

How to Pray in Your Own Way

Leader's Guide
for Ministry with Youth and Adults



Kathy Cawsey



How to Pray in Your Own Way: Leader's Guide for Ministry with Youth and Adults

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Kathy Cawsey, whom Presbyterians may remember as a youth columnist for the *Presbyterian Record*, wrote and taught this resource for Knox PC, Waterloo, Ontario, when the church started developing a program of adult education. Knox now has a thriving adult education ministry, including a “Wednesdays at Knox” lecture series. Kathy currently teaches English at Dalhousie University in Halifax where she attends St. John's United Church.

This resource is designed to be used with the Participant's Workbook. The idea for these resources was inspired by the book *Pray Your Way: Your personality and God* by Bruce Duncan (London: Darton, Longman and Todd Ltd., 1993).

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Introduction

“Prayer is seeking God’s blessing and making our requests known to God in the confidence that God hears and will answer. It is seeking, asking and accepting from God whatever we need. In words or the absence of words, prayer is openness to the presence of God.”

—From *A Catechism for Today*, Question 127,
The Presbyterian Church in Canada, 2004

Purpose of this resource

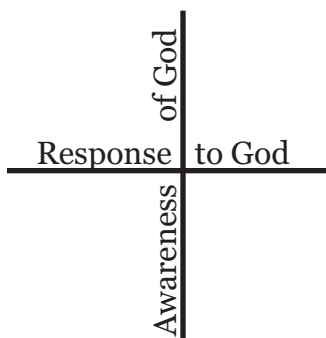
This resource was inspired by the book *Pray Your Way: Your personality and God* written by Bruce Duncan, an Anglican priest. Duncan grew up with the idea that prayer was a human activity, involving prayer rituals and recitation. For an introverted and sensitive person, it was a joyful revelation to learn that genuine prayer is a response to God and not a hunt for God, “that the initiative is always God’s, never ours.”

There is no “right” way or “wrong” way to pray, no “better” way or “worse” way, unless the way you pray doesn’t help you develop a meaningful relationship with God.

However, people do have preferred ways of praying and a greater familiarity with some ways more than others. The purpose of this resource is to introduce ways of praying that connect with different aspects of our personalities.

Why do people pray?

In praying we enter into relationship with God. We pray to develop our awareness of God and we pray to form responses to God. These two purposes are interconnected: aware of God, we respond to God. Therefore, this resource depicts the two purposes of prayer as two intersecting lines.



Why try new forms of prayer?

New ways of praying may be unfamiliar and sometimes even uncomfortable but they can be as important as the familiar ways. By praying in a new way we might

- stretch our spiritual muscles
- experience God in new ways
- develop a new relationship with God
- increase our understanding of other people and their ways of knowing God



It is also possible that as we enter different stages of life, we may find our old ways of praying don't work as well. They may become routine or even meaningless. Broadening our knowledge of different prayer forms provides us with new "tools" that may give us new opportunities to relate to God as we journey through life.

How is praying related to personality?

We are all unique individuals. Our individuality affects how we behave and how we form relationships. Therefore, the behaviour of prayer, which brings us into relationship with God, can also arise from each person's uniqueness.

The study of individual human behaviour has long been a focus of psychologists and resulted in a variety of personality theories and tests. The Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI) is a commonly used psychological testing instrument, first published in 1962. Based on the personality theory of the Swiss psychologist, Carl Jung, it is a self-reporting tool that helps identify personality traits.

The four forms of prayer introduced in this resource coincide with four Myers-Briggs psychological functions that relate to how people process information and make decisions. These functions are sensing, intuiting (i.e. intuition), thinking and feeling. Carl Jung noticed a correlation between these functions and four colours: green, yellow, blue and red. Therefore, in this resource the four prayer forms with their focus are:

- The Green Prayer: Sensing God's reality
- The Yellow Prayer: Intuiting God's mystery
- The Blue Prayer: Understanding God's will
- The Red Prayer: Feeling God's love

The sensing and intuition aspects of green and yellow prayers tend to reinforce the purpose of becoming aware of God. Therefore, on the graphic, they are added on the vertical line. On the other hand, the understanding and feeling aspects of blue and red prayers tend to help people in their response to God; they are depicted on the horizontal line.

Each form of prayer can also be approached using one of two attitudes of personality that are featured in the Myers-Briggs tool: extraversion or introversion. These terms are now part of our everyday language, but it is important that leaders and participants using this resource have a shared understanding of them. The following explanations draw on Bruce Duncan's description of these attitudes (*Pray Your Way*, pp. 18-19).

Extraversion: People with this attitude tend to prefer working out their mental processes in the company of others. They are energized by being among and with others; they need relationships and external activities to renew their energies. They can enjoy quiet, reflective time alone but will find it tiring rather than energizing.

Introversion: People with this attitude tend to prefer working out their mental processes internally, thinking to themselves before speaking. When they do speak, they often express a well thought out discourse. While they can enjoy being in groups for work or social activities, this will tend to tire them. They need time alone to renew and energize.

Duncan describes extraversion and introversion as God-given abilities, present in all of us to some extent and needed to live beyond ourselves “in the breadth of life” and within ourselves “in the depth of life.” He suggests, “Both ways of directing and renewing our psychic energy are good and valuable, but one rather than the other will be your particular gift” (p. 19).

How to use this resource

In each of the four sessions, participants explore and experience one form of prayer. They will have the opportunity to read scripture and sing hymns that are consistent with that type of prayer. Participants will be asked to refer to Bibles and the Book of Praise (1997) and sometimes to write or draw responses. Leaders are asked to

- provide a variety of Bible translations including a study Bible and/or a commentary
- encourage participants to search online for background information about each gospel

Each session includes suggested exercises to practice the form of prayer that has been introduced. The accompanying Participant's Workbook can be used during the sessions as well as between sessions. It provides participants with space to record comments, questions and images related to the different prayers.

It is likely that participants will find some forms of prayers more familiar and more comfortable than others. This is all right and can be a source of discussion.

