayer is more affective concerned with personal holiness and transformation. They value evangelism and renewal and enjoy corporate worship too especially if it includes time for witness, testimony and music. They will use less formal more intimate language for prayer as God is here with us and they may be easier with prayer 'off the cuff' from the heart. Their prayer is earthed in present circumstances and they are likely to be more comfortable with physical expressions of prayer and worship. They respond to music and fellowship in prayer and worship as well as personal service of others. It can be more difficult for this type to express 'negative' emotions in prayer and they may not deal well with things being undefined or with the spiritual experiences of others if they differ from their own. They can sometimes see God as punitive and can be in danger of excessive pietism.

Type 3: the 'mystic' places more value on hearing God than speaking to God. They are contemplative and often intuitive and prayer focuses on the inner world. God is mysterious and they run the risk of seeing God as so transcendent that he is completely unknowable. Asceticism and spiritual disciplines can be useful in prayer but they can also be individualistic and overly solitary in their pursuit of God, sometimes feeling they do not fit in to the faith community. They need space and silence in their prayer and value the use of symbols that are wordless such as icons or a lit candle. They can bring imaginative interpretations rooted in experience to the theological conceptualising of Type 1 and can be formed in deep ways by their encounter with God in silence. They often find praying outdoors in open spaces within the created world where they may experience union with God. They can benefit from prayer with others even if simply sharing silence together as a counterbalance to the risk of their solitude becoming escapism.

Type 4: the 'crusader' or visionary emphasises kingdom spirituality. Prayer is expressed in action; lived out rather than simply spoken or felt. Work and prayer are seen as the same thing. They will favour prayers that ask for the transformation of society. They will be faithful intercessors, often passionate in both prayer and service. They will be drawn to prayers for peace and justice and will be engaged in issues and campaigns perhaps before people and pastoral programmes. However they will value corporate worship and will be helped particularly by communities where there is a supportive expression of the body of Christ seeking to build God's kingdom in a particular location or mission. This type may find sharing in the Eucharist helpful especially where the emphasis is on the sacrifice and work of Christ.

The identification of these four types has come from the work of Holmes and Ware (for more info see: 'A History of Christian Spirituality: an analytical introduction' by Urban T. Holmes 2002 and 'Discover your Spiritual Type: a guide for individual and congregational growth' by Corinne Ware 2000). These 'spiritual styles' are not an attempt to pigeon hole us; we are all a unique blend of experience and innate preference. This is not about right and wrong ways to pray but rather to open up some ideas about how we value and honour who we are as God's creatures seeking to be in relationship with him. Please note that while terms such as 'theologian' and 'charismatic' may reflect a career choice or choice of worship style it does not follow that mystics can't be career theologians or that crusaders can't worship in a charismatic fellowship! The terms used in this context are describing the intersection of the abstract-concrete and thinking- feeling axis. None of us fit neatly into one type, we have something of all of them but we will have a preference in our spiritual style and we can benefit greatly from spending time with others who have different worship and prayer styles to our own, challenging though this can be! We can particularly benefit from practicing approaches to prayer that fit more naturally in the type opposite to our own on the diagram above.

Spend time discussing these four spiritual styles using the following questions to help your reflections (the group may find it easier to discuss the first three questions below in two's or three's and then as a whole group for the final question):

1. Are there ways that this outline of spiritual styles has helped understand your particular challenges or preferences in prayer?
2. Can you identify which style best describes you?
3. How might this give you some ways to experiment in your approach to prayer? And how might it affirm your experience and approach to prayer?
4. As well as thinking about these styles of prayer for yourself individually can you think about your church congregation or faith community and think about how we pray and worship communally and whether we need to explore different (or more balanced?) approaches to prayer in order to foster growth more widely and in order for newcomers to feel at home?



‘LOOKING IN: the Prayer of Discovery’



Read the account of the woman at the well and her journey of discovery in Luke chapter 4

- Where are the ‘wells’ in your life at this time? How are these places of renewal and refreshment replenished?
- What sort of reading and praying with scripture feeds you? Is there one simple practical decision you could make to create a boundaried space for prayer in order to regularly be drawing up this water?
- What practices of self- reflection are helpful for you? What enables you to ‘break through the surface’ to be able to look at what God draws up from the deep places in you?
- What does being ‘well’ look like for you?

- What are you thirsty for?
- Turn these thoughts and intentions into prayer or use the poem below (re-written in the first person) as a personal prayer.

'WELL' By Bridget Macaulay

The 'well-woman' I was.

Until one day

leaning over the edge of the inky depths

an overhead tree flame dry in the sun

drops five leaves.

Like the burnt fragments of my life, they float beneath my gaze.

Until that day, leaning over

he disturbs the surface of me.

Reaching deep down

to draw up my truest name;

an image of the well-maker in whose name he does his disturbing.

I drink deeply, clear and cleansing.

Soothing my scorched heart,

resting in this new reflection.

And my tears well, welcoming well-being.

I am woman,

well now.



'Printing for Participants'

LOOKING IN PRAYER

Lord of the surface, Lord of the deep places, show us how to create a well of prayer in our lives. As we reach into the well of your word and our experiences reveal to us who you are. As we reach into the well to draw up what we need as human beings for each day's tasks, show us what you see when you gaze at our reflection.

As we reach into the well of our thoughts and ideas, disturb the surface of our thinking so that we can be open to new ways of being mindful about ourselves, about your church and your world.

As we reach into the well of silence and space help us to draw up the water that refreshes, heals and gives us life. Build this well of prayer in us Lord so that we can be connected to you, our Source.

Amen

Session 4: SHARING WITH: the Prayer of Community



Aim: to explore why it is important to pray together and how prayer can build up the body of Christ.



