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If you love liturgy, this book is for you.
If you don’t know what liturgy is, this book is also for you.
Whether you are over-churched or under-churched, a proud evangelical, a recovering evangelical, or not evangelical at all; whether you are high-church, low-church, or no-church, a skeptic or a Pentecostal; whether you have found a community or have burnt out on community; this book is for you.
This is a different kind of book. It’s not a book you try to pick up and read straight through. In fact, this book is not designed to be read alone. It is a book filled with songs, prayers, ideas, and memories that are meant to be spoken aloud and shared together in some form of community. That “community” may be your biological family or a small group of friends. It could mean gathering folks in your public housing unit or dorm room, in your village or cul-de-sac each morning or evening for prayer. For the early Church it meant meeting in homes and as congregations in local assemblies. Whatever the case, this is a book about “we” not “me.”
“They met daily in each other’s homes.”

Common Prayer
There are so many different divisions of Christianity — Greek, Russian, and Serbian Orthodox, Roman Catholic, Anglican, Reformed, Presbyterian, Baptist and Anabaptist, African Methodist Episcopal, Pentecostal and Non-denominational, Mennonites and Quakers. By one count, there are over 38,000 thousand Christian denominations. Many people have said that the greatest barrier to becoming a Christian is all the division they see within the Church.
God’s deepest longing is for the Church to be united as one Body. Jesus’s longest recorded prayer is that we would be “One as God is one.” As one old preacher said, “We gotta get it together, because Jesus is coming back … and he’s coming for a bride, not a harem.”
God only has one Church.
This prayer book has been a collaboration of people from many different streams of Christianity, which all converge into one river … if you look back far enough up-stream, at least.

Folks are bound to ask if this prayer book is for Catholics or for Protestants. Our answer is, “Yes, it is.” We’ve drawn on some of the oldest and richest traditions of Christian prayer. And we’ve tried to make them dance.

Our prayer-life is a way of connecting ourselves to the rest of the body of Christ around the world. Any hour of any day many of these prayers are being prayed in some corner of the earth. It is a way of connecting ourselves to the past, present, and future and recognizing that these prayers go all the way back to Jesus and beyond. How many things do we have in our treasure chest that are over 100 years old? We’re not just talking “best hits” from the ’60s, ’70s and ’80s, but from the 1800s and the 300s. Many of these prayers and songs are over a thousand years old.

A Word about Liturgy

Liturgy comes from the Greek word leitourgia meaning “public worship”. When we hear “public” many of us think of large meetings like Sunday morning services, and, while it can be a big group, it doesn’t have to be. After all, “public” shares the same root word as “pub”, and it really just refers to a gathering of people to share life (and maybe a drink) — a get together that’s always open to having another stranger join in. Jesus promised that wherever two or three of us gather in his name, he’ll be there with us. That’s enough of a “pub” for Jesus to join in (whether there is wine or not).

For those of us who are new to liturgy, it’s noteworthy that, though there are some variations in different traditions, there is an overall structure to the liturgy that is very similar and consistent around the world among a majority of the Christian Church — especially Catholics, Anglicans, Lutherans, Presbyterians, Methodists and others. It has been said that if the covers were removed from the major worship books of the late twentieth century, it would be difficult to tell which book belongs to which church body. The major traditions pretty much follow the same script.

When we first discover that there is a very organized cycle of readings — a “lectionary,” as it’s often called — it can feel like magic, or a conspiracy. We may hear a pastor preach from the same text we read in morning prayer and think, “How in the world? The Spirit must be moving!” And, in fact, the Spirit is moving (but maybe in a more organized way than we first guessed).

Some liturgical types smile when evangelicals “discover” the miracle of the liturgy. But it is a miracle nonetheless. So lean in and listen as you pray these prayers. Sometimes it may feel like you can hear the Church’s heart beat as you pray in a way you never have before.

The readings of the Church are arranged in a three-year cycle so that we hear the entire biblical story — creation and fall, the exodus, the captivity and return, the promise and advent of Messiah, the coming of the Holy Spirit, and the promise of the coming kingdom. These cycles are repeated all over the world (so Christians in Africa are reading the same texts as Christians in Latin America). Since Common Prayer is designed to be repeated each year, we have done our best to honor these cycles, though we’ve squeezed them into one year of readings.

Participating in the liturgy of the worldwide Christian community, whether on a Sunday morning or at another time, is more than attending a service or a prayer meeting. It is about entering a story. It is about orienting our lives around what God has been doing throughout history. And it is about being sent forth into the world to help write the next chapter of that story. Wandering the world in search of meaning and purpose, we may not even realize how we desperately need a story. But we know we’ve found something priceless when we find ourselves in God’s narrative.

Liturgy is not about getting indoctrinated. Doctrines are hard things to love. It’s not even really about education. Liturgy at its core is not about learning facts memorizing phrases. The imagination of the liturgy is about soul wisdom — it is about nourishing our souls just as we do our bodies; it is about disciplining our spirits just as we exercise our muscles.

It’s sort of like family dinner — hopefully you get some nutritious food, but more than nutrition, family dinner is about family, love, community. Liturgy is kind of like family dinner with God. We will probably have a good meal, but it’s about more than just eating. Liturgical theologian Aidan Kavanaugh says it well: “The liturgy, like the feast, exists not to educate but to seduce people into participating in common activity of the highest order, where one is freed to learn things which cannot be taught.”

Certainly we are learning as we pray, as we listen to Scripture, as we learn the songs and stories. But liturgy is also about participating in the process — active prayer, active worship. As you will see, liturgy offers us an invitation not just to observe, but to participate. “O Lord let my soul rise up to meet you” invites us to respond “as the day rises to meet the sun.” When we hear, “God is good,” we want to call back, “All the time.” It is a dialogue, a divine drama in which we are invited to be the actors. We become a part of God’s story. We sing God’s songs.

Their story becomes our story.
Welcome to a Whole New World

Liturgy is a workout for the imagination, because we are invited to see the reality of the universe through a new lens. Liturgy offers us another way of seeing the world. The liturgical imagination is different from the imagination of films or video games, though every once in a while you catch a film that gives you a hint of another world (like when Neo takes the red pill in the Matrix).

In Common Prayer we enter a counter-intuitive story. It helps us see ourselves as part of a holy counterculture, a people being “set apart” from the world around us (and the world inside us) in order to bear witness that another world is possible. We’re invited to become a peculiar people living into a different story and into different values than those we learn from the world’s markets and empires. In an individualistic culture, the liturgy helps us live a communal life. In an unstable, ever-changing world, the liturgy roots us in the eternal—something that was around long before us and will live long after us…a God who is the same yesterday and today and tomorrow, no matter what happens on Wall Street.

The liturgy’s counter-intuitive nature may feel a little culturally strange at first. It is weird enough in our culture just to get together to sing songs (unless you are going to a concert or playing Rock Band on the Wii). Singing and praying together can feel awkward, especially if it is not Thanksgiving or Christmas. But liturgy is meant to be an interruption. It disrupts our reality and re-focuses it on God. It reshapes our perceptions and lives around new rhythms, new holy-days, a whole new Story.

What we discover is not just a poetic genius behind the words, but a community in, with, and under the words. Just as people of the world pledge allegiance to flags or sing national anthems with pride and adoration, these creeds, songs, and prayers are ways that we proclaim our allegiance and sing our adoration not to nation, but to another Kingdom altogether. That may sound a little esoteric or ethereal, like heaven is less real than the stuff of earth. In liturgical prayer, the only Church is a megachurch, one an escape. Just the opposite, it is a warning not to escape from the eternal into the stuff of earth. But liturgy is actually drawing us out of the world of counterfeit power and splendor and drawing us into another reality. As we pray, we are lifted up into a place beyond the building or city we are in. We are living in the “city of God,” which isn’t something you can find with a GPS.

In prayer and worship we can feel like we are transported to another place, taken into another world. When we say “Oh Lord, let my soul rise up to meet you,” we are ascending beyond this world and all that is temporary. It is not an escape. Just the opposite, it is a warning not to escape from the eternal into the stuff of earth. In liturgical prayer, the only Church is a megachurch, one Body with all sorts of cells, because we are surrounded by the thousands of folks who are singing and praying with us. And as we pray, we are lifted up into a place beyond the building or city we are in. We are living in the “city of God,” which isn’t something you can find with a GPS.

the Trinity, then it is also the core of who we are. “Who am I?” cannot be answered without asking “Who are we?” We cannot properly know ourselves until we conceive of God and our neighbor.

Liturgy invites us into a new “we”. The Church actually reflects the most diverse community in the world — white, black, and all shades in between, rich and poor, all walks of life…called together to bring our lives and our cultures and become a new community.

The world the liturgy reveals may not seem relevant at first glance, but it turns out that the world it reveals is more real than the one we inhabit day by day. It outlasts McDonalds and Wal-Mart, America and South Africa. The songs and readings and prayers of the liturgy are more ancient and true than any culture or empire.

The liturgy presents a form of worship that transcends our time and place. It does not negate culture, but creates a new one. Certainly we can see the fingerprints of the cultures from which it has come—from the Mediterranean, Greco-Roman, North African, German, Frankish, Anglo Saxon. But we are formed into a people who are singing songs and prayers that transcend place and nation. Though its forms may change, the liturgy will never grow old. It has been meaningfully prayed by bakers, housewives, tailors, teachers, philosophers, priests, monks, kings, slaves, and revolutionaries for centuries.

This is the story of the Israelites. Their story is our story. The God who saved the Hebrew children saves us today. When we say “Father Abraham” it does not need to feel like artificial words on paper, but like we are discovering lost relatives. Abraham and Sarah are our grandparents. And their God is our God. God is the same yesterday, today, and forevermore. When we say we believe in “the communion of saints” in the apostles creed (one of the oldest declarations of our faith) we are saying that we are in community with those who have gone before and those who will come after. We are one in Christ, a union so strong and eternal nothing can separate us … not even death, and certainly not time or space.

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Welcome to a New Time Zone

Every sturdy society has created its own calendar according to its own values. For some time now, Western civilization has used the Julian and Gregorian calendars, which are influenced largely by the Roman Empire’s traditions (“August” referring to Caesar Augustus and “January” referring to the god Janus, etc.). The United States’ civil religion uses this calendar, mixing in its own set of holy days, most notably its date of inception (July 4) and its remembrances of human sacrifice (Memorial Day and Veterans Day). Consumer culture always threatens to monopolize the feast days when the Church remembers saints like Nicholas, Valentine, and Patrick, turning them into little more than days to buy stuff in the name of cultural idols like Santa, the Easter bunny, and green leprechauns. Too often we have forgotten the lives of the people for whom these days are named.

But if we in the church are going to take our citizenship in heaven seriously, we must reshape our minds by marking our calendars differently. We must remember the holidays of the biblical narrative rather than the festivals of the Caesars, and celebrate feast days to remember saints rather than war heroes and presidents. Instead of thinking of our inception as July 4th, we would be best served to know that our inception as the church was at Pentecost. Our firework should go off a few months earlier than America’s. And instead of commemorating people who sacrifice themselves in order to kill for their country, we will find a deeper and more powerful observance in the Christian holiday of Good Friday, the day when we remember that Jesus willingly died for everyone in the world, even his enemies, instead of killing them to “change the world.”

Or consider our holy season of Epiphany, when the church celebrates the civil disobedience of the magi, who, coming from outside of Caesar’s realm, honored a different kind of king and sneaked away from the violent Herod. One of our lesser known holidays is the Feast of the Holy Innocents (December 28), when the church remembers Herod’s genocide of children in his attempt to root out any would-be incumbents. On such a day, we take in the harsh truth that there was and still is a political cost to the incarnation of God’s peaceable love. Such a holy feast day of mourning provokes our own political memory to communally and publicly remember the Iraqis (around one million) who have died since the US invasion in 2003. On such a day, we don’t consider those deaths to be the necessary sacrifice of “collateral damage,” we lament their deaths as acts of our contemporary Herods.