Session 1: Awareness of God

Green Prayer

The Sensing Prayer

Green Prayer:

Sensing

God's reality

Awareness of God

Gathering

Welcome participants and introduce the resource. Invite discussion about personality tests and reactions to the idea that one's personality might affect the way one prays. Give everyone a Participant's Workbook. Invite someone to read the opening.

Opening

Listen as one person prayerfully and slowly reads aloud the following poetic verse.

“To see a World in a Grain of Sand
And a Heaven in a Wild Flower
Hold Infinity in the palm of your hand
And Eternity in an hour...”

—From *Auguries of Innocence* by William Blake (1757 – 1827)

Introducing sensing

You will need:

- A variety of objects, having at least one object for each sense (e.g., a flower for smell, wool for touch, an orange for taste, something colourful for sight, a clock timer for hearing) and at least one object for each person. Alternatively, bring pictures of such objects.

Set out the objects and invite everyone to “sense” them close-up i.e. touching, tasting, hearing, smelling, seeing. Ask everyone to choose one object and silently reflect on how God is in the chosen object; then turn to a partner and take turns talking about the reasons for their choice and how God is in that object.

Come back together and share how God has been experienced through objects. Then take turns reading aloud the following statements about the green prayer.

The green prayer is

- The sensing prayer: we pray using our five senses to become aware of God's reality in our lives and in the world around us.
- A prayer of wonder and joy, of childlike pleasure and gratitude for life in all its revelations.



- Consistent with the cataphatic theological tradition; that is the tradition that suggests we can know of God through our experiences.
- The prayer of the incarnation of God: God's immanence in Jesus, Holy Communion, all of creation and everyday life.
- Image-filled; it is concrete, sensory and detailed.

Scripture

Sensing God

Divide into small groups and ask participants to share the ways God has appeared in their lives. Bring everyone together and using a brainstorming process with newsprint and a marker, list the ways that they have experienced God in their lives. Tape this on a wall so everyone can see it.

Read responsively Psalms 148:1–12. On another sheet of newsprint, list all the ways the psalmist experienced God in his life. Display this beside the first list. Talk about the similarities and differences between the two lists.

The sensory gospel

Read aloud Mark 10:13–16. What are the story details that connect with our senses?

Ask participants to browse through Mark, reading aloud some of the sub-titles. Encourage them to share what they know about this gospel, what they notice as they browse, what parts are familiar. If possible read together a short description about the content and writing style of Mark, such as from the introduction to the book in a Bible or from a commentary.

While Mark is the shortest of the gospels, the stories are full of graphic details. Mark is written with a sense of urgency, emphasizing the actions of Jesus, the disciples and the people they encounter more than their spoken words. Despite being brief and straightforward, the simple stories are clear with sensory details. The healing stories are often about restoring one of the senses to a person, and Jesus uses everyday objects in his parables.

Have participants divide into small groups and choose one passage from Mark to read and discuss, identifying the sensory details and the experiences of God.

Hymns

Look at some verses in the following hymns.

All things bright and beautiful (#435)
In the bulb there is a flower (#674)
Morning has broken (#814)

What other hymns include a lot of sensory details? Choose one or two hymns to sing.

Prayer exercises

1 Visualizing green prayers

Invite participants to find a comfortable space apart from others, but within hearing of your voice. Ask them to follow your instructions.

Choose one of the following visualizations to read to them. Read slowly and pause frequently.

a) Bible story

Pick a favourite Bible story. Imagine you are there. See yourself—in the crowd, among the followers or quietly hovering on the edge of the scene. See the other people who are there...

Listen... to your own breathing, to the sounds of other people, and to other living things...
Smell the air... Feel something... perhaps someone touches you...

Jesus is there somewhere... you see him... you hear his voice. Something is happening... What does being there feel like? Breathe deeply as you experience this story.

Take another deep breath. Leave the story behind and return to our space.

b) Favourite place

What is your favourite place? A place you go to think and to feel?

Imagine you are there now. See yourself in this place. You are listening and hear sounds...

You take a breath and smell things in the air... You look around and see details in the scene...
What are you feeling? What are you doing?

Imagine God is there with you... How do you experience God's presence? Breathe deeply as you experience this favourite place.

Take another deep breath. Leave the place behind and return to our space.

2 Extraverted and introverted green prayers

Look at Table 1. Try doing an extraverted green prayer; then try an introverted green prayer.

Table 1: Examples of Green Prayers

Extraverted	Introverted
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Experiencing God through nature, or through a particular place or object. • Experiencing God through dance, art, song, movement. • “Chatting” with God about the ordinary details of your life. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Imagining oneself experiencing the event of a Bible story. • Meditating through visualizing a particular place where one might feel God’s presence.

Discuss the experience of praying a green prayer.

- Where had you experienced this kind of prayer previously (e.g. at camp, outside)?
- Share an experience of a green prayer in church.
- Would you like this type of prayer to be used more often in worship services? Why or why not?

Closing

Ask everyone to open their Participant’s Workbook to the first page and browse the information about the green prayer, along with the scriptures and hymns referred to in this session. Point out the spaces left for participants to add their own notes or images. Turn to the next page where some prayer exercises are provided so that participants can practice the green prayer on their own in the coming days. Encourage everyone to try these and bring their experiences and their workbook to the next gathering.

Are you a sensing person?

Did you know that...

- The majority of people are sensing people?
- A minority of religious leaders are sensing people?

—From *Pray Your Way*
by Bruce Duncan, p. 105–6

Invite one person to read prayerfully the following poem while the others listen.

i thank You God for this most amazing
day: for the leaping greenly spirits of trees
and a blue true dream of sky; and for everything
which is natural, which is infinite, which is yes

(i who have died am alive again today,
and this is the sun's birthday; this is the birth
day of life and love and wings: and of the gay
great happening illimitably earth)

how should tasting touching hearing seeing
breathing any—lifted from the no
of all nothing—human merely being
doubt unimaginable You?