Equipment for the journey

For this session you will need:

- Bibles, pens, paper,
- A selection of small pottery, china or wooden bowls, enough for one each for each group member and some small smooth stones that will fit into the bowls (one for each group member).
- A copy of these session notes for the group facilitator
- A copy for each group member of the pages marked with the symbol

'Printing for Participants' sections entitled:

'SHARING WITH: The Prayer of Community'

'SHARING WITH: Building community in prayer' (including the BOWL image and simple liturgy for the final prayer time including the SHARING WITH prayer).

- If you are able to also print out an enlarged copy of the 'BOWL' picture and either pin it up where everyone can see it or mount it in the bottom right hand corner of the backing board if you used it for the last sessions. This can then be displayed and brought out for each session, adding two other pictures to it as the course progresses.
- A candle and a ball of string ribbon or thin strips of crepe paper.
- A length of coloured ribbon
- You will need to arrange the chairs for this session in a circle.



Setting the route (preparing together)

(20mins)

Display the enlarged copy of the 'Bowl' picture where everyone can see it. You may also like to light a candle as a symbol that Christ the Light of the world is present by his Spirit. Make sure that the group is seated in a circle for this session. Ask the group to make themselves comfortable taking a few minutes to settle themselves and arrive for this session. The printed sheet entitled: 'SHARING WITH: The Prayer of Community' can be handed out. Now cut some lengths of string or

crepe paper that are long enough to have one end held by someone of one side of the circle and the other end held by the person sitting opposite them. Repeat this until everyone has a piece of string and is connected across the circle rather like the spokes of a wheel. Now tie all the bits of string together in the centre with the piece of coloured ribbon to form a 'hub'. Ask everyone to place their right hand on the shoulder of the person sitting on their right. Now read slowly the points in the printing for Participants section entitled: 'SHARING WITH: the Prayer of Community', perhaps reading round the group if practical (it may be tricky for participants to manage to hold their piece of string, place their hand on a shoulder *and* read from their sheets!) Spend a few minutes quietly praying for the person seated to the right and conclude by praying the grace together.



Exploring the terrain (learning together)

(35-45mins)

Discuss the following scripture passages together:

Romans 12:9-13, 15:5-7

James 5: 13-20

Colossians 3:12-17, 4:2-4

Luke 9:28-36

Acts 2:41-3:1

2 Chronicles 7:14

Matthew 18:19, 20

- What can they teach us about the importance of sharing with others in prayer?
- Why do we find praying together challenges us?
- Might these passages have anything to say to us about how we approach praying together in church?
- What might we do in our communal worship and prayer in order to deepen our experience of community?

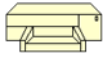


Enjoying the view (praying together)

(30-35mins)

In this section we will pray with and for one another using the image of the bowl that we displayed at the start of the session.

- Give each person one of the small bowls and a stone each. They will also need a copy of the BOWL image and the simple liturgy and SHARING WITH prayer on the same sheet. Place a lit candle in the centre of the group.
- Split the group into pairs and invite them to take it in turns to share with each other something they would be glad of prayer about, for themselves. As they start to share their prayer needs they place their stone in the other person's bowl. What each person shares is up to them. It may be a personal need or a desire to deepen their life in God, it may be a challenge or decision they face. As each person shares the other person is asked to listen attentively without comment or advice; their job is to 'hold' the other person's stone in their own prayer bowl. After about 10 minutes the other person in the pair shares and puts their stone into the other's prayer bowl. (Group leaders will need to keep people to time).
- Once both people have shared in their pairs, invite people back into the circle and complete this time of praying together using the prayer form on the sheets ending with the SHARING WITH prayer.



Printing for participants

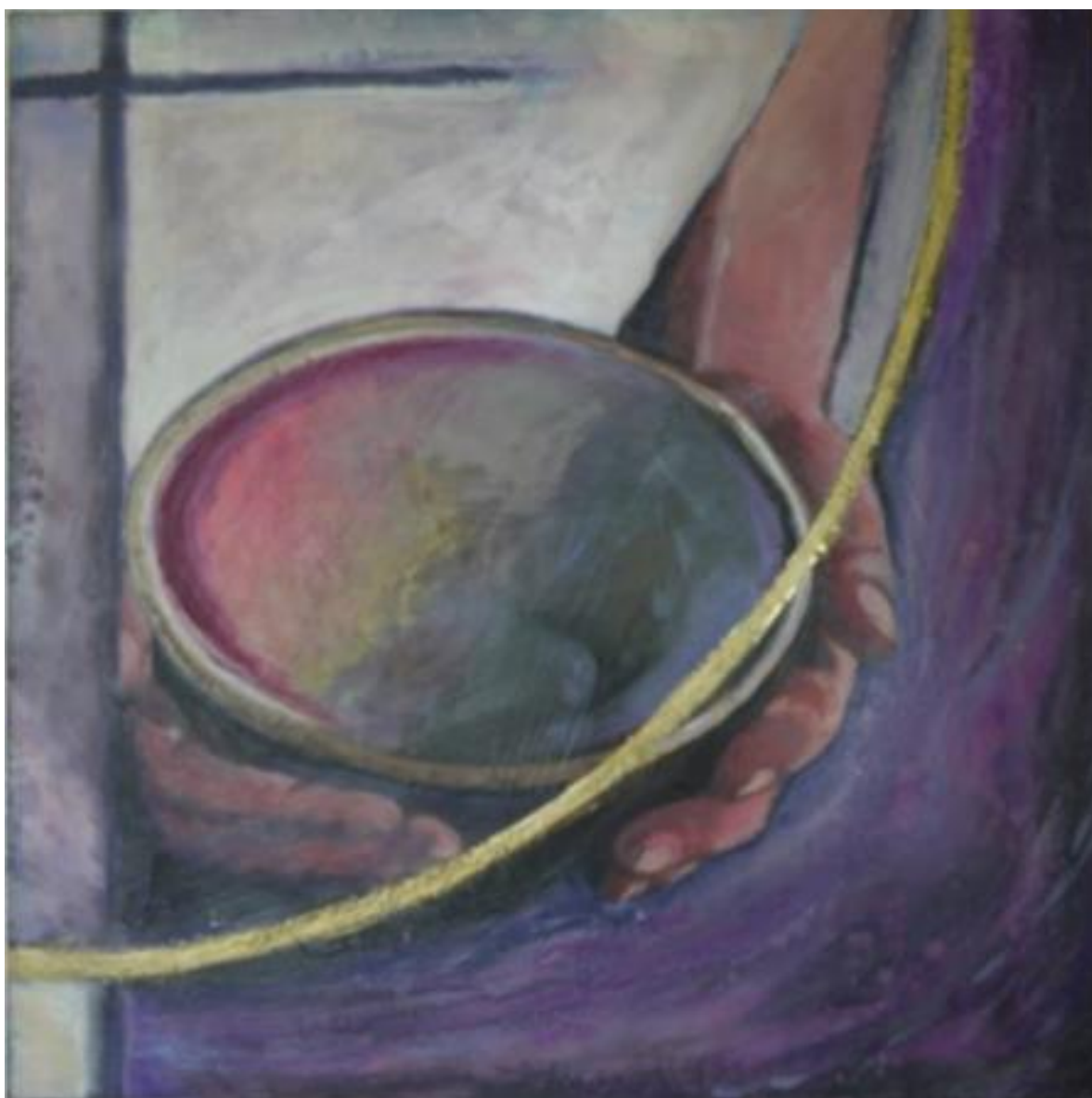
'SHARING WITH: the Prayer of Community'