Many of us have learned history by studying wars and violence; we organize it by the reigns of kings and presidents. But in Jesus, we reorder history. We date it from his visit to earth and examine it through a new lens, identifying with the tortured, the displaced, the refugee, and the revolutions on the margins of empires.

We enter a new time zone, where it can feel like there is a “cloud of witnesses” surrounding us, praying for us, cheering us on from eternity. It should feel like we are singing “Holy, Holy, Holy” with all of the people of God who have come before us. And our own past becomes bigger than ourselves. The day the “world changed” was not September 11 but 33 AD. The most significant event in my past is not a shameful transgression but the death and resurrection of Jesus. My past is not defined by my sin but by Christ’s victory.

God’s story is the lens through which we understand our current world. It affects how we interact with evil and how we hold our possessions. The future, like the past, is no longer held hostage. We are no longer defined by the anxieties of our age. We know how the story ends and it is beautiful. This is the Good News that transcends the nightly news. Even more certain than who the next president will be is the reality that Christ will come again.

Our lives are filled with overlapping calendars and dates. For some, the football season is their favorite time of year, and they won’t miss Monday night football for anything. Football has its own holy days and landmark moments, its own hall of fame (and hall of shame). So does the Church. And for those of us who are following the way of Jesus, part of what we do is begin to orient our lives around a different calendar and history (that’s not to say you can’t watch a good football game from time to time).

As the worldwide Church, we have our own holy days, as you will see in the morning prayers — days like the Presentation, the Annunciation, the Visitation, and the Transfiguration. These are our holidays or “holy days” as a Church. We also have our own hall of fame (and hall of shame). There will be days where we highlight different women and men throughout Church history (often on the days they died) who are exemplary models of Christian discipleship … not to mention really fascinating people who will inspire us and whose character and courage we want to rub off on us, as they points us to Christ. More on that later.

The Church’s calendar weaves in and out of the world around us. It is not that the Christian calendar have their basis in the world’s calendar. For instance, the date of Christmas comes before the winter solstice, the date of Easter comes before the spring equinox. It’s interesting too that the natural seasons can also enhance and expand the Christian calendar. The Church’s holiday of Good Friday, the day when we remember that Jesus died for everyone in the world, even his enemies, instead of killing them to “change the world.”

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they go to the beach on Christmas rather than sit by the fire). But as we build our life around God’s story, we are reminded that this Story is the center of the universe.

Much of the Church has created a life with common prayer at the center. Our days begin in the evening as we light the Christ candle in darkness, then move to greeting the morning with resurrection praise, and then come back to prayer at noon to re-center ourselves in the midst of activity. (So we proclaim as we gather to pray, “Christ has died, Christ is risen, Christ will come again.”) Morning and evening prayer are the touchstones of common prayer, going all the way back to ancient Judaism. The Didache, a collection of practical instructions for the early church, instructs believers to say the Lord’s Prayer three times a day. We’ve stuck with the three times of prayer in this book. But it’s worth noting that some monastic communities have taken the psalm that says “seven times a day do I praise Thee” quite literally. They even get up once in the middle of the night to pray together.

The daily cycle of evening, morning, and midday prayer is like a heartbeat for the global church, passing from one time zone to the next each day so that we as a people can, as the apostle Paul taught us, pray without ceasing. But this daily rhythm is but a “wheel within a wheel” of the weekly cycle which begins on Sunday (Resurrection Day), remembers Jesus gathering the twelve on Thursday, suffers with Christ on Friday (hence many Christians fast), and makes preparation on Saturday for the Great Feast after the resurrection. And then we do it all again … and again. Common Prayer honors this weekly rhythm in its seven day cycle of evening prayers.

But the weekly cycle also happens within an annual rhythm of seasons—Advent to prepare for Christ’s coming, Christmas to celebrate the Prince of Peace, Epiphany to remember the Light (a light outsiders often recognize before we do), Lent to confess our resistance to the Light, Holy Week to remember Christ’s suffering, Easter to celebrate resurrection’s power, the Birthday of the Church at Pentecost (a good time for pyrotechnics—be careful), and Ordinary Time to bring us back to the beginning again. These are our seasons in the Church.

This peculiar way of counting time teaches us to look at our days differently. No longer do we simple see dates as June 24 or October 6. Now they are John the Baptist’s day and Francis of Assisi’s day. No longer are our seasons simply fall and spring but Advent and Lent. Our history is different from the history told by nations and empires—our heroes are not the pioneers of colonialism and capitalism like Columbus and Rockefeller, but the pioneers

2Many thoughtful authors have helped correct our revisionist history and our amnesia about the ugly parts. For instance, in his book Lies My Teacher Told Me, James W. Loewen points out that Columbus and the Spaniard conquerors approached the native Americans and would read aloud what came to be called “The Requirement” that went like this: “I implore you to recognize the Church as a lady and in the name of the Pope take the King as lord of this land and obey his mandates. If you do no do it, I tell you that with the help of God I will enter powerfully against you all. I will make war everywhere and every way that I can. I will subject you to the yoke of compassion like Mother Teresa and Oscar Romero. And our holy-days are different from the holidays of pop-culture and the dominatrix of power.

The rhythms of the liturgy are not so much something that has been created as something that has been discovered over the centuries. Many of our current patterns of prayer and worship began to take shape as early as the second century. Especially in ancient oral cultures, they were ways of remembering the story. And in a world of twitter and blogs and text messages, these words and songs and prayers feel more rooted and eternal than the virtual truth that is here today and gone tomorrow.

The Church calendar begins not on January 1 but with Advent, four weeks before Christmas (Advent means “the coming”), as the world waits pregnant with hope. So you’ll notice our morning prayers begin at the end of the world’s calendar year (in December) because we begin with the birth of our Savior Jesus around whom the entire calendar and world revolve. Everything in the Kingdom of God is upside down and backwards—the last are first the first are last, the poor are blessed and the peacemakers are the children of God—and the year begins with Advent rather than January.

Select any day of the year and you can find its liturgical significance. In fact, one of the cool things about the Christian calendar is that every day is a holy day. Holidays are not just days you get off work, but days you remember God’s redemptive work in the world.

We also realize that we are not called to be so heavenly minded that we are no earthly good. We are not to ignore the calendar that the rest of the world lives by, but we are to hold our Calendar alongside of it, and to realize that all of history hinges around the death and resurrection of Jesus 2000 years ago. For this reason, just as we begin morning prayer remembering saints and holy days, this book will also remember significant dates in world history—dates that mark great strides for freedom and grave injustices we dare not forget.

As we look at the Christian calendar we are reminded that we are in the world, but not of it. We are citizens of the kingdom that transcends time, but we sojourn on a time-bound earth. Without liturgical time, we can easily forget our eternal identity. We can get lost in the hustle and bustle of business and efficiency that shapes our culture and society. Likewise, without the and obedience to the Church and to his majesty. I will take your women and children and make them slaves … The deaths and injuries that you will receive form here on will be your own fault and not that of his majesty nor of the gentlemen that accompany me.” Part of what we hope to do in this book, rather than read the Bible with imperial eyes, is to read the empire with biblical eyes.
So here’s what you are holding in your hands.

**Evening Prayers**

There are seven evening prayers, one for each evening of the week, to be repeated throughout the year. We created these evening prayers in the hopes that, just as the morning prayers allow us to greet the morning together, the evening prayers would allow us to retire from the day together. They are simple prayers that should be able to be prayed in 15 – 20 minutes. The evenings have an element of confession — the confession of our sins to one another, and the confession of our faith together. And we have grafted into them some of the core creeds and Scriptural songs that are hundreds and even thousands of years old.

**Morning Prayers**

There are 365 morning prayers, one for each day of the year. They are designed to be prayed in the morning together, as we wake up and greet the day, and you should be able to pray them in less than half an hour. The morning prayers invite participation through responsorial psalms to read together and songs to sing. If you do pray by yourself, we hope you’ll hear the echoes of others’ voices and remember you are not alone.

As is the case with most prayer books, the prayers are designed to have one person lead. Feel free to rotate who that person is, but it is usually helpful to have one person get things rolling. Prayers in normal type are to be said by the leader; prayers in bold type can be said by everyone together. Words in italic type are headings or instructions and are not meant to be read aloud. Also, a colon (:) with a space before and after it ( : ) indicates a pause. Here’s a visual key for future reference:

- **Normal type** = to be read by single voice/leader
- **Bold type** = to be read by community
- **Italics type** = instructions/headings, not to be read
- A colon (:) = pause

Each month has a little “month at a glance” introduction to kick it off, featuring a lovely piece of art, reflections on one of the twelve “Marks of New Monasticism,” and a list of suggested reading (and sometimes viewing or listening) for the month. Several years ago, we held a little “ecclesial council” of sorts, a gathering of dozens of communities, old and young, to try to identify the DNA of the current renewal we see in the church. As we tried to listen to the Spirit together, twelve distinctive marks of that renewal jumped out at us. As we worked on this book, those twelve marks seemed to flow well with the months of the year.

And at the end of each month, we list a few practical ideas for becoming the answer to our prayers. Too often we use prayer as a substitute for action. But it seems that much of the time when we ask God to do something about pain and suffering, we hear God say back to us, “I already did do something—I made you.” Our little lists are meant to provoke the imagination with ideas on how we might put our prayers into action and our faith into practice. They’re meant as brainstorm to get the gears going, so feel free to add to those lists your own recipes for holy mischief.

Many of the morning prayers begin with a glance back into the past — a “This Day in History” — where we can remember significant moments for peace and justice over the centuries. We will be able to greet the each day remembering things like: “This is the day that Nagasaki was bombed . . . that Rosa Parks went to jail . . . that Dr. King was killed . . . that Mandela was released from prison . . .” One of the unique contributions of this prayer book is to weave into our prayer life the ongoing struggle for peace and justice, to hold the Bible in one hand and the newspaper in the other. Clearly, the list is not exhaustive, but we did our best, with a very diverse group of friends, to identify global events, both magnificent and terrible, that have been landmark moments . . . especially as we pray for God’s Kingdom to come on earth.

Throughout the morning prayers we remember different saints who have exemplified what our faith is about. Usually we recognize them on their birthday or on the day of their death (another birthday, especially for those who were martyred). We have been careful to celebrate the legacy both of Saints with a big S (recognized officially by Catholic and Orthodox Church) and other “saints” with a little s (not officially recognized by Catholics and Orthodox, but who give us incredible glimpses of faithful discipleship).

Selecting the readings was a little tricky, since the traditional liturgy of the Church has a three year cycle of Scripture. We’ve done our best to honor these cycles, as well as the Psalms that we use each morning. You will notice that you move through the 150 psalms each month (skipping quite a few, of course), but getting some of every psalm throughout the whole year. The Old and New Testament readings for each day also move consecutively through biblical books, with the occasional interruption for a special holiday with a fixed date. For those who use Common Prayer year after year, you might choose to read through other books of Scripture some years.

One of the other tricky things we had to resolve was how to merge the World Calendar with the Church Calendar, since many holy days like Easter do not fall on the same calendar day each year. For ease of use, we chose to use calendar dates as our primary skeleton, but that has also meant that we created a few additional prayers to use as supplements during these holy days and holy seasons. Whenever Holy Week comes around (the week before Easter Sunday), you can leave the dated morning prayers and use the morning
prayers for Palm Sunday, Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, Holy Saturday, and Easter.

Finally, each morning prayer has a quote, a nugget of wisdom from voices throughout Church history. We have done our best to create a chorus of voices from throughout the world and across the centuries. Not all of these quotes are from saints, and we don’t mean to endorse everyone we’ve quoted. The quotes we’ve chosen to remember in the context of prayer are words that inspire us to shout the gospel with our whole lives.