(now the ears of my ears awake and
now the eyes of my eyes are opened)

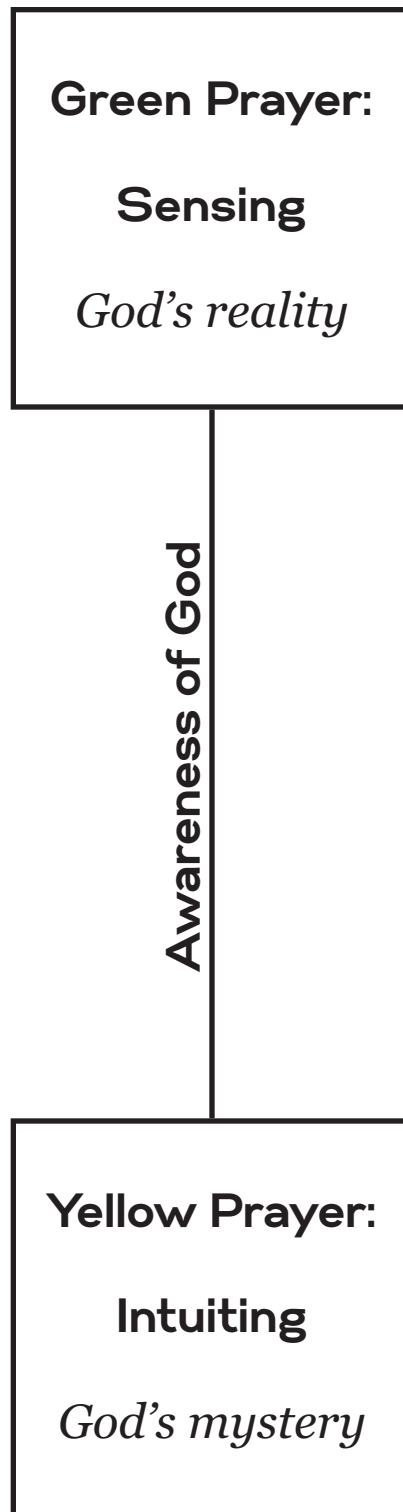
—*i thank You God for this most amazing* by e.e. cummings (1894–1962)



Session 2: Awareness of God

Yellow Prayer

The Intuitive Prayer



Gathering

Welcome everyone and share current news. Invite participants to review their experiences with the sensing prayer, the green prayer, perhaps referring to notes in their workbooks.

Opening

Invite one person to read prayerfully and slowly the following passage while others listen.

“O Lord, you have searched me and know me.
You know when I sit down and when I rise up;
you discern my thoughts from far away.
You search out my path and my lying down,
and are acquainted with all my ways.”

—Psalm 139: 1–3

Intuition

You will need:

- Pens, crayons, markers, pastels, art paper.

Give each participant a sheet of art paper and set out the drawing materials. Ask everyone to take a few minutes to draw an image of someone praying. Invite those who wish to place their images in front of the group.

While participants silently look at the images, rhetorically ask

- How do these images compare with the way prayer is traditionally depicted (e.g., people with hands folded, eyes closed, very still, kneeling)?
- In what ways are the traditional ways of praying useful and meaningful to you?
- How do you feel about prayer being expressed through art? Through conversation? Through dance?

Then take turns reading aloud the following statements about the yellow prayer.



The yellow prayer is

- The intuiting prayer; it goes beyond what we can understand with our senses or our reason, approaching the mystery of God.
- Consistent with the apophatic theological tradition; that is the tradition that suggests that God is the unimaginable, ungraspable, the “cloud of unknowing.”
- The prayer of God’s transcendence—the majesty and infinity of the God who created everything, but is beyond space, time, understanding.
- Image-less. Without using our experiences, we simply have an awareness and a knowledge of God’s presence.
- A freewheeling, butterfly prayer that depends on free association and metaphor, making connections and gaining flashes of insight which aren’t obvious or natural; sometimes it is deeply contemplative.

Scripture

Aware of God’s mystery

Tape blank sheets of newsprint on the walls and set out markers. In small groups have participants generate some statements describing moments when they’ve experienced God’s mystery. These statements might begin “God’s mystery is like...” Then invite everyone to write or draw statements or images on the blank newsprint to represent God’s mystery. Share reactions to these representations.

Read responsively Psalms 19:1–4. Talk about how the psalmist expresses awareness of God’s glory and mystery.

The intuition gospel

Invite a participant to read aloud John 1:1-14. Talk about what might have been the author’s intention with this opening passage.

- How do you understand this passage?
- What do you think the author is trying to express with phrases like
 - “the Word was with God” (vs. 1)?
 - “what has come into being in him was life, and the life was the light of all people” (vs. 3b–4)?
 - “the Word became flesh and lived among us” (vs. 14a)?

Ask participants to browse through John's gospel, reading aloud some of the sub-titles. Encourage them to share what they know about this gospel, what they notice as they browse, what parts are familiar. If possible read together a short description about the content and writing style of John, such as from the introduction to the book in a Bible or from a commentary.

John is sometimes described as the "big picture" gospel, the transcendent gospel with patterns and symbols. The author does not focus on facts; there is not one parable. There are lots of abstract ideas like "I am the light of the world" (John 8:12) and "I am the way, and the truth, and the life" (John 14:6).

Have participants divide into small groups and choose a favourite passage from John to read and discuss. Identify the characters. What is the author saying about God?

Hymns

Look at some verses in the following hymns.

Immortal, invisible, God only wise (#290)
Before the world began (#341)
Spirit, Spirit of gentleness (#399)

What other hymns express intuitively knowing God? Choose one or two to sing.

Prayer exercises

Discuss the experience of praying a yellow prayer.

- Where had you experienced this kind of prayer previously?
- Share an experience of a yellow prayer in church.
- Would you like this type of prayer to be used more often in worship services? Why or why not?

1 Extraverted and introverted yellow prayer

Look at Table 2. Try doing an extraverted yellow prayer; then try an introverted yellow prayer.