- The centre, the hub, is signified by Christ, the central and focal point of our lives, our prayers and our group.
- The rim of the wheel is signified by us - the continuous line of our arms and shoulders. We form the outer circumference, the rim of the wheel. Without each one of us there wouldn't be a wheel. In practical and spiritual ways we carry and hold one another as parts of Christ's body.
- The strings are the spokes. They represent our personal connection with Christ through our prayer. We have to remain individually connected with Christ if there is to be a wheel.
- Unless each one of us remains united with Christ, the wheel will collapse.
- In the same way, unless we remain hold and bear with one another, the wheel without the support of the outer rim will lose its shape and effectiveness. We have to lean on and support one another in our prayers to keep the wheel strong.
- These three essential parts of the wheel - the hub - spokes, - and the rim - are also essential building components for Christian community, the body of Christ.
- When we pray the prayer of community we can bring our cupped hands together like a bowl both to receive from one another, carrying one another's concerns in prayer and also to offer the bowl of our lives in service.

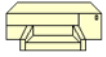


Printing for participants

SHARING WITH: The Prayer of Community



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Printing for participants

Closing liturgy

- The group leader begins with this declaration:

We share each other's burdens, and in this way obey the law of Christ
(Galatians 6:2)

- Now each person in turn is invited to take the stone from their bowl. Using the name of the person they have listened to they say : **'I place.....in the light of Christ'** as they place the stone beside the lit candle and then group together responds: **'As we hold each other in prayer, you hold us Lord'**
- After each person has done this the group sits with their empty bowl in their hands, open to receive from God and one another as we share silence together for a few minutes
- Conclude by praying together the SHARING WITH prayer below:

Lord, you have made us like bowls,

Our bodies created as carrying place.

Filling and holding and emptying, breath after breath.

We are hollowed out, hallowed space.

Form us into bowls that have room to listen to you and to one another.

Make us into bowls offered in hospitality of the home and heart.

You alone Lord, know what we are carrying, containing, keeping safe,

You know what we long to receive,

You know what we keep holding,

You know what we are ready to offer.

As we hold one another,

You hold us.

Amen.

Session 5: MOVING OUT: the Prayer of Engagement

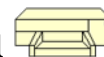


Aim: to explore how the journeys of encounter, discovery and sharing in prayer move us into action in the world, being engaged as participants in the building of God's Kingdom of justice and peace.



Equipment for the journey

For this session you will need:

- Bibles, marker pens, scissors and glue sticks
- The time of prayer at the end of this session suggest two possibilities: the first is to 'pray the news' and for this you will need the items listed below (large sheet of paper, newspapers, magazines etc). The second option is to go on a 'prayer walk' and this will require a little forward planning by group leaders in order to plan a simple route and to give the group notice that they will need to come with outdoor coats and footwear.
- A couple of large sheet of paper or card (spare wall paper or lining paper would suit)
- A selection of current local and national newspapers, and up to date current affairs magazines
- A copy of these session notes for the group facilitator
- A copy for each group member of the pages marked with the symbol 

'Printing for Participants' sections entitled:

'MOVING OUT: The Prayer of Engagement'

'Doorways for prayer'

'Prayers for Peace and Justice from the Iona Community'

'MOVING OUT: Building God's Kingdom in prayer' (including the DOOR image and liturgy for the final prayer time including the MOVING OUT prayer).

- If you are able to also print out an enlarged copy of the 'DOOR' picture and either pin it up where everyone can see it or mount it in the bottom left hand corner of the backing board if you used it for the last sessions. This can then be displayed and brought out for each session, adding two other pictures to it as the course progresses.
- A candle

- If practical arrange the chairs for this session around a table or leave a space on the floor in the middle of the room



Setting the route (preparing together)

(30mins)

Display the enlarged copy of the 'Door' picture where everyone can see it. You may also like to light a candle as a symbol that Christ the Light of the world is present by his Spirit. Ask the group to make themselves comfortable taking a few moments of quiet to settle themselves and arrive for this session. Hand out the sheets entitled 'MOVING OUT: the Prayer of engagement' and 'Doorways for Prayer'. Read the former together around the group and then move into reflecting with the 'doorways' sheet either alone or in two's and three's. Conclude this time of preparation with the prayer for peace and justice from the Iona Community.