**Midday Prayer**

The Midday prayer is meant to be a way of carving out space from the busyness of our days, re-centering us on Christ as our single focus. It is a simple prayer that comes from various ancient prayers and monastic orders, and can be prayed in about 10 minutes. Midday prayer would be a great way to gather co-workers or colleagues and be refreshed for the rest of the day. We crafted it in a simple and beautiful form that would continue to “dance” despite its repetition each day, and there are elements of this prayer that you could take and integrate into your day or even pray in a bathroom stall if your life prohibits a noontime break for prayer. We hope for those who use it daily that it is easily memorizable.

**Occasional Prayers**

In the back of the book you will find some prayers, songs, and rituals for use throughout the year for special occasions. There are prayers for house blessing, healing, birth, and death … sending people out on adventures and gathering folks for meals. You’ll also find some little additions here that can spice things up as you try to pray without ceasing (while doing dishes!), and you’ll find the prayers for various seasons like Lent and Advent. A few of them we created. Some of them we gathered from Church history, and others we just added a little contemporary fingerprint to make them dance for us today.

**Songbook**

We asked folks from many different traditions to give us their “best hits,” — the songs they sing in the shower and have written on their hearts. We’ve collected those classics and compiled them into a cookbook here with the words and music — everything from African-American spirituals and freedoms songs to Taize chants and old hymns. Most of them are used in morning prayers, but this collection alone is quite a gift as we seek to learn each other’s songs and sing them as one Body all over the world.

**Website**

As big as this book is, we could not fit everything we wanted to include on its pages (and that’s not even counting the gems we overlooked or haven’t yet discovered). What is more, some songs have to be heard, not just seen on paper. And besides the limits of a book, we also recognize the many ways the Internet can help people to connect across time and space (of course, it can also distract … but back to our point). So we have created a website to supplement Common Prayer. Here we will be able to more exhaustively include saints, dates, songs, prayers, and ideas that couldn’t fit in this book. So we hope you’ll check the website out and add your ideas to the mix.

www.commonprayer.net.

**Circle of Hope**

Praying in a circle or sitting around a table can be helpful, so we can see each other’s faces and remember that the center of our worship is Christ, not a pulpit. Truth is not simply imparted by a preacher or teacher; it is lived together in the context of community prayer, gathered around Jesus. Christ lived and prayed in community. Circles of Christians are gathered across the globe — in basements and living rooms, on street corners and in slums, in prisons and in palaces … holding hands and praying to the God of the universe to be with us.

So let us pray … and let us become the answer to our prayers.

**Acknowledgements**

In some ways this book feels like it has taken centuries to create — because it has.

There are lots of fingerprints on this book. Some of them are ancient … and there are far too many to name. But there are some more contemporary collaborators we do want to recognize. We have had a brilliant advisory team that gave us wisdom and counsel along the way. Thanks to Phyllis Tickle, Sr. Karen Mohan, Richard Rohr, Eliac Rosario-Cruz, and Andy Raine. We are especially grateful to Phyllis for her tremendous work on the Divine Hours, from which we benefited immensely. And we are grateful to Andy and the Northumbria community for creating *Celtic Daily Prayer*, and for their enthusiasm for this project. Both Phyllis and Andy allowed us to raid and pillage their wisdom and work.

As we sensed the Spirit’s motion in creating this book, we gathered a dozen or so folks in North Carolina from different traditions, many of them liturgy
and prayer experts (if there is such a thing). We put our hands together and said, “Let’s do it.” That set things in motion and many of their fingerprints are on this book. Thanks to Scott Bass and Roberta Mothershead, who hosted that gathering at Nazareth House, and Catherine and Pete Askew, Karen Sloan, Monica Klepac, Melanie Baffes, Katie Piche, Richard and Diana Twiss, Christine Sine, Scott Krueger, Mark Van Steenwyck, Chris Haw, Martin Shannon and the many others who contributed the songs and prayers that are written on their walls and in their hearts.

Joel Klepac, Jesce Walz, and Rick Beerhorst were our fantastic woodcut artists. Katie Jo Brotherton and Brian Gorman poured in countless hours along the way editing, notating, praying, and researching. We are grateful for our tremendous friend Angela Scheff and all the folks at Zondervan who have plotted and published the book.

And we have been your compilers. It has been an honor.

Now, add your fingerprints.

— Shane Claiborne, Jonathan Wilson-Hartgrove, and Enuma Okoro
Evening Prayer

Naked I came from my mother’s womb, and naked will I return. The Lord gives, and the Lord takes away. Blessed be the name of the Lord.

O God, come to my assistance: O Lord, make haste to help me.

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.

Kneeling  Lord, have mercy. Christ, have mercy. Lord, have mercy.

I confess to almighty God, and to you, my brothers and sisters, that I have sinned through my own fault, in my thoughts and in my words, in what I have done, and in what I have failed to do; and I ask you, my brothers and sisters, to pray for me to the Lord, our God.

Silence (or time to confess to God or to one another)

Rebuke me, O Lord, but not in your anger, lest I come to nothing.

Lord, have mercy. Christ, have mercy. Lord, have mercy. Amen.

A candle is lit during the following song
Walk in the light, the beautiful light. Come where the dew drops of mercy shine bright. Shine all around us by day and by night. Jesus, the light of the world.

O gracious Light, pure brightness of the ever living Father in heaven, O Jesus Christ, holy and blessed!

Now as we come to the setting of the sun, and our eyes behold the evening light, we sing your praises, O God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

You are worthy at all times to be praised by happy voices, O Son of God, O Giver of life, your glory fills the whole world.

In word or song

Declaration of Faith
We believe and trust in God the Father Almighty. We believe and trust in Jesus Christ, His Son. We believe and trust in the Holy Spirit. We believe and trust in the Three in One.

Prayers for Others
(following each request): Lord, hear our prayer.

Our Father

Magnificat (Mary’s Song)
My soul glorifies the Lord, my spirit rejoices in God my Savior. The Lord looks on me a lowly servant; henceforth all ages will call me blessed. The Almighty works marvels for me. Holy is God’s name! God’s mercy is from age to age, on those who are faithful. God puts forth an arm in strength and scatters the proud-hearted—casts the mighty from their thrones and raises the lowly. God fills the hungry with good things and sends the rich away empty, protecting Israel, God’s servant, remembering mercy, the mercy promised to our ancestors, to Abraham, Sarah and their children for ever.

Lord Jesus Christ, you have triumphed over the powers of death and prepared for us a place in the new Jerusalem. Grant that we, who have this day given thanks for your resurrection, may praise you in that City of which you are the light and where you live and reign forever and ever. Amen.

May the Lord bless us and keep us from all harm; and may God lead us to eternal life. Amen.

And forgive our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And do not bring us to the time of trial, but rescue us from the evil one. Amen.
Monday

Naked I came from my mother’s womb, and naked will I return.
The Lord gives, and the Lord takes away. Blessed be the name of
the Lord.

O God, come to my assistance: O Lord, make haste to help me.

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit,
as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.

Kneeling  Lord, have mercy. Christ, have mercy. Lord, have mercy.

I confess to almighty God,
and to you, my brothers and sisters,
that I have sinned through my own fault,
in my thoughts and in my words,
in what I have done,
and in what I have failed to do;
and I ask you, my brothers and sisters,
to pray for me to the Lord, our God.

Silence (or time to confess to God or to one another)

Rebuke me, O Lord, but not in your anger, lest I come to nothing.

Lord, have mercy. Christ, have mercy. Lord, have mercy. Amen.

A candle is lit during the following song
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Come where the dew drops of mercy shine bright.
Shine all around us by day and by night.
Jesus, the light of the world.

O gracious Light,
pure brightness of the ever living Father in heaven,
O Jesus Christ, holy and blessed!

Now as we come to the setting of the sun,
and our eyes behold the evening light,
we sing your praises, O God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

You are worthy at all times to be praised by happy voices,
O Son of God, O Giver of life,
your glory fills the whole world.
you will lead the people you have redeemed.
In your strength you will guide them
To your holy dwelling.

Lighten our darkness, we beg you, O Lord; and by your great mercy defend us from all perils and dangers of this night, for the love of your only Son, our Savior, Jesus Christ.

May the Lord bless us and keep us from all harm; and may God lead us to eternal life. Amen.

Tuesday

Naked I came from my mother’s womb, and naked will I return.
The Lord gives, and the Lord takes away. Blessed be the name of the Lord.

O God, come to my assistance: O Lord, make haste to help me.

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.

Kneeling Lord, have mercy. Christ, have mercy. Lord, have mercy.

I confess to almighty God, and to you, my brothers and sisters, that I have sinned through my own fault, in my thoughts and in my words, in what I have done, and in what I have failed to do; and I ask you, my brothers and sisters, to pray for me to the Lord, our God.

Silence (or time to confess to God or to one another)

Rebuke me, O Lord, but not in your anger, lest I come to nothing.

Lord, have mercy. Christ, have mercy. Lord, have mercy. Amen.

A candle is lit during the following song
Walk in the light, the beautiful light.
Come where the dew drops of mercy shine bright.
Shine all around us by day and by night.
Jesus, the light of the world.

O gracious Light,
pure brightness of the ever living Father in heaven,
O Jesus Christ, holy and blessed!

Now as we come to the setting of the sun,
and our eyes behold the evening light,
we sing your praises, O God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

You are worthy at all times to be praised by happy voices,
O Son of God, O Giver of life,
your glory fills the whole world.

In word or song
Praise God from whom all blessings flow.
Praise God all creatures here below.
Praise God above, ye heavenly host.
Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Amen.

Declaration of Faith

We believe and trust in God the Father Almighty.
We believe and trust in Jesus Christ, His Son.
We believe and trust in the Holy Spirit.
We believe and trust in the Three in One.

Prayers for Others
(following each request): Lord, hear our prayer.

Our Father

Magnificat (Mary’s Song)
My soul glorifies the Lord,
my spirit rejoices in God my Savior.
The Lord looks on me a lowly servant; henceforth all ages will call me blessed.
The Almighty works marvels for me. Holy is God’s name!
God’s mercy is from age to age, on those who are faithful.
God puts forth an arm in strength and scatters the proud-hearted —
casts the mighty from their thrones and raises the lowly.
God fills the hungry with good things and sends the rich away empty,
protecting Israel, God’s servant, remembering mercy,
the mercy promised to our ancestors,
Evening Prayer

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come. Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And do not bring us to the time of trial, but rescue us from the evil one. Amen.

I see the salvation you prepared for all peoples, a light of revelation for the Gentiles and glory to your people Israel.

Visit this place, O Lord, and drive far from it all snares of the enemy. Send your holy angels to dwell with us and preserve us in peace. And let your blessing be upon us always, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

May the Lord bless us and keep us from all harm; and may God lead us to eternal life. Amen.

Morning Prayer

I see the salvation you prepared for all peoples, a light of revelation for the Gentiles and glory to your people Israel.

Visit this place, O Lord, and drive far from it all snares of the enemy. Send your holy angels to dwell with us and preserve us in peace. And let your blessing be upon us always, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

May the Lord bless us and keep us from all harm; and may God lead us to eternal life. Amen.
Marks of New Monasticism
Locating Our Lives in the Abandoned Places of the Empire

Everything in our society teaches us to move away from suffering, to move out of neighborhoods where there is high crime, to move away from people who don’t look like us. But the gospel calls us to something altogether different. We are to laugh at fear, to lean into suffering, to open ourselves to the stranger. Advent is the season when we remember how Jesus put on flesh and moved into the neighborhood. God getting born in a barn reminds us that God shows up in the most forsaken corners of the earth.

Movements throughout church history have gone to the desert, to the slums, to the most difficult places on earth to follow Jesus. For some of us that means remaining in difficult neighborhoods that we were born into even though folks may think we are crazy for not moving out. For others it means returning to a difficult neighborhood after heading off to college or job training to acquire skills — choosing to bring those skills back to where we came from to help restore the broken streets. And for others it may mean relocating our lives from places of so-called privilege to an abandoned place to offer our gifts for God’s kingdom.