Table 2: The Yellow Prayer

Extraverted	Introverted
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Writing a spiritual journal. • Abstract or metaphorical art, dance, music. • Seeing connections, metaphors. • A yearning to be used by God. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deep meditation or contemplation. • Walking a labyrinth. • Participating in a “walkabout,” silent retreat, pilgrimage.

2 Art or music prayer

You will need: Images of the art of Hildegard von Bingen (Google “Images” on the Internet, search for “Hildegard von Bingen art work” and print some of the images); and/or a CD of her music.

Show pictures of some art and/or play music by Hildegard von Bingen. How would you describe her work? What do you think she was trying to express? Talk about how an act of painting, composing, or singing might also be an act of prayer.

3 Meditative prayer

Lead the group through a meditation exercise. Ask everyone to find a comfortable space. Begin with some deep breathing and ask participants to imagine a candle flame. Lead them to focus only on their image of the candle flame by suggesting they push every random thought into the flame until their minds are empty. Allow a few minutes for this. End the meditative state gradually with deep breathing. Invite anyone who wishes to comment on meditating as a form of prayer.

Closing

Invite everyone to open their workbook to the pages about the yellow prayer. Talk about the differences between the green and the yellow prayer while recognizing that they both focus on developing an awareness of God. Encourage participants to try the suggested yellow prayer exercises and bring their experiences and their workbook to the next gathering.



Invite one person to read prayerfully the following poem while others listen.

You will find but a darkness,
as it were a cloud of unknowing;
you will know not what it is,
but feel a naked draw towards God.
This darkness and this cloud is, whatever you do,
between you and your God,
and blocks you so that you cannot see God clearly,
by the light of the understanding of your reason,
nor feel God in the sweetness of love in your affection.
And therefore shape yourself to stay in this darkness as long as you may,
evermore crying after the One whom you love,
for if ever you shall feel God or see God,
it may be here.

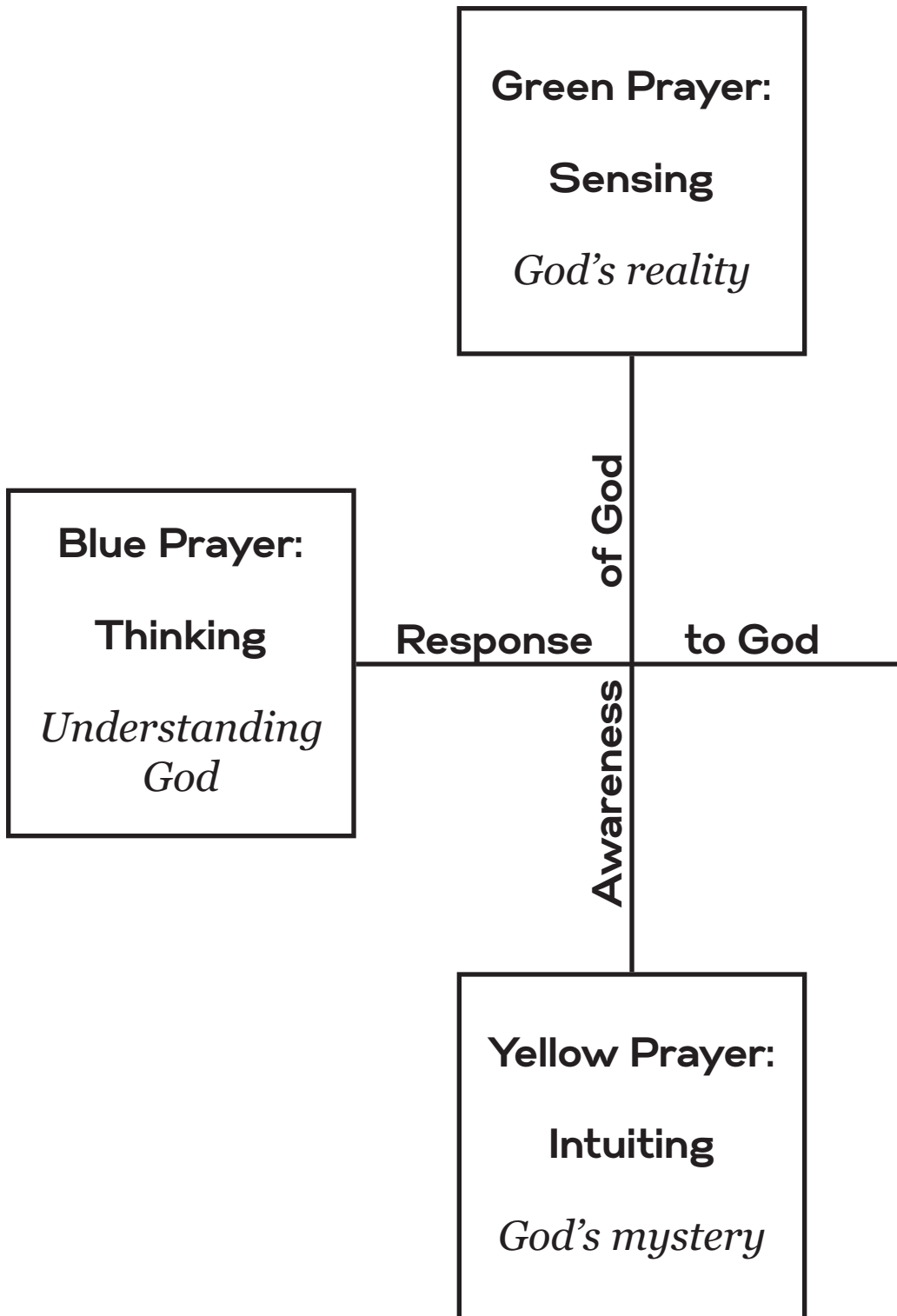
—From *The Cloud of Unknowing*, anonymous 14th century English monk



Session 3: Response to God

Blue Prayer

The Thinking Prayer



Gathering

Welcome everyone and share current news. Invite participants to review their experiences with the intuition prayer, the yellow prayer, perhaps referring to notes in their workbooks.

Opening

Listen as two people prayerfully and responsively read aloud the following words.