Exploring the terrain (learning together)

(25mins)

Read together the account of Jesus teaching about himself as the Gate (or Door) in John 7:7-10.

- In this statement Jesus says, I am the gate for the sheep (v. 7). In some translations the word 'gate' is used interchangeably with the word 'door'.
- In these verses the scene has shifted from the village to the open field. We are called to move out from the pen. As Christians we are called not to stay in our enclosed communal spaces but to move in and out, to come and go.
- The pen used is simply an enclosure made of piled rocks. These enclosures don't have a roof or door, but thorns along the top of the rock walls protect the sheep from wild animals, and the shepherd himself sleeps in the entrance, making a door. So when Jesus says he is the gate for the sheep (v. 7) he is still using the image of a shepherd, but applying it directly to himself.
- From this picture of a shepherd sleeping in the entrance we would expect Jesus' role to be the protector of the sheep. Jesus does indeed protect his own (cf. 6:39; 17:12), but the image is developed here in a surprising way. The sheep are to enter through Jesus (v. 9).
- So the image is not that of a door as a barrier for protection, but of a door as a passageway. The one who enters by Jesus has the liberty to 'come in and go out'. This is an Old Testament expression often used in a general

sense to refer to the whole of one's daily activities. Jesus' sheep have the freedom to live their lives in his presence. Both their going out and their coming in is through him.

Explore these ideas with the group using the following questions for discussion:

- The opening of doors is synonymous with hospitality. What are the situations, people, needs that we personally want to open the door to? And what do we find it hard to open the door to? How might prayer help us to 'open the door'?
- How might we be 'open doors' in our personal and communal praying in order that we can move out to engage with the world around us?
- How might we keep the doors open in our personal and communal prayers in order to welcome people in to deeper relationship with God?
- What might it mean to 'come in and go out and find pasture' in our daily lives as followers of Christ?



Enjoying the view (praying together)

(35mins)

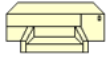
There are two options for this time of praying together:

1. Prayer walk

As a group walk slowly and quietly around the local area (group leaders plan a simple route to lead people round). As you walk look and listen carefully and be aware of the needs around you. Pray for the occupants of the houses as you pass. Pray for different community and social issues that are evident in the environment. You may like to silently pray the Lord's prayer pausing between each line. End with a prayer for God's blessing on this locality and the witness of God's people through the churches in the vicinity. Share together how it felt to pray in this way and anything that group members noticed or were drawn to pray for.

2. Praying the news

During this time of prayer we will use the Lord's prayer to engage with current issues both locally and globally. Spread out on the table or floor the newspapers and magazines. You will also need the large piece of paper or card (a long strip of wallpaper paper is ideal for this). On the paper write out the lines of the Lord's prayer (eg 'Our Father in heaven hallowed be your name' or 'lead us not into temptation' etc). Leave plenty of space in between the lines. Invite the group to tear or cut out headlines or images or adverts etc from the papers and to stick them around the lines from the Lord's prayer. Suggest that they do this in silence in order that they can have the space to reflect on which part of the Lord's prayer are relevant to the items of news that have caught their attention. The cutting out and sticking down can then become a communal silent 'moving out' prayer of the group as a whole. Different news items can overlap to make this a multi layered prayer collage. Once the paper is covered and there is no more room, draw the prayer time to a close by praying the MOVING OUT Prayer.



MOVING OUT: The Prayer of Engagement

- Prayer is the door through which we are called to engage with the world around us.
- Encountering God in prayer; discovering more about ourselves in prayer and sharing with others in prayer will then move us out to put our prayers into actions that build God's Kingdom.
- When we move out in prayerful action we may become part of the answer to our own prayers.
- A physical stance or bodily prayer to use for this journey in prayer is to place hands out in front with palms out. Push palms out from your body and step forward as if opening a door in front of you and walking out through it.