Wherever we come from, Jesus teaches us that good can happen where we are, even if real-estate agents and politicians aren’t interested in our neighborhoods. Jesus comes from Nazareth, a town from which folks said nothing good could come. He knew suffering from the moment he entered the world as a baby refugee born in the middle of a genocide. Jesus knew poverty and pain until he was tortured and executed on a Roman cross. This is the Jesus we are called to follow. With his coming we learn that the most dangerous place for Christians to be is in comfort and safety, detached from the suffering of others. Places that are physically safe can be spiritually deadly.

One of the best stories of community in the United States comes from the backwoods of Georgia. In the 1940s, long before the civil rights movement had begun to question the racial divisions in the South, white folks and black folks came together to start Koinonia Farm — a “demonstration plot” for the kingdom of God, as they called it. Koinonia survived attacks from the Ku Klux Klan in the ’50s and ’60s, tilling the soil and sowing seeds for God’s movement in the least likely of places.

O Lord, let my soul rise up to meet you as the day rises to meet the sun.

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.

Come, let us bow down and bend the knee: let us kneel before the Lord our Maker.

Song “Will You Let Me Be Your Servant?”

May we cry the gospel from the rooftops: not by our words but by our lives.

Psalm 8:4 – 7
When I consider your heavens, the work of your fingers: the moon and the stars you have set in their courses,
what is man that you should be mindful of him?: the son of man that you should seek him out?
You have made him but little lower than the angels: you adorn him with glory and honor;
you give him mastery over the works of your hands: you put all things under his feet.


May we cry the gospel from the rooftops: not by our words but by our lives.

Charles de Foucauld (1858 – 1916)
While working in the North African desert after a dishonorable discharge from military service, Charles de Foucauld was impressed by the piety of Muslims and experienced a dramatic recovery of his Christian faith. He spent a number of years in a Trappist monastery before hearing the call to a new monasticism among the working poor. “I no longer want a monastery which is too secure,” he wrote. “I want a small monastery, like the house of a poor workman who is not sure if tomorrow he will find work and bread, who with all his being shares the suffering of the world.” Though Foucauld died in solitude, the Little Brothers and Sisters of Jesus, inspired by his life and witness, have started communities of service among the poor and outcast around the world.

Suggested Reading for the Month
Sayings of the Desert Mothers and Fathers
Jesus and the Disinherited by Howard Thurman
The Beloved Community by Charles Marsh
Morning Prayer

Prayers for Others

Our Father

Sometimes, Lord, it takes witnessing another person’s commitment for us to realize our own lack of faith. Open our eyes to learn, even from those who adhere to a different religion, what it means to be committed to you. Amen.

May the peace of the Lord Christ go with you: wherever he may send you; may he guide you through the wilderness: protect you through the storm; may he bring you home rejoicing: at the wonders he has shown you; may he bring you home rejoicing: once again into our doors.

A Note on Advent

Advent, meaning “the coming,” is a time when we wait expectantly. Christians began to celebrate it as a season during the fourth and fifth centuries. Like Mary, we celebrate the coming of the Christ child, what God has already done. And we wait in expectation of the full coming of God’s reign on earth and for the return of Christ, what God will yet do. But this waiting is not a passive waiting. It is an active waiting. As any expectant mother knows, this waiting also involves preparation, exercise, nutrition, care, prayer, work; and birth involves pain, blood, tears, joy, release, community. It is called labor for a reason. Likewise, we are in a world pregnant with hope, and we live in the expectation of the coming of God’s kingdom on earth. As we wait, we also work, cry, pray, ache; we are the midwives of another world.

Just as red, white, and blue have meaning in the world (as in “these colors don’t run”), colors also have meaning in the church (though a different sort of meaning, needless to say).

Advent is often marked with purple, signifying royalty; purple often marked the coming of a king or Caesar back in the day. (In fact, no one but Caesar’s palace was allowed to wear it.) Many Christians celebrate advent by lighting a purple candle each week for the four weeks leading up to Christmas, and then lighting a “Christ candle” (usually white or red) on Christmas Eve.

As you will note in the morning prayers, many Christians also remember St. Nicholas, who was a faithful man of God before he was a cultural icon. Now the season between Thanksgiving and Christmas is that many of us recognize as Advent is the biggest frenzy of retail spending. More than half of it, hundreds of billions of dollars a year, is spent as we celebrate the birth of the homeless son of God in that stinky manger. (And he got only three measly presents. One of them was myrrh. What baby wants myrrh?) Hundreds of Christian congregations are now rethinking the Advent season as a time for compassion rather than consumption. (Check out adventconspiracy.org.)

December 2

In 1980 Maura Clarke, Ita Ford, Dorothy Kazel, and Jean Donovan were murdered by officers of the Salvadoran military. Missionaries among the poor during El Salvador’s civil war, these women knew, as Ita Ford said the night before she died, that “one who is committed to the poor must risk the same fate as the poor.” Their deaths affected the North American church deeply, galvanizing opposition to US support for the Salvadoran government’s repression of its people.

O Lord, let my soul rise up to meet you as the day rises to meet the sun.

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.

Come, let us bow down and bend the knee: let us kneel before the Lord our Maker.

Song “Were You There?”

O Lord, listen to the song: of your saints who cry, “How long?”

Psalm 12:1 – 5

Help me, LORD, for there is no godly one left: the faithful have vanished from among us.

Everyone speaks falsely with his neighbor: with a smooth tongue they speak from a double heart.

Oh, that the LORD would cut off all smooth tongues: and close the lips that utter proud boasts!

Those who say, “With our tongue will we prevail: our lips are our own; who is lord over us?”

“Because the needy are oppressed, and the poor cry out in misery: I will rise up,” says the LORD, “and give them the help they long for.”

Isaiah 1:10 – 20 Luke 20:9 – 18

O Lord, listen to the song: of your saints who cry, “How long?”

Ita Ford wrote, “The reasons why so many people are being killed are quite complicated, yet there are some clear, simple strands. One is that people have found a meaning to live, to sacrifice, struggle, and even die. And whether their life spans sixteen years, sixty, or ninety, for them their life has had a purpose. In many ways, they are fortunate people.”

O Lord, listen to the song: of your saints who cry, “How long?”

Prayers for Others
Morning Prayer

Our Father

Lord, it was not enough for you to care for the poor. You chose to become one of them by descending as you did. Keep us free from fear and selfish preoccupations that we may walk as you walked among the poor, sick, and dying in body and spirit. Amen.

May the peace of the Lord Christ go with you: wherever he may send you; may he guide you through the wilderness: protect you through the storm; may he bring you home rejoicing: at the wonders he has shown you; may he bring you home rejoicing: once again into our doors.

December 3

O Lord, let my soul rise up to meet you as the day rises to meet the sun.

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.

Come, let us bow down and bend the knee: let us kneel before the Lord our Maker.

Song  “Swing Low, Sweet Chariot”

O Come, O come, Emmanuel: and ransom captive Israel.

Psalm 18:3 – 7

I will call upon the Lord: and so shall I be saved from my enemies. The breakers of death rolled over me: and the torrents of oblivion made me afraid. The cords of hell entangled me: and the snares of death were set for me. I called upon the Lord in my distress: and cried out to my God for help. He heard my voice from his heavenly dwelling: my cry of anguish came to his ears.


O Come, O come, Emmanuel: and ransom captive Israel.

Justin the Martyr wrote in the second century, “He called Abraham and commanded him to go out from the country where he was living. With this call he has roused us all, and now we have renounced all the things the world offers, even unto death.”

O Come, O come, Emmanuel: and ransom captive Israel.

December 4

O Lord, let my soul rise up to meet you as the day rises to meet the sun.

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.

Come, let us sing to the Lord: let us shout for joy to the Rock of our salvation.

Song  “Magnificat”

Praise to you who lift up the poor: and fill the hungry with good things.

Psalm 22:22 – 25

Praise the Lord, you that fear him: stand in awe of him, O offspring of Israel; all you of Jacob’s line, give glory. For he does not despise nor abhor the poor in their poverty; neither does he hide his face from them: but when they cry to him he hears them. My praise is of him in the great assembly: I will perform my vows in the presence of those who worship him. The poor shall eat and be satisfied, and those who seek the Lord shall praise him: “May your heart live for ever!”


Praise to you who lift up the poor: and fill the hungry with good things.

Commenting on the activities of the early church, Roman Emperor Julian said, “The godless Galileans feed our poor in addition to their own.”

Praise to you who lift up the poor: and fill the hungry with good things.

Prayers for Others

Our Father

Hound us, Lord, with affection and conviction until we renounce all things to follow you. Help us see that in giving up the fool’s gold of the world, we open ourselves to heavenly treasure that does not rot. Amen.

May the peace of the Lord Christ go with you: wherever he may send you; may he guide you through the wilderness: protect you through the storm; may he bring you home rejoicing: at the wonders he has shown you; may he bring you home rejoicing: once again into our doors.
O house of Aaron, trust in the Lord: he is your help and your shield. You who fear the Lord, trust in the Lord: he is your help and your shield. The Lord has been mindful of us, and he will bless us: he will bless the house of Israel; he will bless the house of Aaron; he will bless those who fear the Lord: both small and great together.


Come now, bless the Lord: he is our help and our shield.

Augustine of Hippo wrote, “No man has a right to lead such a life of contemplation as to forget in his own ease the service due his neighbor; nor has any man a right to be so immersed in active life as to neglect the contemplation of God.”

Prayers for Others

Our Father

O Lord whose patience is beyond comprehension, we pray that you may never tire of helping us grow in faithfulness. Though we fail more than we succeed, raise us up each morning to follow after you again. Guide us today for your glory’s sake. Amen.

May the peace of the Lord Christ go with you: wherever he may send you; may he guide you through the wilderness: protect you through the storm; may he bring you home rejoicing: at the wonders he has shown you; may he bring you home rejoicing: once again into our doors.

December 24

Christmas Eve

O Lord, let my soul rise up to meet you as the day rises to meet the sun.

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.

Come, let us bow down and bend the knee: let us kneel before the Lord our Maker.

Song  “Amazing Grace”

December 25

Christmas

O Lord, let my soul rise up to meet you as the day rises to meet the sun.

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit,
as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.

Come, let us sing to the LORD: let us shout for joy to the Rock of our salvation.

Song “Go, Tell It on the Mountain”

O Word, now wrapped in human skin: speak peace on earth through your children.

Psalm 119:89 – 93
O Lord, your word is everlasting: it stands firm in the heavens.
Your faithfulness remains from one generation to another: you established the earth, and it abides.
By your decree these continue to this day: for all things are your servants.
If my delight had not been in your law: I should have perished in my affliction.
I will never forget your commandments: because by them you give me life.


O Word, now wrapped in human skin: speak peace on earth through your children.

Leo the Great preached, “Truly wondrous is the whole chronicle of the incarnation. From the time when Christ came, the ancient slavery is ended, the devil confounded, demons take to flight, the power of death is broken, paradise is unlocked, the curse is taken away, sin is removed from us, error driven out, truth has been brought back, and the speech of kindliness diffused. A heavenly way of life has been implanted on the earth.”

O Word, now wrapped in human skin: speak peace on earth through your children.

Prayers for Others

Our Father

Lord God, we adore you as the infant Christ. Teach us how to tend to you in your self-imposed vulnerability with us. Prepare us in these tender moments to see what incarnation means in our world. Amen.

May the peace of the Lord Christ go with you: wherever he may send you; may he guide you through the wilderness: protect you through the storm; may he bring you home rejoicing: at the wonders he has shown you; may he bring you home rejoicing: once again into our doors.

A Note on Christmas

“The Twelve Days of Christmas” is not just the title of a fun song but also refers to the twelve-day celebration of the coming of Christ, from his birth, which is observed on December 25, until Epiphany, on January 6. This twelve-day celebration is often marked with the colors gold and white, and dates back to the fourth century. Christmas is short for “Christ’s Mass,” referring to the worship service that marks the birth of Christ. Celebrations during the season include the Feast of the Holy Innocents (Dec. 28), when we remember that the joy of Christ’s coming was marked by genocide as Herod fearfully massacred other children in Bethlehem. We can remember that the coming of Christ is about God entering the mess of this world, from the stinky manger to the torturous cross.