Person One: “God is dead,” said Nietzsche.

Person Two: “Nietzsche is dead,” said God.

Thinking

You will need:

- Some pages from the website of The Presbyterian Church in Canada printed in colour (<http://presbyterian.ca>).
- The Book of Forms.
- An Acts and Proceedings of a recent General Assembly.

(Note: The church administrator may be able to help you locate the above.)

Set out the pages and books. Invite participants to examine them and identify them. Invite comments about these publications. If no one mentions it, point out that the common colour associated with Presbyterianism is blue, a colour that is also associated with intelligence.

Have one person read aloud the following:

“We live in a culture which emphasizes feelings. If it feels right it is right. If it feels okay, do it. Presbyterians, on the other hand, have historically emphasized the mind and reason...Presbyterians believe their minds and the ability to reason are also God's gifts. Why has God not provided answers to every problem, nor detailed plans for every occasion? Perhaps because God provided us with minds to think and reason, to discover God's will and the path we should follow.”

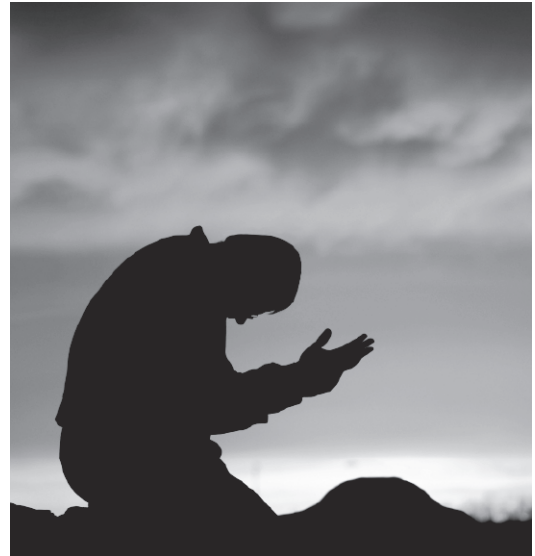
—From *This Presbyterian Church of Ours* by John Congram (p. 13)

Share opinions about the mind and the ability to reason as gifts from God. Ask how

participants feel about thinking, reasoning, doubting and arguing as praying. Then take turns reading aloud the statements about the blue prayer.

The blue prayer is

- The prayer of the mind.
- The thinking prayer. It is thoughtful, reasoned, logical.
- A prayer that values rigorous honesty and truth, justice and integrity.
- A prayer that attempts to understand God and to take faith to the limits of reason and logic.
- Sometimes angry, argumentative, challenging—pushing God to explain God's self and to justify the suffering of the world.



Scripture

A reasoning response to God

The blue prayer, a way of responding to God, is the prayer of some of the great thinkers of our religion—of Aquinas, Augustine and Calvin—who appreciated mentally wrestling with God as a valid religious experience. (Another way of responding is to respond with our hearts with the red prayer as described in the next session). Since the enlightenment, people have been distrustful of using intellect or reason to approach God. But in the Old Testament (e.g., Genesis, Job, Jonah, Psalms and Lamentations), throughout the early church, and in medieval times people saw no contradiction between reason and faith.

Divide into four groups and give each group one of the following passages to read and discuss using the questions below: Genesis 32:24-28, Exodus 32:7-14, Lamentations 2:18-22, Psalms 13:1-5.

- 1 Who are the main characters in this story?
- 2 What happens to them?
- 3 What do you think about questioning, arguing and challenging God as being valid ways to pray and connect intimately with God? Are they as valid as the “peak” emotional experiences that some people have?

The rational gospel

Read aloud Matthew 12:1–8. How does this passage demonstrate a rational, thinking response to God?

Matthew's gospel is considered the “rational” gospel. Ask participants to browse through the gospel, reading aloud some of the sub-titles. Encourage them to share what they know about this gospel, what they notice as they browse, what parts are familiar. If possible read together a short description about the content and writing style of Matthew, such as from the introduction to the book in a Bible or from a commentary.

The gospel's author reveals a liking for order and logic. He links and parallels Old Testament stories with stories about Jesus, marshalling arguments and evidence as if to prove Old Testament prophecies are fulfilled in Jesus. He shows concern with the law. His favourite word is “righteousness,” which we sometimes translate as “justice.”

Have participants divide into small groups and choose a favourite passage from Matthew to read and discuss. Identify the thoughts and reasoning of the characters. What does the passage say about responding to God?

Hymns

Look at some verses in the following hymns.

How long will you forget me, Lord (#6)
Teach me, O Lord, your way of truth (#80)
Thy word is a lamp unto my feet (#496)

What other hymns include reasoning and logic as a response to God? Choose one or two to sing.

Prayer exercises

1 Debate as a blue prayer

Divide into two groups, having participants choose whether they want to be “God-Defenders” or “Devil Advocates.” Invite each group to amass evidence for or against this statement:

“There exists a good, all-powerful God who loves each one of us individually.”

Establish some simple guidelines and time limits. Then have the groups debate the issue. Afterwards ask participants to comment on this experience. Who had trouble with this exercise? Some people may be very resistant to this exercise—identify and discuss this.

2 Extraverted and introverted blue prayers

Look at Table 3. Give everyone time and space to do one of the extraverted or introverted blue prayers. Some people may want to pray in pairs.

Table 3: Examples of Blue Prayers

Extraverted	Introverted
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Arguing about religion and spirituality with friends. • Working for political and social justice in the world. • Challenging hypocrisy, shallowness, evasion in the church and in the world. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Praying with the newspaper in hand or nightly news broadcast going on • Arguing with God, doubting God • Ruthlessly examining your conscience and your life • Thinking through your understanding of God, life, the universe

Discuss the experience of praying a blue prayer.

- Where had you experienced this kind of prayer previously?
- Share an experience of a blue prayer in church.
- Would you like this type of prayer to be used more often in worship services? Why or why not?

3. Praying for change

Invite participants to write down something they're really angry about in the world or in their lives, and how they want it to be different. Then gather standing in a circle, shoulders touching. The leader begins and ends the prayer, asking participants who wish to participate to pray using words and phrases they wrote down.