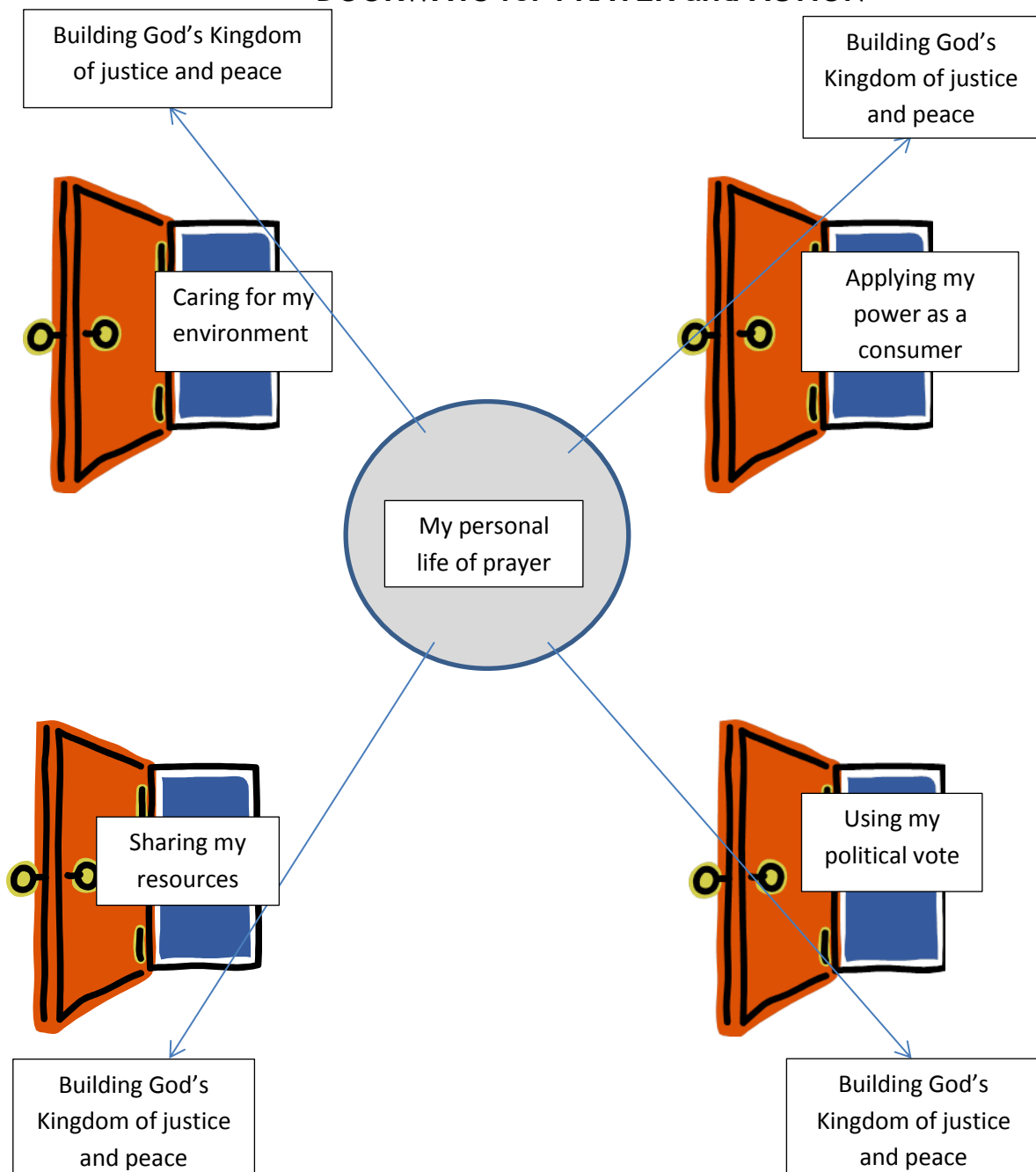
DOORWAYS FOR PRAYER AND ACTION: A REFLECTIVE EXERCISE

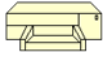
Moving out in prayer means thinking about how I personally can 'live' my own prayers. We might ask the question: 'What is God doing on earth....through us his people?' Below (see diagram overleaf also) are four ways that God's Kingly rule can be seen on earth. How might you practically embody your prayers for peace and justice in our world?

1. God as Creator is sustaining the earth and his people (his new creation). In prayerful action I can join him in this by being a good steward of the material and natural world around me. I can repair, re-use and recycle the things I own. I can be connected to the earth by growing good food and being mindful of the potential I have to pollute or preserve.
2. God is the source of all power and riches. He shares his riches with us and gives us ways to exercise power in the world. I can learn about how to be an ethical consumer; I can prayerfully choose to use my power as a consumer to trade fairly or withdraw my custom in keeping with Kingdom values. I can pray for those who produce my food and make my clothes. I can support local producers and ethical investors.
3. God has authority in heaven and on earth and yet gives his creation freedom to exercise authority and organise corporate life. I can find out about local community action groups and engage with them. I can write to my MP. I can make contact with my neighbours. I can prayerfully read the papers and listen to the news.

4. 'By his divine power, God has given us everything we need for living a godly life. We have received all of this by coming to know him, the one who called us to himself by means of his marvellous glory and excellence' 2 Peter 1:3. I too can reflect the generous heart of God when I pray for those in need and share my resources with them. I can give people time; I can offer hospitality; I can give the use of my possessions. I can tell people the good news of Jesus and share my own joys and challenges in following his Way. I can practice gratitude in prayer and service.

'DOORWAYS for PRAYER and ACTION'





Peace and Justice Prayers from the Iona Community

Voice 1:

Eternal God, out of your great generosity you brought the world into being and gave it life. Then you gave it yourself, on the cross of human suffering. Eternal God, out of your great generosity, make us generous; bring us into being.

All: AMEN. Help us to pray, empower us to act

Voice 2:

Liberator Christ, you came into a holy place and read the sacred word about sight for blind folk and freedom for prisoners. Come to this place now. Read these words to us till our own eyes are opened, our faith is unlocked, and we can see the world as it is, and as it could be; till the yearnings of ordinary people are taken seriously, and the visions of the young are valued, and the potential of the old is released; till your kingdom is celebrated everywhere, and your church is good news to the poor.

All: AMEN. Help us to pray, empower us to act

Voice 3:

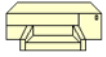
Here, O Creator God, we look in wonder at all you have made. Teach us, O Creator God, to respect this planet, our home, to live carefully within the web of life, and to give you the glory.

All: AMEN. Help us to pray, empower us to act

Voice 4:

God in the midst, come close to us, and help us come close to you, as, for a fraction of time, we step back from the activities of the day. May we treasure such moments with you. Moments when we can bring to you the things we are doing, and find new meaning for them, and new strength for doing them. And moments for recalling how we are meeting you already, in the stuff of daily living and engagement, when faith is tested and compassion is translated into action.

All: Lord, teach us to pray, empower us to act until we live our prayer and pray our action, and we see your Kingdom come. Amen



Printing for participants

MOVING OUT: The Prayer of Engagement



‘MOVING OUT’ Prayer

Loving Lord,
Gate for your sheep, door of heaven,
you invite us to come and go through you to find good pasture. You call us to invite others to share in the good things of your Kingdom. Lord move us, and move us out, to active engagement through the ordinary business of our lives. Teach us to ‘go out and come home’ in prayer, each day. Amen


Session 6: PRAYING AS A WAY OF LIFE: Praying the Hours

Aim: to explore the importance of pattern and form in our prayers. To emphasise the need to root these patterns in the ordinary business of daily life in order for prayer to become a Way of Life.