December 26

Stephen of Jerusalem (? – 35)

Stephen was the first in a long line of Christian martyrs. He looked on those who were about to kill him and asked the Lord to forgive them (Acts 7:60). His courageous nonviolence in the face of death resembled that of Christ. It is said that Jesus sat at the Father’s side after his ascension into heaven, but rose to greet Stephen when he arrived.

O Lord, let my soul rise up to meet you as the day rises to meet the sun.

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.

Come, let us sing to the LORD: let us shout for joy to the Rock of our salvation.

Song “Woke Up This Mornin’”

In the morning when we rise: may your image shine in us.

Psalm 119:164 – 68

Seven times a day do I praise you: because of your righteous judgments.
Great peace have they who love your law: for them there is no stumbling block.
I have hoped for your salvation, O LORD: and have fulfilled your commandments.
I have kept your decrees: and I have loved them deeply.
Writing about the first Watch Night, Booker T. Washington said, “As the
great day grew nearer, there was more singing in the slave quarters than usual.
It was bolder, had more ring, and lasted later into the night. True, they had
sung those same verses before, but they had been careful to explain that the
‘freedom’ in these songs referred to the next world, and had no connection
with life in this world. Now they gradually threw off the mask; and were not
afraid to let it be known that the ‘freedom’ in their songs meant freedom of
the body in this world.”

Shout the glad tidings o’er Egypt’s dark sea: Jehovah has triumphed; his
people are free!

*Prayers for Others*

*Our Father*

Lord, we know that freedom will prevail because you are already victorious.
Help us never lose hope, never stop celebrating your victory, and never stop
walking alongside those who struggle to see this freedom come on earth as it
is in heaven. Amen.

May the peace of the Lord Christ go with you: wherever he may send you;
may he guide you through the wilderness: protect you through the storm;
may he bring you home rejoicing: at the wonders he has shown you;
may he bring you home rejoicing: once again into our doors.

**Becoming the Answer to Our Prayers: A Few Ideas**

1. Throw a banquet, a really good one with lots of nice food. Invite folks who
   struggle with homelessness, mental illness, or addiction. Give everyone a chance
ten share a gift.
2. Do a creative witness outside a shopping mall. And be nice. Invite folks to see
   that the best things in life are free. Maybe give out free coffee or cookies.
3. Dismantle a bomb. Or dismantle a theological argument that justifies bombs. Or
   dismantle an ideology of security and consumption that requires bombs.
4. Experiment in creation care by going fuel-free for a week—bike, carpool, or
   walk.
5. Start a business whose goal is to provide living-wage jobs to persons from
   economically disinvested neighborhoods.
Marks of New Monasticism

Shared Economics

Throughout Scripture we are given a vision of an economy different from the empire’s economy. One of the first stories of Scripture is God rescuing the Hebrew slaves from Egypt. And God gives them new patterns of Sabbath, and gleaning to make sure that they care for the most vulnerable among them (widows, orphans, immigrants…). God also sets in place Jubilee—God’s systemic plan for dismantling inequality, relinquishing debts, redistributing property, setting slaves free, and allowing the land to rest and restore. There is the promise throughout Scripture that God has created an economy where there is enough—that God has not created a world of scarcity, with too many people or too little stuff. As Gandhi said, “There is enough for everyone’s need but not enough for everyone’s greed.”

We are to pray for this day our daily bread…nothing more and nothing less. Prophets like John the Baptist cry out for repentance but then also say things like, “And if you have two tunics, give one away to the person who has none.” Rebirth and redistribution must go together. Just as Jesus came preaching repentance, he also invited followers to sell everything they have and give it to the poor. The early Christians went so far as to say, If we have two coats we have stolen one from the poor and when we give to the beggar we should get on our knees and ask for forgiveness because we are returning what was wrongfully stolen from the beggar.

Economic sharing was a mark of the early Church in Acts where Scripture says, “No one claimed any of their possessions were their own, but they shared everything they had… and there were no needy persons among them.” One of the signs of the birthday of the Church is that they ended poverty. But it was not just a systemic thing—it was a love thing. The Scriptures say that we can sell everything we have and give it to the poor but if we have not love it is still empty. For Christians, redistribution comes out of a love of neighbor—to love our neighbor as ourselves means we hold our possessions loosely, for the suffering of another is our suffering and their burden is our burden.

Suggested Reading for the Month

Sabbath Economics by Ched Myers
Rich Christians in an Age of Hunger by Ron Sider
The Story of Stuff (online video: http://www.storyofstuff.com/)

There are creative experiments in economic sharing happening all over the world. One group of Christians in the US started putting out a newsletter of everyone who was hospitalized and unable to cover their medical bills, so that everyone could be praying for each other and then put their money together to meet the bills. Over the past few decades that group has met over 500 million dollars in medical bills of one another. Another fascinating experiment is the Relational Tithe, an international group of Christians who tithe (give 10% of their income) into a common fund in order to meet one another’s needs and the needs of other people they are friends with. 100% of their tithe goes directly to meet needs, and is a witness of a community that bears each others burden. The reality of rebirth comes with responsibility, for we are reborn into a terribly dysfunctional family. And redistribution, most meaningfully, comes not through guilt or coercion or force—but through compassion, solidarity, and love.
January 1

In 1788 Quakers in Pennsylvania freed their slaves, anticipating the emancipation of chattel slaves in the United States some seventy-five years later. Together with free blacks, abolitionist evangelicals, and slaves who were willing to risk their lives, Quakers led one of America’s most vibrant faith-based justice movements—the Underground Railroad. Committed to simplicity, religious freedom, and nonviolence, Quakers have contributed to movements for peace and justice throughout U.S. history.

O Lord, let my soul rise up to meet you as the day rises to meet the sun.

January 2

Basil of Caesarea (330 – 379AD)

Basil was born in modern-day Turkey. His grandfather was martyred and his brother, Gregory of Nyssa, became a very influential bishop. In an age marked by doctrinal battles within the church, Basil was a tireless defender of orthodoxy. He is known as an early developer of Christian monasticism, and an incredible preacher and writer. Among his many writings are some of the Church’s earliest prayers. Basil’s life was an attempt to live out Christ’s command to “go, sell your possessions, and give the money to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; then come, follow me.” He first left the world to join the monastery, but eventually brought the monastery to the world through the city of Basiliad, also called ‘The New City’. This was a giant community of monastic men and women working with doctors and other lay people to provide food, clothing, shelter and medical assistance to the poor of Caesarea. He later went on to become a priest and bishop, but always kept his vision of a monastic life not cut off from the world, but embracing the pain and sorrow of the world. Basil’s life was a reform of monasticism, calling monks and nuns to return to society and his life was also dedicated to reforming society with the wisdom of monasticism, advocating a new social order based on simplicity rather than competition and private ownership.

O Lord, let my soul rise up to meet you as the day rises to meet the sun.

Our Father

Lord, help us answer your call as readily as our father Abram that we might extend your blessing throughout our community. Remind us that the places where we find you become altars in our world. Amen.

May the peace of the Lord Christ go with you: wherever he may send you; may he guide you through the wilderness: protect you through the storm; may he bring you home rejoicing: at the wonders he has shown you; may he bring you home rejoicing: once again into our doors.

Jesus, teach us not to shun: what is of God in everyone.
HOLY WEEK — JESUS EATS WITH FRIENDS
A Note on Holy Week

Since we chose to organize morning prayers in this book by calendar dates, there's no way to say for sure when Easter, Ascension, and Pentecost will be this year. If you have the Internet or a printed calendar, it's pretty easy to look up the date of Easter. (Or, if you want to figure it out for yourself, Easter is the first Sunday after the coming of the first full moon after the vernal equinox.) However you find the date, this is an important one to note. As Paul said in the first century, our faith means little if Jesus isn't risen from the dead. If Advent is our New Year's and Pentecost is the Church's birthday, Easter is our Memorial, Independence, and President's Day all in one. This is when we remember Christ's sacrifice for our sins, celebrate his victory over the powers of evil, and honor him as our true Commander in Chief. It's a big deal, so we have a special set of prayers for Holy Week.

Holy Week begins with Jesus' Inaugural Parade on Palm Sunday and takes us through the drama of his last week in Jerusalem. In many ways, this is the week that teaches us our rhythm for every week in God's kingdom. It's often called the “passion week,” because it's full of suffering (passio is Latin for suffering). This is one of the harder things to learn about following Jesus — his way to real life isn't easy. In the end, it'll get you killed. And most of us don't want to die. (This is why we have to practice denying ourselves through forty days of Lent, fasting from stuff that we usually enjoy so we can learn to hunger and thirst for God's kingdom.)

The good news of the cross is that dying in Christ, we're raised to new life — a life that is stronger than death. As Martin Luther King taught us, unearned suffering is redemptive. Loving your enemies, giving to whoever asks, and turning the other cheek might get you killed ... but it will also get you born again. And when we're born into God's life, we know a life that will never end. That's what Easter season is about.

Resurrection is such a big deal that we don't just take one day to celebrate it. Every Sunday is resurrection day. But we also set aside fifty days for the Easter season, setting aside our normal fasts and taking extra time to celebrate what God has done in our world. Forty days after Easter, we remember Jesus' Ascension, when he returned to heaven and told the disciples to wait for the Holy Spirit, so they might become his body in the world. The ascension seals the deal for the disciples (up to that point, many of them had headed back to their familiar world of fishing and life as usual). For us it is a reminder that resurrection isn't just a miracle that happened 2,000 years ago. It's a way of life we practice. Pentecost ends the Easter season, reminding us that we don't practice resurrection by our own strength, but have the Holy Spirit's power among us as a community called Church. Jesus' story is now our story. And the next chapter begins today...
Palm Sunday

O Lord, let my soul rise up to meet you as the day rises to meet the sun.

Glory to the Father, to the Son, and to the Spirit, as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be.

Come, let us sing to the Lord: let us shout for joy to the Rock of our salvation.

Song “Sing and Rejoice”

Lest a rock cry out in my place: I lift my whole life in praise.

Psalm 118:25–29

Hosanna, Lord, hosanna!: Lord, send us now success.
Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord: we bless you from the house of the Lord.
God is the Lord; he has shone upon us: form a procession with branches up to the horns of the altar.
“You are my God, and I will thank you: you are my God, and I will exalt you.”
Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good: his mercy endures for ever.

Lest a rock cry out in my place: I lift my whole life in praise.


Lest a rock cry out in my place: I lift my whole life in praise.

Eight-century martyr Andrew of Crete wrote, “Let us say to Christ: Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord, the king of Israel. Let us wave before him like palm branches the words inscribed above him on the cross. Let us show him honor, not with olive branches, but with the splendor of merciful deeds to one another. Let us spread the thoughts and desires of our hearts under his feet like garments, so that he may draw the whole of our being into himself and place the whole of his in us.”

Prayers for Others

Our Father

Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews, may your reign become real through the works of our hands and your love alive in our hearts. Amen.

May the peace of the Lord Christ go with you: wherever he may send you; may he guide you through the wilderness: protect you through the storm; may he bring you home rejoicing: at the wonders he has shown you; may he bring you home rejoicing: once again into our doors.

Monday

O Lord, let my soul rise up to meet you as the day rises to meet the sun.

Glory to the Father, to the Son, and to the Spirit, as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be.

Come, let us sing to the Lord: let us shout for joy to the Rock of our salvation.

Song “We Are Marching in the Light of God”

With you, O Lord, is the well of life: and in your light we see light.