Closing

Invite everyone to open their workbook to the pages about the blue prayer. Talk about the differences between this prayer and the previous two. Note that the blue prayer helps people in responding to God. Encourage participants to try the suggested blue prayer exercises and bring their experiences and their workbook to the next gathering.

Invite one person to read prayerfully the following thesis while others listen.

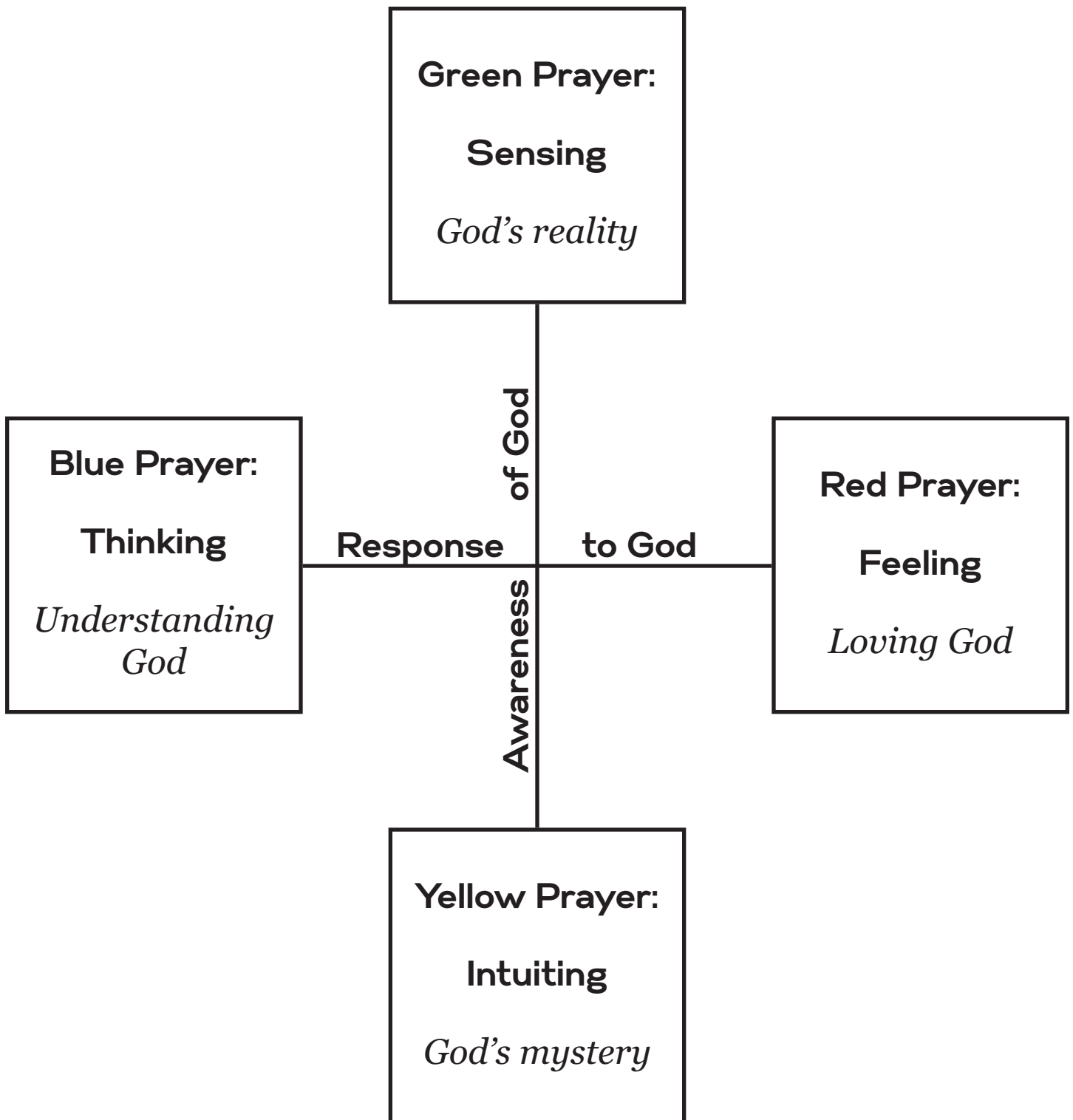
“There are many seeming contradictions and even obscurities in the innumerable writings of the church fathers. Our respect for their authority should not stand in the way of an effort on our part to come at the truth... These questions ought to serve to excite tender readers to a zealous inquiry into truth and so sharpen their wits. The master key of knowledge is, indeed, a persistent and frequent questioning. Aristotle, the most clear-sighted of all the philosophers, was desirous above all things else to arouse this questioning spirit, for in his *Categories* he exhorts a student as follows: ‘it may well be difficult to reach a positive conclusion in these matters unless they be frequently discussed. It is by no means fruitless to be doubtful on particular points.’ By doubting we come to examine, and by examining we reach the truth.”

—From *Sic et Non* by Peter Abelard (1079–1142)

Session 4: Response to God

Red Prayer

The Feeling Prayer



Gathering

Welcome everyone and share current news. Invite participants to review their experiences with the thinking prayer, the blue prayer, perhaps referring to notes in their workbooks.

Opening

Listen as one person prayerfully reads aloud the following words.

“Loving tenderness abounds for all
from the darkest
to the most eminent one
beyond the stars.”

—From the chants of Hildegard von Bingen (1098–1179)

Feeling

You will need:

- Newsprint and markers.

Brainstorm and list on the newsprint all the different kinds of love that participants can think of (e.g. a parent's love, a friend's, first crush, erotic love, a child's love, a pet's, a craving or an addiction, respect and affection for a colleague).

Divide into small groups to discuss.

- 1 Which type of love is most like God's love for us? Our love for God?
- 2 Share reactions to this statement: God's love encompasses all these different kinds of love.

Then take turns reading aloud the statements about the red prayer.