Equipment for the journey

You will need for this session:

- Bibles, pens, paper,
- a copy of these session notes for the group facilitator and
- a copy for each group member of the pages marked with the symbol  'Printing for participants' to include
 - 'Praying as a Way of Life: Praying the Hours'
 - 'Finding a pattern in the shape of my day'



Setting the route (preparing together)

(15mins)

- Display the enlarged copy of the 'Tree, Well, Bowl and Door' pictures where everyone can see them. You may also like to light a candle as a symbol that Christ the Light of the world is present by his Spirit. Ask the group to make themselves comfortable taking a few minutes to settle themselves and arrive for this session.
- Invite the group to close their eyes and to think back over the past few days or even the past 24 hours. Think about the different activities you have been involved in however mundane and also the encounters with people however fleeting. Now ask the group to think about how, where and in what ways they might have been praying over this period. Have there been any set times of prayer, alone or with others? Have you been sending quick prayers up 'on the hoof'? or have you sat down quietly at any time to be still, enjoy the view or do something creative? Have you prayed with your body at all? been for a walk in the natural world or lived out your prayers in care for the vulnerable or sick? Leave a few minutes of silence for people to

ponder with their own life patterns and how prayer might be part of their day.

- Finish this time of setting the scene by reading **Godfrey Rust's poem 'Listening'** as a prayer. Read this prayer for the group so that they can stay in a prayerful place as you do so. Copies can be handed out afterwards if requested.



Exploring the terrain (learning together)

(45-50mins)

Hand out copies of the sheets entitled 'Prayer as a Way of Life: Praying the Hours'. Give the group time to read through the notes and then discuss the ideas together.



Enjoying the view (praying together)

(25-30mins)

Now hand out the sheets entitled 'Finding a pattern in the shape of my day' and 'Praying on the Way'. Invite them to use this last half an hour of quiet space to fill in the sheet. They may find it useful to look back over the material covered in previous weeks to remind them of the journey they have taken over the course.

Conclude this final session by praying the prayers that relate to the four journeys of Way of Life (Reaching Up Prayer; Looking In Prayer, Sharing With Prayer and Moving Out Prayer). You may like to have different people reading out the four prayers.

Send people out with the light hearted but important message of 'Praying is like breathing' and then sharing the Grace together.



'The Word's Out' from **BREAKING THE CHAINS** by Godfrey Rust Poems and Performance Pieces published by Word Books (ISBN 0-9520212-0-X) on the WordsOut imprint in 1992

Sometimes, I listen for your voice and hear nothing.

In the quiet of my room the only noise

is the thump of my own heart and the angry voices arguing in my head.

You can't say I don't give you a chance.

Sometimes I may say nothing for as long as five minutes.

Your silence is still deafening.

Then I open a book and your voice tumbles out.

And when I try to shut that up I find you can get a word in anywhere.

I've even heard you sometimes from the pulpit.

I hear you on the 9 o'clock news saying "What have you done to the world I gave you?"

I hear you in the tabloids saying "Whoever is without sin cast the first stone."

With the first burst of spring flowers you say "Look - no hands!"

With the most extraordinary sunset you say "Look, just relax".

The shrunken face of hunger is you saying "Feed me".

The beggar on the underground is you saying "House me".

The dreaded diagnosis is you saying "Heal me"

The valium prescription is you saying "Free me".

The redundancy notice is you saying "value me".

The scream of the torture victim is you saying "Father, forgive"

The priest staring down the barrel of a gun is you saying "Love casts out fear"

When I am late and hurrying you are the face of the clock saying "I am the beginning and the end".

When I am greedy you are the face on the banknote saying "Treasure is in heaven".

When I am proud you drop your banana skins in front of me whispering “Don’t look down”.

When I am lonely you are the stillness of the house saying “I am with you always”.

And when I am grieving you are the voice at the graveside saying

“I am the Resurrection and the Life”.

Sometimes I listen for your voice and hear nothing.

And sometimes you make so much noise

I can hardly hear anything else.



Praying as a Way of Life: Praying the Hours

- Shape and form are useful in prayer and there are some ancient patterns in church tradition to help us
- Our prayer must be rooted in the daily lives if it truly to become a 'Way of Life'.
- Praying can be connected to the ordinary activities we are engaged in each day and in so doing will create a rhythm of prayer that keeps us mindful of God's on-going Presence.
- One way that we can create a rhythm of daily prayer is through a pattern for living (traditionally known as a 'Rule of life'). The forming of these Rules of Life began as far as we know in the early part of the 4th century and they have had many different forms since. 'Way of Life' is such a pattern or shape, offering as it does four journeys or four 'stances' for prayer and discipleship (UP, IN, WITH and OUT). It is worth saying something about the term 'RULE'. While today we recognise the need for some 'rules' to order and contain public and communal life we don't like the idea of our individual freedom being imposed upon. We perceive on some level that a rule limits our freedom. But the concept of a 'rule of life' was actually all about freedom. RULE in this context is understood as being a measure or marker like a ruler, a reference point which brings perspective and clarity to our lives. A rule of life is a pattern of daily actions chosen to accomplish something. The goal of a rule is RECOLLECTION. All religious rules begin as patterns of re-calling, remembrance, re-membering, putting back together-creating form and shape again to distracted lives. The task of a rule or pattern for living is the opposite of distraction. It is about helping our concentration on the real, active but often hidden presence of God in our lives. It is not about adding lots of extra activity and prayer to our lives in order that we sense God is present; it is about using some tools to recollect, to remember, to become conscious that God is already present and so to turn the already existing shape of our lives back into prayer and an orientation to God who travels with us in the ordinary business of our daily lives.
- So, it may be all very well for the monastics who we perhaps perceive as having the space to be holy full-time! How does that translate in this time? How on earth do we find that rhythm when our lives are so full, so distracted, so dispersed? This is where a fresh look at the discipline of 'Praying the Hours' may be useful.
- This is a traditional form of prayer that is still practiced in monasteries and convents all over the world. These 'praying points' (they weren't 60 minute hours!) were and still are called the canonical hours. 'Canon' is a word used

for a unit of measure or standard of some sort (which is why we talk about the canon of scripture in the sense of the standard collection). But the word canon also means a trellis of the kind that supports vines. If we see these hours not as an achievement to strive for as 'extras' to add to our spiritual lives but rather as a shape, a trellis then they can become a support system, an outline for our daily remembering God's presence in all we are living; in all we are seeking to be and to do. They are simple way-markers in the day. Through them we have a tool for recollection (both re-collecting our scattered attention and remembering God's unchanging presence). Through them we turn to God who is always orientated to us. Ref: 'Saint Benedict on the Freeway' by Corinne Ware (Abington Press) for further exploration of the idea of a 'Rule'.