Psalm 36:5–10

Your love, O Lord, reaches to the heavens: and your faithfulness to the clouds.
Your righteousness is like the strong mountains, your justice like the great deep: you save both man and beast, O Lord.
How priceless is your love, O God!: your people take refuge under the shadow of your wings.
They feast upon the abundance of your house: you give them drink from the river of your delights.
For with you is the well of life: and in your light we see light.
Continue your loving-kindness to those who know you: and your favor to those who are true of heart.

With you, O Lord, is the well of life: and in your light we see light.

Isaiah 42:1–9 Mark 14:3–9

With you, O Lord, is the well of life: and in your light we see light.

Contemporary Ugandan theologian Emmanuel Katongole has written, “Mary represents the ‘rebel consciousness’ that is essential to Jesus’ gospel. Wherever the gospel is preached, we must remember that its good news will make you crazy. Jesus will put you at odds with the economic and political systems of our world. This gospel will force you to act, interrupting the world as it is in ways that make even pious people indignant.”

Prayers for Others

Our Father

While we sat in darkness, Lord Jesus Christ, you interrupted us with your life. Make us, your people, a holy interruption so that by your Spirit’s power we may live as a light to the nations, even as we stumble through this world’s dark night. Amen.
Fannie Lou Hamer said, “It wouldn’t solve any problem for me to hate whites just because they hate me. Oh, there’s so much hate, only God has kept the Negro sane.”

**Prayers for Others**

**Our Father**

Merciful Lord, you revealed your glory by humbly serving the one who would betray you. Shower us with your mercy, Lord, and grow us up to be merciful. Amen.

May the peace of the Lord Christ go with you: wherever he may send you; may he guide you through the wilderness: protect you through the storm; may he bring you home rejoicing: at the wonders he has shown you; may he bring you home rejoicing: once again into our doors.

**Maundy Thursday**

O Lord, let my soul rise up to meet you as the day rises to meet the sun.

Glory to the Father, to the Son, and to the Spirit, as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be.

Come, let us bow down and bend the knee: let us kneel before the Lord our Maker.

**Song** “Guide My Feet”

Will you let me be your servant? let me be as Christ to you?

_Psalm 78:14 – 17_

He led them with a cloud by day: and all the night through with a glowing fire.

He split the hard rocks in the wilderness: and gave them drink as from the great deep.

He brought streams out of the cliff: and the waters gushed out like rivers.

But they went on sinning against him: rebelling in the desert against the Most High.

Will you let me be your servant? let me be as Christ to you?

_Exodus 12:1 – 14a John 13:1 – 15_

Will you let me be your servant? let me be as Christ to you?

Jean Vanier, founder of the L’Arche communities, has written, “To wash the feet of a brother or sister in Christ, to allow someone to wash our feet, is a sign that together we want to follow Jesus, to take the downward path, to find Jesus’ presence in the poor and the weak. Is it not a sign that we too want to live a heart-to-heart relationship with others, to meet them as a person and a friend, and to live in communion with them? Is it not a sign that we yearn to be men and women of forgiveness, to be healed and cleansed and to heal and cleanse others and thus to live more fully in communion with Jesus?”

**Prayers for Others**

**Our Father**

Lord Jesus Christ, you knelt to wash from our feet the dirt from which you made us. Teach us to humbly serve one another so that the world may know we are your disciples. Amen.

May the peace of the Lord Christ go with you: wherever he may send you; may he guide you through the wilderness: protect you through the storm; may he bring you home rejoicing: at the wonders he has shown you; may he bring you home rejoicing: once again into our doors.

**Taking Liturgy to the Streets**

Liturgy and worship were never meant to be confined to the cathedrals and sanctuaries. Liturgy at its best can be performed like a circus or theater—making the Gospel visible as a witness to the world around us. Consider these services that happened in Philadelphia around Good Friday just before Easter.

Hundreds of Christians gathered on Good Friday to remember Jesus, and also to remember Jesus disguised in the ‘least of these’—those who continue to be tortured, spit on, slapped, insulted, misunderstood… those who ache, bleed, cry, love, forgive, and ask God “have you forsaken me?” The morning started with a slow meditative reading of the passion narrative from the Gospel. We sat still, praying that we would have the courage to follow the way of the cross in a world of the sword. Then, as many Christians do throughout the world, we spent Good Friday remembering the “stations of the cross”, the various stages of Christ’s execution.

But we didn’t keep things inside the walls of cathedrals—we took to the streets. At one gathering, hundreds of us gathered outside one of the most notorious gun stores in the country for selling weapons later traced to violent crimes. On the makeshift stage outside the gun shop, alongside a Pentecostal dance team and a host of collared clergy from all sorts of denominations, there was a giant gun alongside a cross and a coffin. After some songs, testimonies, and preaching, we read aloud the same Scripture we had read in the morning, only this time what stood out was how the heartbroken women went to the tomb with all the perfumes and spices, and found no body there. We heard from women who had lost their children from gunshots on the streets of Philadelphia, who wept and prayed that tomorrow “the casket and tomb would be empty”. One of them lost her
Morning Prayer

Good Friday

O Lord, let my soul rise up to meet you as the day rises to meet the sun.

Glory to the Father, to the Son, and to the Spirit, as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be.

Come, let us bow down and bend the knee: let us kneel before the Lord our Maker.

Song “Were You There?”

He who hung the earth upon the waters: today he is hung upon the cross.

Psalm 22:1 – 2, 9 – 11
My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?: and are so far from my cry and from the words of my distress?
O my God, I cry in the daytime, but you do not answer: by night as well, but I find no rest.

Holy Saturday

O Lord, let my soul rise up to meet you as the day rises to meet the sun.

Glory to the Father, to the Son, and to the Spirit, as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be.

Come, let us bow down and bend the knee: let us kneel before the Lord our Maker.

Prayers for Others

Our Father

While we were still your enemies, Lord Jesus Christ, you suffered and died for us, winning the victory over death for our sakes. Give us grace to lift you up as we follow the way of your cross so that all people may be drawn unto you. Amen.

May the peace of the Lord Christ go with you: wherever he may send you; may he guide you through the wilderness: protect you through the storm; may he bring you home rejoicing: at the wonders he has shown you; may he bring you home rejoicing: once again into our doors.

Yet you are he who took me out of the womb: and kept me safe upon my mother’s breast.
I have been entrusted to you ever since I was born: you were my God when I was still in my mother’s womb.
Be not far from me, for trouble is near: and there is none to help.

He who hung the earth upon the waters: today he is hung upon the cross.


He who hung the earth upon the waters: today he is hung upon the cross.

John Chrysostom, a fourth-century bishop and preacher in Constantinople, asked, “Do you see how the devil is defeated by the very weapons of his prior victory? The devil had vanquished Adam by means of a tree. Christ vanquished the devil by means of the tree of the Cross. The tree sent Adam to hell. The tree of the Cross brought him back from there. The tree revealed Adam in his weakness, laying prostrate, naked and low. The tree of the Cross manifested to all the world the victorious Christ, naked and nailed on high. Adam’s death sentence passed on to all who came after him. Christ’s death gave life to all his children.”

Prayers for Others

Our Father

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May the peace of the Lord Christ go with you: wherever he may send you; may he guide you through the wilderness: protect you through the storm; may he bring you home rejoicing: at the wonders he has shown you; may he bring you home rejoicing: once again into our doors.
AUGUST — THE TRANSFIGURATION
Marks of New Monasticism

Peacemaking

Peace is not just about the absence of conflict, but about the presence of justice. Dr. King even distinguished between “the devil’s peace” and God’s true peace. A counterfeit peace exists when people are pacified or distracted or so beat up or tired of fighting that all seems calm. But true peace does not rest until there is justice, restoration, forgiveness. Peacemaking doesn’t mean passivity. It is a deliberate act of interrupting injustice without mirroring injustice, the act of disarming evil without destroying the evil-doer, the act of finding a third way that is neither fight nor flight, but the careful arduous pursuit of reconciliation and justice. It is about a revolution of love that is big enough to set both the oppressed and the oppressors free.

Peace is about being able to recognize in the face of the oppressed our own face, and in the hands of the oppressors our own hands. Peace, like most beautiful things, begins small. Matthew 18 gives us a very clear process for approaching someone who has hurt or offended us—we are to first talk directly with them, not at them, or around them. Most communities that have been around a while (like a few decades or centuries) identify that one of the core values of healthy community is “straight talk” or creating an environment where people do not avoid conflict but speak honestly to one another. Straight talk is countercultural in a world that prefers politeness to honesty. Benedict speaks passionately about the deadly poison of “murmuring”, the negativity and dissension that can infect community and can rot away at the very fabric of love, like mildew or yeast, will ruin things.

Peacemaking begins with what we can change—ourselves. But it doesn’t end there. We are to be peacemakers in a world riddled with violence. That means interrupting violence with imagination—on our streets and in our world. This peace “that is not like any way the empire brings peace” is rooted in the nonviolence of the cross, where we see a Savior who loves his enemies so much he died for them. Peace is often not our instinct, which is why it must be cultivated and grown in us. Even Jesus’ key disciple Peter picks up his sword when the soldiers approach Jesus. Jesus’ response is brilliant: he scolds Peter, and then he heals the wounded persecutor… only to be dragged away and hung on a Roman cross. If ever there were a case for “just war” or justified violence to protect the innocent, Peter had it. Yet Jesus rebukes his logic of the sword.

The early Christians said, “When Jesus disarmed Peter he disarmed every Christian.” For hundreds of years Christians were not seen carrying swords again, and they followed the way of the Prince of Peace even unto death, loving their enemies and blessing those who cursed them. It doesn’t look like a good strategy for running an empire, but it is the narrow way that leads to life. Undoubtedly, it doesn’t always seem to “work”. As we look at history, and even as we read the Scripture, there seems to be evidence that violence has worked at times and failed at times, just as nonviolence has worked at times and failed at times. In the end, the question is: which looks most like Jesus? For we are called not just to be successful, but to be faithful to the way of the cross, even unto death. The way of the cross did not seem to work on Friday…but the promise is that Sunday is coming. In the end, Love wins.

This can be hard to remember as we go about our lives. But the Transfiguration reminds us how the disciples’ eyes were opened to the reality of Jesus’ power even before the resurrection. If we have eyes to see, the lightning that flashes east to west in the nonviolent coming of God can illuminate the world wherever we are. “If you are willing,” one of the desert fathers said, “you can become all flame.”

Suggested Reading for the Month

The Politics of Jesus by John Howard Yoder
Resident Aliens by Hauerwas and Willimon
The Powers That Be by Walter Wink
The Violence of Love by Oscar Romero
‘Riverside Speech’ by Martin Luther King Jr. (audio; good for reading on August 6, the anniversary of the bombing of Hiroshima)
August 1

O Lord, let my soul rise up to meet you as the day rises to meet the sun.

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.

Come, let us bow down and bend the knee: let us kneel before the Lord our Maker.

Song “Come Thou Fount of Every Blessing”

Listen, Lord, in your mercy: not to our words but to our hearts.

Psalm 5:1 – 4
Give ear to my words, O Lord; consider my meditation.
Hearken to my cry for help, my King and my God; for I make my prayer to you.
In the morning, Lord, you hear my voice; early in the morning I make my appeal and watch for you.
For you are not a God who takes pleasure in wickedness, and evil cannot dwell with you.

Listen, Lord, in your mercy: not to our words but to our hearts.

1 Samuel 11:1 – 15 Matthew 25:1 – 13

Listen, Lord, in your mercy: not to our words but to our hearts.

Irish monk Columbanus wrote, “Blessed is the time of waiting, when we stay awake for the Lord, the Creator of the universe, who fills all things and transcends all things. How I wish he would awaken me, his humble servant, from the sleep of slothfulness, even though I am of little worth. How I wish he would enkindle me with that fire of divine love. The flames of his love burn beyond the stars; the longing for his overwhelming delights and the divine fire ever burn within me!”

Prayers for Others

Our Father

Lord, you are coming in glory to bring the fullness of peace, healing, and justice. Teach us to wait when you would have us wait. And teach us to act when you would have us act. Fill us up with the expectation of you your coming Kingdom so much that we cannot help but to enact it now. Amen.