The red prayer is

- The feeling prayer; it is warm, emotional, unreasonable.
- Prayed when one has experienced the love of God and responds with an outpouring of love back to God and out towards the world.

- An “affective” prayer—the prayer of affection, of the heart.
- An expression and response to the personal, intimate relationship we can have with a loving God.
- The prayer of supplication and intercession. This is usually what people mean when they say, “I’m praying for you.” It’s what most of us think of when we feel guilty for not praying enough, for not praying for specific people or causes. This is also the most familiar form of prayer for most people.

Scripture

An emotional response to God

Have one person read aloud Psalm 100. Talk about how the psalmist conveys his feelings. What does he suggest people do to respond to God?

Divide into two groups with one reading and discussing 1 John 4:7–12, 20–21 and the other reading Matthew 25:34–45.



- What are the emotions expressed in the passage?
- What do these writers suggest we do to respond to God?

Come together and ask each group’s spokesperson to summarize their comments. Ask participants what they think are similarities and differences in the response to God of people practicing Christianity, Judaism, Islam, Buddhism, Hinduism or other religions of interest to the group? If there is interest, plan how more information could be gathered and when the group might discuss this further.

The feeling gospel

Read aloud Luke 7:36–47. How are feelings revealed in this passage?

Ask participants to browse through Luke’s gospel, reading aloud some of the sub-titles. Encourage them to share what they know about this gospel, what they notice as they browse, what parts are familiar. If possible read together a short description about the content and writing style of the author, such as from the introduction to the book in a Bible or from a commentary.

This gospel focuses on the poor with stories advocating on behalf of the poor, the oppressed and the suffering. The author describes a message of God's good news that extends to everyone—Jews, Gentiles, tax-collectors, foreigners, women and children. Some well-known stories and parables are recorded only in Luke, such as the Prodigal Son and the Good Samaritan. Underlying both parables is the message of the immensity of God's love that we are to imitate.

Have participants divide into small groups and choose one of these parables or a favourite passage in Luke. Identify the feelings. Comment on what it says about responding to God's love.

Hymns

Look at some verses in the following hymns.

We are one in the Spirit (#471)
Amazing grace (#670)
When the poor ones (#762)

Trivia

Question: What's the shortest verse in the Bible?

Answer: "Jesus wept."
(John 11:35 from the King James Version)

What other hymns include emotional responses to God? Choose one or two to sing.

Prayer exercises

1 Extraverted or introverted red prayer

Look at Table 4. Give everyone time and space to do one of the extraverted or introverted red prayers. Some people may want to do this in pairs or small groups.

Table 4: Examples of Red Prayers

Extraverted	Introverted
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Praying with others.• Performing acts of love, charity and service in the world.• Loving and caring for others.• Singing praise and worshipping.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Praying for individuals or specific causes.• Experiencing an intimate connection with God and God's love.

Discuss the experience of praying a red prayer.

- Where had you experienced this kind of prayer previously?
- Share an experience of a red prayer in church.
- Would you like this type of prayer to be used more often in worship services? Why or why not?



2. Prayer of Intercession

Stand in a circle to pray asking everyone to think about people and situations that they want to pray for. Invite everyone to hold hands or touch shoulders, explaining that participants will take turns going around the circle, with those who wish, praying aloud by naming or describing a situation. When each person finishes praying, he or she squeezes the next person's hand or nudges their shoulder. When possible, after a person's spoken or unspoken prayer, the whole group will say "God, hear our prayer." Ask someone to start.

Closing

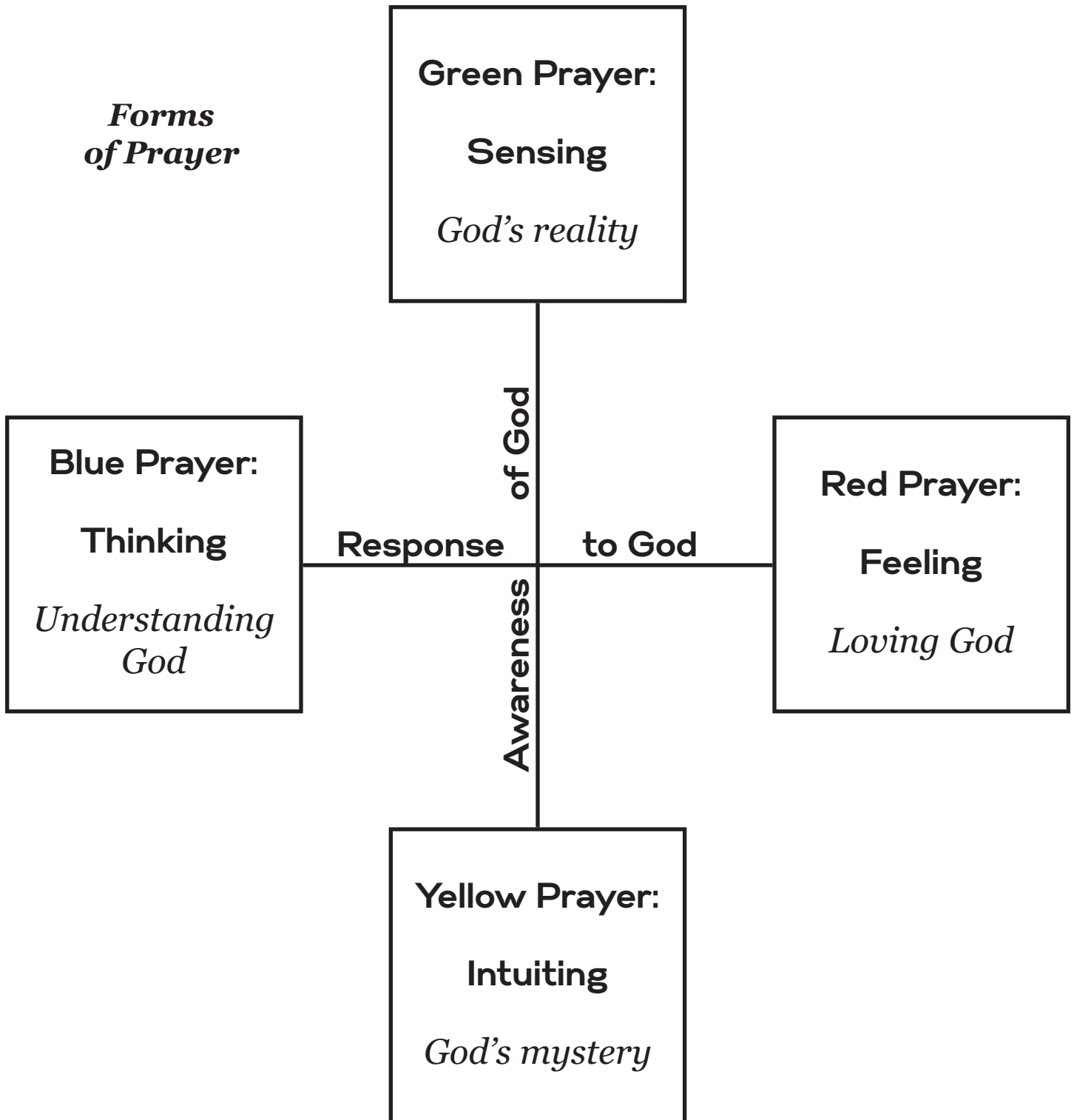
Invite everyone to open their workbook to the pages about the red prayer. Talk about the differences between the blue and red prayers while recognizing that they both help people respond to God. Encourage participants to try the red prayer exercises suggested and bring their experiences and their workbook to the next gathering.