- Traditionally there were 7 sacred pauses in the monks' day. Perhaps based on the psalmist's cry: 'seven times a day do I praise you because of your righteous judgements' Psalm 119:164. They are outlined below and interpreted in a way that can connect and root them in our daily lives:

Vigils: the Prayer of Watchfulness: A stance of waiting in the dark, trust, vigilance

We are sometimes woken by unresolved stress or by our dreams. Vigils invites us to take time in the dark and listen...to use other senses than those at our disposal in the daylight hours. We give over to God that which we cannot control and about which we can do nothing at this hour. We ask God to watch over us, to stand vigil, to look after and oversee what we cannot. This may be a prayer stance particularly for nursing mothers, awake in the depths of the night to attend to children. It is also the prayer for those who cannot sleep...

Form of prayer: perhaps a lying down and resting prayer or even a getting up and being attentive in the dark. Use of a rosary or a simple repetitive prayer may be useful related prayer to the breath: 'I will rest quietly in the Lord' (breathing in) 'who watches with me' (breathing out).

Scripture: Psalm 119:148-152; Psalm 42; Psalm 63

Lauds: the Prayer of Praise: A stance of welcome, dawning, resurrection, gratitude and celebration

Here we give thanks that we have woken to a new day. We celebrate the gift of life after sleep. Even if we do not feel ready for another day we recognise we are part of the rhythm of the created world that passes through the darkness of night into the light of day once more. We mark the fact that we are conscious once more and this gives us the possibility of awareness of God in our waking life just as he has been present to us in our sleeping hours. This could be a 'REACHING UP' Prayer.

Forms of prayer: perhaps a simple body prayer as we place our feet out of bed and onto the floor or of cupped hands lifting water to our face to wash. Perhaps a stretching prayer or a prayer that you always say as you drink your first coffee or orange juice.

Scripture: Psalm 19; Psalm 95; Psalm 147

Prime: the Prayer of Preparation: A stance of potential, planning, offering and 'priming the pumps'

Here we pause before the activity of the day's work begins properly. We offer our day and our work to God. We gather our energy and attention to the potential of the day ahead. This could be a 'MOVING OUT' prayer.

Forms of prayer: we might attach a written prayer to our diary and pray it as we open to the day's appointments. We might light a candle on our desk or by the washing up bowl. We might have a simple prayer attached to the inside of the sun-visor in our car which we pray before we set off at the start of the day.

Scripture: Ecclesiastes 3 and 5, Proverbs 3:6

Terce: the Prayer of Refreshment: A stance of re-focus, de-escalation, pausing, revival, strengthening and sanctifying.

The third hour (our 9 am but remember that the monks had already been up a long time!). Here we get up from our work for a break to get a fresh or renewed perspective. We look up and bring our focus and work into alignment again with God's purposes and priorities. We are present again to this time and moment where God is. We check and adjust our direction for the rest of the day.

Form of prayer: we might make a 'cloister walk' stretching our legs and letting our eyes look out again to the sky or the distant horizon. We might take some long, deep breaths asking for God's strength to continue with the day. We cradle our coffee cup in our hands and make an offering of ourselves and the rest of the day, as we drink it.

Scripture: Psalm 67; Psalm 84; Psalm 121

Sext: the Prayer of Insight: A stance of illumination, intercession, turning and transition, re-orientation outwards to others, tuning in, commitment to 'stay the course'.

This is approximately midday...the middle and turning point of the day, a point of balance before the day tips into the afternoon. The sun is high, all is exposed. The world around us is lit up by the sun and we shift our attention and focus from the confines of our work to the world in which we live and serve. The tradition of 'praying the angelus' is rooted here. The church bells would ring so that those working in the fields would look up and stop for a brief moment to pray. This could be a 'SHARING WITH' prayer.

Forms of prayer: perhaps the pips on the lunch time news can be our angelus or an alarm clock on our desk or phone to tell us that the day is turning. We might read the paper over

our lunch break or listen to the news and lift up the needs of the world to God as we do so. We might pray a simple prayer for peace. We might pray for family members as we see their photograph on our wall. As we eat our lunch we are strengthened to keep our true direction for the afternoon's activities. We might stand and pray for the world as we wait for the kettle to boil.

Scripture: Psalm 24; Psalm 33; Psalm 34

None: the Prayer of Examine: A stance of reflecting back, confession, forgiveness, being 'known', taking stock.

We pray at the end of the afternoon or at the end of the working day. We 'come home' literally and spiritually as we return to God through confessing the day's limitations and failings. We reflect back over the day, examining where we were conscious of God and where we moved at odds with God's purposes. We receive God's grace, we pause beneath his loving, searching gaze. For some with children or evening commitments this pause doesn't come until much later when the sun has finally set and it is almost time for bed. This time in the monastery would be marked with 'Vespers'.

Forms of prayer: we may make our confession as we close our diaries or computers, or transfer the list of jobs not completed into tomorrow's 'to do' list. We use the journey home to think back over the day and hand it over to God. We tidy our desk or put dirty clothes into the washing machine, we are turned and tidied by God's healing forgiveness. We close doors and open doors as we move into the evening and we leave behind our incompleteness. We pray as we put on the lights or light the fire for the evening. We are made whole as we come home to God. This can be seen as a 'LOOKING IN prayer.