May the peace of the Lord Christ go with you: wherever he may send you; may he guide you through the wilderness; protect you through the storm; may he bring you home rejoicing: at the wonders he has shown you; may he bring you home rejoicing: once again into our doors.

August 2

Basil the Blessed (1464 – 1552)

Born to a peasant family near Moscow in the late 1400s, Basil left home at 16 to devote himself to a life of asceticism. He did not have a permanent home, but instead walked around barefoot and in rags, exhibiting extraordinary humility in the face of punishment, ridicule, and derision. Like an Old Testament prophet, Basil challenged those in power about their treatment of the poor, marginalized, and afflicted. He foretold misfortunes and preached the gospel to all who would listen, including the Tsar Ivan the Terrible, who respected and feared Basil’s gift of prophecy. Once, when Basil offered the Tsar a piece of raw meat during the Lenten season, the Tsar rejected it. Basil then boldly and truthfully asked him, “Then why do you drink the blood of men?” noting the Tsar’s violent behavior toward innocent people.

O Lord, let my soul rise up to meet you as the day rises to meet the sun.

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.

Come, let us bow down and bend the knee: let us kneel before the Lord our Maker.

Song “Poor Wayfaring Stranger”

If we are fools in this world, O Lord: may we be fools for Christ.

Psalm 13:3 – 6
Look upon me and answer me, O Lord my God; give light to my eyes, lest I sleep in death;
Lest my enemy say, “I have prevailed over him,” and my foes rejoice that I have fallen.
But I put my trust in your mercy; my heart is joyful because of your saving help.
I will sing to the Lord, for he has dealt with me richly; I will praise the Name of the Lord Most High.

If we are fools in this world, O Lord: may we be fools for Christ.
American farmer and poet Wendell Berry has written, “Sabbath observance invites us to stop. It invites us to rest. It asks us to notice that while we rest the world continues without our help. It invites us to delight in the world’s beauty and abundance.”

Prayers for Others

Our Father

Lord, the morning sings of your beauty and lightness of heart. There is always fresh hope in the morning if we stop to receive it. The new possibilities of morning are like a glimpse of Sabbath, when we are reminded that everything happens because you permit it and that the end of history is in your hands. Thanks be to God. Amen

May the peace of the Lord Christ go with you: wherever he may send you; may he guide you through the wilderness: protect you through the storm; may he bring you home rejoicing: at the wonders he has shown you; may he bring you home rejoicing: once again into our doors.

A Note on Christ the King Sunday

The last day of the Christian calendar is “Christ the King” Sunday. This day was established very late in the life of the Church (in the twentieth century), in the face of rising violence and racism in the world. On this final Sunday we remember that our first and foremost allegiance is to Jesus, not to nation, tribe, or biological family. The next day marks the beginning of Advent ... and we'll do it all again (for another 2000 years).

Becoming the Answer to Our Prayers: A Few Ideas

1. Spend the day baking cookies or bread. Give them away to the person who delivers your mail or picks up your trash next time you see them.
2. Host a rain-barrel party and teach neighbors how to make and use rain-barrels to recycle water.
3. Spend a day hiking in the woods. Consider how God cares for the lilies and sparrows ... and you.
4. Gather some neighbors, and plant a tree in your neighborhood together.
5. Hold a Knowledge Exchange where you gather friends or neighbors to share a skill or something they are learning.
Draw us into your love, Christ Jesus: and deliver us from fear.

Lord, make me an instrument of your peace.
Where there is hatred, let me bring love;
where there is injury, pardon;
where there is doubt, faith;
where there is despair, hope;
where there is darkness, light;
where there is sadness, joy.
O Divine Master, grant that I may not
so much seek to be consoled as to console,
to be understood as to understand,
to be loved as to love.
For it is in giving that we receive,
it is in pardoning that we are pardoned,
and it is in dying that we are born to eternal life.

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit,
as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.

Silence for meditation

Our Father

Make us worthy, Lord, to serve our brothers and sisters throughout the world, who live and die in poverty and pain. Give them today, through our hands, their daily bread and through our understanding love, give peace and joy. Amen.

Blessed are the poor,
for theirs is the Kingdom of God.
Blessed are the hungry,
for they shall be filled.
Blessed are the meek,
for they shall inherit the earth.
Blessed are the pure in heart,
for they shall see God.
Blessed are those who mourn,
for they shall be comforted.
Blessed are the merciful,
for they shall be shown mercy.

Blessed are the peacemakers,
for they are the children of God.
Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness and justice,
for great is their reward.

Come, Holy Spirit. We pray that your fruit would be in us: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.

Dear Jesus, help us to spread your fragrance everywhere we go.

Soul of Christ, sanctify me;
body of Christ, save me;
blood of Christ, inebriate me;
water from the side of Christ, wash me;
passion of Christ, strengthen me.
O good Jesus, hear me;
within your wounds hide me;
suffer me not to be separated from you;
from the malicious enemy defend me;
in the hour of my death call me;
and bid me come to you
that with your saints I may praise you forever and ever. Amen.

Through our lives and by our prayers: may your Kingdom come!

In the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Amen.

Passing of the Peace

A Note on Passing the Peace

“Passing the peace” is an ancient tradition whereby brothers and sisters in Christ share a hug or handshake, or “holy kiss” as a sign of our love (perhaps start with a holy hug). Often the embrace is accompanied with a wish for the “peace of Christ” to be with another (this is often said out loud as hugs are exchanged). It is also a sign that we have reconciled wrongs with one another and with anyone that might be holding something against us (Rom. 16:16; 1 Cor. 16:20; 2 Cor 13:12; 1 Thess. 5:26; 1 Peter 5:14). Even if you say your midday prayer alone, take a moment to think of the people you need to connect with to share a joy, confession, or burden.
These are prayers for special occasions that have been gathered from communities around the globe. Some of them are new and some are ancient. They are offered here as tools and you are invited to use them or adapt them so that they fit your community and occasion. There are many other prayers available on the website www.commonprayer.net.

**House Blessing**

**At the Doorway**

May God give a blessing to this house. God bless this house from roof to floor, from wall to wall, from end to end, from its foundation and in its covering. In the strong name of the Triune God all disturbance cease, captive spirits freed, God’s Spirit alone dwell within these walls.

We call upon the Sacred Three to save, shield and surround this house, this home, this day, this night and every night.

**In the Entrance or Foyer**

May all be welcomed here, friend and stranger, from near and far. may each be blessed and honored as they enter. There is a friend’s love in the gentle heart of the Savior. For love of Him we offer friendship and welcome every guest.

We call upon the Sacred Three to save, shield and surround this house, this home, this day, this night and every night.

**In the Living Room**

There is a friend’s love in the gentle heart of the Savior. For love of Him we offer friendship and welcome every guest. Lord, kindle in our hearts a flame of love our neighbor, to our enemies, our friends, our kindred all, from the lowliest thing that liveth to the name that is highest of all.

We call upon the Sacred Three to save, shield and surround this house, this home, this day, this night, and every night.

**At a Warm Place (or the Furnace)**

There is a fiery power in the gentle heart of the Spirit. Our hearts are agreed as we kneel by the hearth, and call on the Sacred Three to save, shield and surround us and our kin, this house, this home, this day, this night and every night.

We call upon the Sacred Three to save, shield and surround this house, this home, this day, this night, and every night.

**In the Kitchen**

May we welcome the poor and honor them. May we welcome the sick and care for them in the presence of angels and we ask you God to bless and embrace us all. Seeing a stranger approach, may we put food in the eating place, drink in the drinking place, music in the listening place, and look with joy for the blessing of God,
who often comes to our homes
in the blessing of a stranger.
We call upon the Sacred Three
to save, shield and surround
this house, this home,
this day, this night,
and every night.

For a Bedroom
Peace be here in the Name of the King of life;
the peace of Christ above all peace,
the Lord’s blessing over you.
We call upon the Sacred Three
to save, shield and surround
this house, this home,
this day, this night,
and every night.

For the Bedroom of a Single Person
Peace be here in the name of the King of life;
the peace of Christ above all peace,
the Lord’s blessing over you.
May God the Father be the guardian of this place
and bring his peace,
that fear may find no entry here.
May Christ be a chosen companion and friend.
May loneliness be banished.
May the Spirit bring lightness and laughter,
and be the comforter of tears.
Courage be at each going out;
rest be present at each return;
each day, each night,
each going out and each returning.

For a Bedroom of a Married Couple
Peace be here in the name of the King of life;
the peace of Christ above all peace,
the Lord’s blessing over you.
Peace between person and person;
peace between husband and wife.

The peace of Christ above all peace,
Peace between lovers
In love of the King of life.

For a Guest Room
Peace be here in the name of the King of life;
the peace of Christ above all peace,
the Lord’s blessing over you.
May all be welcomed here
as the Christ-child at the stable:
in simplicity and joy,
and as saints before us have welcomed the poor,
may the smile of the Son of Peace
be found here
whenever the door is opened.

For the Room of a Young Child
To be said by the parent(s) if possible:
Peace be here in the name of the King of life;
the peace of Christ above all peace,
the Lord’s blessing over you.
They say nothing is given birth without pain.
I have a secret joy in thee, my God,
For, if thou art my Father,
thou art my Mother too,
And of thy tenderness, healing and patience
There is no end at all.
I pray for (name).
(Name), may the joy and peace of heaven
be with you.
The Lord bless you.

For the Room of an Older Son
or Daughter, Present or Absent
To be said by the parent(s), if possible:
Peace be here in the name of the King of life;
the peace of Christ above all peace,
the Lord’s blessing over you.
Son of my breast/daughter of my heart.
The joy of God be in thy face,
Joy to all who see thee.
The circle of God around thee,
angels of God shielding thee,
joy of night and day be thine;
joy of sun and moon be thine;
joy of men and women be thine;
each land and sea thou goest,
each land and sea thou goest,
be every season happy for thee;
be every season bright for thee;
be every season glad for thee.
Be thine the compassing of the God of life;
be thine the compassing of the Christ of love;
be thine the compassing of the Spirit of grace:
to befriend thee and to aid thee,
(Name), thou beloved son of my breast/
thou beloved daughter of my heart.

At the Door (or at a Cross)
Christ, in our coming
and in our leaving,
the Door and the Keeper;
for us and our dear ones,
this day and every day,
blessing for always. Amen.

We call upon the Sacred Three
to save, shield and surround
this house, this home,
this day, this night,
and every night. Amen.

Prayers for a Workplace

Outside the Doorway
May God give a blessing on this place.
God bless it from roof to floor,
from wall to wall, from end to end,
from its foundation and in its covering.
In the strong name of the Triune God:
all evil be banished,
all disturbance cease,
**Major Life Transition**

Lord, help me now to unclutter my life, to organize myself in the direction of simplicity. Lord, teach me to listen to my heart; teach me to welcome change, instead of fearing it. Lord, I give you these stirrings inside me. I give you my discontent. I give you my restlessness. I give you my doubt. I give you my despair. I give you all the longings I hold inside. Help me to listen to these signs of change, of growth; help me to listen seriously and follow where they lead through the breathtaking empty space of an open door.

**Before or After a Meal**

Lord God, Creator of All,
in your wisdom,
you have bound us together so that we must depend on others
for the food we eat,
the resources we use,
the gifts of your creation that bring life, health and joy.

Creator God, we give thanks.

Holy be the hands that sew our clothes so that we do not have to go naked;
sacred be the hands that build our homes so that we do not have to be cold;
blessed be the hands that work the land so that we do not have to go hungry.

Creator God, we give thanks.

Holy be the feet of all who labor so that we might have rest,
sacred be the feet of all who run swiftly to stand with the oppressed,
blessed be the feet of all whose bodies are too broken or weary to stand.

Creator God, we give thanks.

Holy be the sound of children laughing to take away our sorrow,
sacred be the sound of water falling to take away our thirst,
blessed be the sound of your people singing to heal our troubled hearts.