Invite one person to read prayerfully the following poem while others listen.

Wilt thou love God as He thee? then digest,
 My Soul, this wholesome meditation,
 How God the Spirit, by Angels waited on
 In heaven, doth make his Temple in thy breast.
 The Father having begot a Son most blest,
 And still begetting—for he ne'er begun—
 Hath deign'd to choose thee by adoption,
 Co-heir to his glory, and Sabbath's endless rest.
 And as a robb'd man, which by search doth find
 His stolen stuff sold, must lose or buy it again,
 Us whom He had made, and Satan stole, unbind.
 'Twas much, that man was made like God before,
 But, that God should be made like man, much more.

—From *Holy Sonnet XV* by John Donne (1572–1631)

Session 5: Wrap-Up



Gathering

Welcome everyone and share current news. Invite participants to review their experiences with the red prayer, the feeling prayer, perhaps referring to notes in their workbooks. Then invite them to summarize briefly the four different prayer forms.

Opening

Listen as one person prayerfully reads aloud the following thesis.

“To pray your way does not mean choosing what is congenial to you and discarding anything else. Praying your way means having the courage to face the truth about yourself and the faith to love yourself as a gift from God. It means learning to go with rather than against the grain of your personality. It also means desiring what God desires for you, which may or may not be what is at present congenial to you.”

—From *Pray Your Way* by Bruce Duncan (p. 70)

Voting

You will need:

- Slips of paper and pens.

Have participants sit in a wide circle with space between them. Give everyone five slips of paper and a pen. Explain that some questions (below) will be asked. They must decide which prayer they would choose, write the colour of the prayer on a slip of paper without others seeing, and then turn it face down in front of them. Once everyone is ready, everyone turns over their papers to show their answers. Have someone record the answers.

Questions

- 1 Which prayer form do you appreciate the most?
- 2 Which prayer form do you appreciate the least?
- 3 Which prayer form would you like to try using more?
- 4 Which prayer form is most commonly used in church?
- 5 Which prayer form is not done well in church?

Review the results and discuss.

- Which result surprised you? Why?
- Do your personal prayer practices fit your personality? Explain.
- Prayer is most often an introverted exercise. How do you think that might affect people's experiences and preferences?

Scripture

Many of Paul's letters to early Christians addressed the tensions caused by growing diversity in their faith communities. Read these passages and identify the individual differences or gifts.

Romans 12:4–8
1 Corinthians 12
Ephesians 4:1–16

Discuss how our individual personalities reflect God.

Hymns

Look at some verses in the following hymns. What form of prayer coincides with them?

God be in my head (#572)
Christ, you call us all to service (#585)
We have this ministry (#590)

Choose one or two hymns to sing.

Prayer exercises

1 Personal response

Plan how you might set aside time to develop your personal prayer relationship with God. Look through your workbook, reflecting on the experiences of different forms of prayer. Consider how you might use at least two forms of prayer in the



coming days and weeks. Give yourself a target date after which you will reflect again on your prayer experiences.

2 Community Response

Look at an order of service of a traditional worship service in your church. Silently, reflect on these questions:

1. How can more forms of prayer be included in worship services?
2. How can information about the different types of prayers be shared in a way that is not prescriptive or authoritative?
3. How can the graphic of the four prayer forms be shared?

Together plan a worship service that will introduce the congregation to the four different prayer forms.

- How will the service be structured? For example, four prayer centres can be set up for the congregation to go to at specified times during the worship. What are some other possible ways?
- Draw on participants' experiences—during these sessions and recorded in their workbooks—to compile prayers, scripture passages and hymns that you might use.
- To whom do you need to speak about planning such a service?
- Assign responsibilities and plan to meet again.

Remember to get feedback after the service from a variety of people—people of all ages, clergy and lay, male and female. Some evaluation questions might be:

- What helped you pray and worship?
- What made it difficult for you to pray and worship? Why?
- How can the church continue to encourage worshippers to develop their prayer relationship with God?



Closing prayer

Listen as one person prayerfully reads aloud the following words:

Red, blue, green and yellow, all prayer is God's initiative.
Your prayer is always response to God.
There is no one correct way of responding to God in prayer.
Your prayer is a living, growing, developing relationship with God.
You will pray in different ways at different times
and at different stages of life.
You have the green and yellow, blue and red
gifts of prayer in all the colours of the rainbow
to show your covenant love for God
and receive God's covenant love for you.

—From *Pray Your Way* by Bruce Duncan (p. 125)





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