Scripture: Psalm 34; Psalm 139; Psalm 145

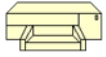
Compline: the Prayer of Rest: A stance of contentment, contemplation, devotion and dedication, silence and surrender.

We 'complete' the day with a prayer for a "quiet night and a perfect end". Here we are connected with the rhythm again of life and re-birth, death and resurrection. We emphasise God's care and our trust and confidence in it. We are quietened and we move into the great silence of night. We surrender and rest as a child rests in its mother's arms. We are held.

Forms of prayer: we might spend a few moments with our hands open on our lap before we settle for sleep. We might write out a simple prayer and place it by our bedside lamp so that we can pray it as we switch off the light. We might read a psalm before sleep. We might use some stones as a symbol of all the concerns we wish to hand over to God and place them one by one in a bowl as a silent prayer of trust and surrender of the day that has passed

Scripture: Psalm 23; Psalm 91; Psalm 134

References: 'Seven Sacred Pauses: Living Mindfully through the Hours of the Day' by Macrina Wiederkehr Sorin Books 2008 and 'Saint Benedict on the highway' by Corinne Ware Abingdon Press 2001 provided very helpful material and ideas for this section.



Finding a rhythm in the pattern of my day

Having discussed the concept of 'Praying the Hours' you may now like to look at the shape of your own day and ask how you might create your own earthed pattern of prayer and recollection that God is with you in all that you do. Using the examples given if they are useful, write down one simple action or prayer stance for each of the 'Hours' below: (if marking all seven of the 'hours' feels overwhelming you could start with the four prayers REACHING UP, LOOKING IN, SHARING WITH and MOVING OUT and think about how you might work these prayer stances into your day)

Vigils: the Prayer of Watchfulness: A stance of waiting in the dark, trust, vigilance

Lauds: the Prayer of Praise: A stance of welcome, dawning, resurrection, gratitude and celebration.

Prime; the Prayer of Preparation: A stance of potential, planning, offering and 'priming the pumps'.

Terce: the Prayer of Refreshment: A stance of re-focus, de-escalation, pausing, revival, strengthening and sanctifying.

Sext: the Prayer of Insight: A stance of illumination, intercession, turning and transition, re-orientation outwards to others, tuning in, commitment to 'stay the course'.

None: the Prayer of Examine: A stance of reflecting back, confession, forgiveness, being 'known', taking stock.

Compline: the Prayer of Rest: A stance of contentment, contemplation, devotion and dedication, silence and surrender.



Praying on the Way

Reaching Up: the prayer of encounter

Lord, thank-you for you being bigger than our images of you. Thank-you for engaging us in the encounter that is prayer. You are ours but we will never own you. Help us to keep reaching up for you. Keep us rooted but willing to stretch out in growth. May we be open to your surprises, because surprise is the pulse of love. And you have loved us and called us to this journey of faith. We want to travel with you. Amen

Looking in: the prayer of discovery

Lord of the surface, Lord of the deep places, show us how to create a well of prayer in our lives. As we reach into the well of your word and our experiences reveal to us who you are. As we reach into the well to draw up what need as human beings for each day's tasks, show us what you see when you gaze at our reflection. As we reach into the well of our thoughts and ideas, disturb the surface of our thinking so that we can be open to new ways of being mindful about ourselves, about your church and your world. As we reach into the well of silence and space help us to draw up the water that refreshes, heals and gives us life. Build this well of prayer in us Lord so that we can be connected to you, our Source. Amen

Sharing with: the prayer of community

Lord, you have made us like bowls, our bodies created as carrying places; filling, holding and emptying-breath after breath. We are hollowed out, hallowed space. Form us into bowls that have room to listen to you and to one another. Make us into bowls offered in hospitality of the home and heart. You alone Lord, know what we are carrying, containing, keeping safe, you know what we long to receive, you know what we keep holding, you know what we are ready to offer. As we hold one another, you hold us. Amen.

Moving out: the prayer of engagement

Loving Lord, Gate for your sheep, Door of heaven, you invite us to come and go through you to find good pasture. You call us to invite others to share in the good things of your Kingdom. Lord move us, and move us out, to active engagement through the ordinary business of our lives. Teach us to 'go out and come home' in prayer, each day. Amen



Prayer is like Breathing (1Thessalonians 5:17)

Prayer is like breathing.

It's old fashioned but it works.

We need to breathe to stay alive,

to continue growing,

and to achieve anything in life.

It's recommended that one breathes steadily,

confidently,.....and continuously;

believing in faith that, although one cannot see the air being inhaled, it is actually going in and out.

It would be unthinkable to attempt to survive without it.

Air is vital to our bodies, as prayer is to our spirits - we all need to breathe.

However, some have tried alternative methods. For example, many people seem to think that by meeting together once a week and all breathing at the same time for one hour, they can then survive the rest of the week without the use of their lungs.

Or, that all we need is twenty minutes breathing time at the beginning of each day, whilst still in a state of deep slumber.

There are others for whom Wednesday night is their special breathing time, when they all have an evening of sharing air together in each other's homes.

However, whilst many find these times of respiration beneficial, none is totally sufficient to keep us alive.

In conclusion, on the maker's recommendations, we therefore advise that for the best results one prays at all times, without ceasing. For those still not convinced, we recommend a simple test:

Place one hand over the mouth,

The other over the nose,

And do not remove until next Sunday morning.

Reference: this piece can be used as a sketch and is found in 'Acting Up' by Dave Hopwood Church House Publishing 2001 www.davehopwood.com and is used here with permission.



Way of Life resources are produced by the Diocese of Truro Discipleship Team. They are designed to help individuals, small groups, and congregations explore their faith and enable them to flourish in Jesus Christ.