Creator God, we give thanks.

Holy be the bodies of those who know hunger,
sacred be the bodies of those who are broken.
blessed be the bodies of those who suffer.
In your mercy and grace,
soften our callous hearts and
fill us with gratitude for all the gifts you have given us.

**Prayer to Welcome the Sabbath**

In your love,
break down the walls that separate us and
guide us along your path of peace,
that we might humbly worship you in Spirit and Truth.
Amen.

Lord of Creation,
create in us a new rhythm of life
composed of hours that sustain rather than stress,
of days that deliver rather than destroy,
of time that tickles rather than tackles.

Lord of Liberation,
by the rhythm of Your Truth, set us free
from the bondage and baggage that breaks us,
from the Pharaohs and fellows that fail us,
from the plans and pursuits that prey upon us.

Lord of Resurrection,
may we be raised into the rhythm of Your new life,
dead to deceitful calendars,
dead to fleeting friend requests,
dead to the empty peace of our accomplishments.

To our packed-full planners, we bid, “Peace!”
To our over-caffeinated consciences, say, “Cease!”
To our suffocating selves, grant release.

Drowning in a sea of deadlines and death chimes,
we rest in you, our lifeline.

By your ever-restful grace,
allow us to enter Your Sabbath-rest
as your Sabbath-rest enters into us.

In the name of our Creator,
our Liberator,
our Resurrection and Life,
we pray.
Amen.
The Death of Someone Killed in the Neighborhood

Lamb of God,
you take away the sins of the world.
Have mercy on us.
Grant us peace.

For the unbearable toil of our sinful world,
we plead for remission.
For the terror of absence from our beloved,
we plead for your comfort.
For the scandalous presence of death in your Creation,
we plead for the resurrection.

Lamb of God,
you take away the sins of the world.
Have mercy on us.
Grant us peace.

Come, Holy Spirit, and heal all that is broken in our lives, in our streets, and in our world. In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen

For Healing

In the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit,
We enjoin your divine mercies.
Lord, why do we suffer?
Why do we hurt?
Shall our only answer
Be the eternal abyss of the cosmos?
Shall our only answer be the whirlwind of unknowing
Which engulfed Job?
Why do the wicked flourish,
While the righteous waste away?
I am left speechless, left with the words,
“‘I will trust in you, my God.’”

God, we ask for the sending of your healing Spirit,
Which came to us through Jesus, as he breathed upon his disciples.
This Spirit gathered in your people,
To be warmed by the fire of divine presence.
Around this warmth, may (name of sick person)
Be healed and taken into your care.

Like the blind man whom Jesus healed,
May (name of sick person) become a sign
of your glory, calling you the Anointed One,
The one who also anoints us and points us to the Love of God.
Grants us your healing peace, Amen.

A Prayer for Adoption

Generous and Divine Trinity,
We give thanks for the presence
Of our holy brothers and sisters.

We give thanks that you created the world,
Though it turned from your ways.
We give thanks that you began a people
To bless this world,
Though it did not always bless.
We give thanks, with greatest reverence,
For the gift of your Son Jesus Christ,
Who indeed blessed the world.
Thanks be to God for the signs and glory of
The Lamb of God.

In him, we are all adopted children of God.
We are brought into the divine redemption,
Which now subsists in each embrace,
Each extension of love.
Each sacrament,
Each kiss and act of service.

May the adoption of this beloved child (name of adopted)
Be blessed.
Almighty God, you adopted the people in Egypt,
and they came out into the wilderness to pitch a tent.
May (we) the family of this beloved child,
Enjoy the presence of God,
In the tent of life together,
As they (we) look toward the pillar of fire by day —
A sign of your coming glorious redemption.
And the pillar of cloud by night —
A sign of your presence amidst our trials and darkness.

In Christ, the Son of God,
there is neither adoptive nor natural parents and children.
We are all born again in the Spirit of God.
This Spirit redeems us with the substance of faith, hope, and love.
May this child be blessed by the mysterious presence, mercy, and grace of the Trinity, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.
Amen.

Baby Dedication

Celebrant:
The blessing of Christ Comes to you in this child. God’s blessing is mercy and kindness and joy. Blessing comes to home and to family.
Welcome, (name of child), Child of love. God is here to bless you. And blessed are you, Beyond telling, To be born to parents who love you and love each other.

Grow gently, (name of child), In love of God. We bless you, And pray Christ be near you, Now and each hour Of your life

All:
God be with you In this your day, Every day and every way, With you and for you In this your day, And the love and affection Of heaven be toward you.

Celebrant:
As a tiny baby Your parents cover And clothe you In their love And with their faith.

As you grow
May faith grow with you. May you find the presence Of Christ your clothing And protection. And year by year may the Knowledge of His presence Be greater for you, That daily you may put on Christ And walk as His own in the world.

Parents:
May God make clear to you each road; May God make safe to you each step; Should you stumble, hold you; If you fall, lift you up; When you are hard pressed with evil, Deliver you — And bring you at last to God’s glory.

Celebrant, facing the parents:
The blessing of Christ Comes to you in your (name of child); This blessing is mercy And kindness and joy. Blessing comes to home And to family.

Commissioning/Sending

In the name of the divine Trinity, Let us pray. God, you have called us into being through love. You have joined us to one another In love. How good and pleasant it is When your people dwell together in unity.
Shine your light upon your people
That we can see the glory of eternal life.
Grant (name of commissioned) the strength
To carry your blessing from this place to their next.
May they be at home in any land,
For all their earth is yours.
And, with their hopes set on your coming glory in the world,
live also an alien in all lands.
May the lamp of your word
Guide his/her feet on the unsure paths of life.

Our lives are but a breath,
But our breaths are drawn from your divine Spirit.
You have created us as walking paradoxes.
Specs of dust and divine-image bearers.
We are constantly restless,
Until we rest in you.

Grant (name of commissioned) a deeper fullness
Of being and spirit,
By carry our memory with him/her
in the coming journey.
May his/her face be fuller in glory and joy,
Now bearing new shape,
As our faces transform and supplement one another.

Go in the peace of Christ to love and serve the Lord,
Thanks be to God!

Celibacy Commitment

My Father,
I abandon myself to you.
Make of me what you will.
Whatever you make of me,
I thank you.
I am ready for everything
I accept everything.
Provided that your will be done in me,
In all your creatures,
I desire nothing else, Lord.

I put my soul in your hands,
I give it to you, Lord,
With all the love in my heart,
Because I love you,
And because it is for me a need of love
To give myself,
To put myself in your hands unreservedly,
With infinite trust.
For you are my Father!

Minister: What do you ask?
Initiate: The mercy of God and of the church.

Minister: The Lord Christ has chosen you to be in the Church a sign of pure love.
Initiate: Uphold me, O God, according to Your word, and I shall live; and do not disappoint me in my hope.

Minister: Do you commit to celibacy in the context of Christian community so long as you shall live?
Initiate: I do.

Minister: Do you give yourself fully to the church? Will you love her, comfort her, honor and keep her, in sickness and in health; and forsaking all others be faithful only unto her, so long as you shall live?
Initiate: I do.

Minister: Do you, (name of initiate), promise to love rather than force your way, to give your life away no longer living for yourself but for your sisters and brothers — loving them, humbly submitting to them, shepherding them, living with them?
Initiate: I do.

Minister: Do you, Church of (name of congregation), promise to honor (name of initiate) as part of your family and not take his offering lightly? Do you take (name of initiate) to be your brother/sister, to love him/her, comfort him/her, honor and keep him/her in sickness and in health?
Larger Community: We do.

Minister: Family and friends, do you rejoice with (name of initiate) in his/her love for the church? Are you willing, now and always, to support and encourage (name of initiate) in his/her promise to church community and celibacy?
Family and Friends: We do.
Blessing of the Land (at Planting or Harvest)

God of the Universe,
You made the heavens and the earth,
So we do not call our home merely “planet earth.”
We call it your Creation, a Divine Mystery,
a Gift from Your Most Blessed Hand.
The world itself is your miracle.
Bread and vegetables from earth are thus also from heaven.
Help us to see in our daily bread your presence.

Upon this garden
May your stars rain down their blessed dust.
May you send rain and sunshine upon our garden and us.
Grant us the humility to touch the humus,
That we might become more human.
That we might mend our rift from your Creation,
That we might then know the sacredness of the gift of life —
That we might truly experience life from the hand of God.
For you planted humanity in a garden,
and began our resurrection in a garden.
Our blessed memory and hope lie in a garden.

Thanks be to God,
Who made the world teeming with variety,
Of things on the earth, above, the earth, and under the earth.
Thanks be to God,
For the many kinds of plants, trees, and fruits,
We celebrate.
For the centipedes, ants, and worms,
For the mice, marmots, and bats,
For the cucumbers, tomatoes, and peppers
We rejoice,
That we find ourselves eclipsed by the magnitude
Of generosity and mystery.
Thanks be to God.

A Litany to Honor Women

We walk in the company of the women who have gone before, Mothers of the faith both named and unnamed,
Testifying with ferocity and faith to the Spirit of Wisdom and Healing.
They are the judges, the prophets, the martyrs, the warriors, poets, lovers and Saints

Who are near to us in the shadow of awareness, in the crevices of memory, in the landscape of our dreams.

We walk in the company of Deborah,
who judged the Israelites with authority and strength.

We walk in the company of Esther,
who used her position as Queen to ensure the welfare of her people.

We walk in the company of you whose names have been lost and silenced,
who kept and cradled the wisdom of the ages.

We walk in the company of the woman with the flow of blood,
who audaciously sought her healing and release.

We walk in the company of Mary Magdalene,
who wept at the empty tomb until the risen Christ appeared.

We walk in the company of Phoebe,
who led an early church in the empire of Rome.

We walk in the company of Perpetua of Carthage,
whose witness in the third century led to her martyrdom.

We walk in the company of Saint Christina the Astonishing,
who resisted death with persistence and wonder.

We walk in the company of Julian of Norwich,
who wed imagination and theology proclaiming “all shall be well.”

We walk in the company of Sojourner Truth,
who stood against oppression, righteously declaring “ain’t I a woman!” in 1852.

We walk in the company of the Argentine Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo,
who turned their grief to strength, standing together to remember “the disappeared” children of war with a holy indignation.

We walk in the company of Alice Walker,
who named the lavender hue of womanish strength.

We walk in the company of you Mothers of the faith,
who teach us to resist evil with boldness, to lead with wisdom, and to heal.

Amen.
Prayer for Communion/Eucharist

Celebrant:
The table of bread is now to be made ready.
It is the table of company with Jesus,
And all who love him.
It is the table of sharing with the poor of the world,
With whom Jesus identified himself.
It is the table of communion with the earth,
In which Christ became incarnate.
So come to this table,
You who have much faith
And you who would like to have more;
You who have been here often
And you who have not been for a long time;
You who have tried to follow Jesus,
And you who have failed;
Come.
It is Christ who invites us to meet him here.

Prayer:
Loving God,
through your goodness
we have this bread and wine and grape juice to offer,
which has come forth from the earth
and human hands have made.
May we know your presence
in the sharing,
so that we may know your touch
and presence in all things.
We celebrate the life that Jesus has shared
among his community through the centuries,
and shares with us now.
Made one in Christ
and one with each other,
we offer these gifts and with them ourselves,
a single, living, act of praise.
Amen.
All Creatures of Our God and King

D Bm A G

Come, Thou Fount

C F C Bb C F

Come, Ye Sinners

F Bb F C Bb F

Amazing Grace

F F7 Bb F Dm G C C7

Doxology

G D C G/B Em D G G D Em C G D

Be Thou My Vision

Capo 1: D G Bm A D A A/G G A

D G Bm D A G A

Praise God from whom all blessings flow. Praise God, all creatures here below.
Praise God a bove, ye heav’n ly hosts. Praise Fa ther,

572 Songbook

Songbook 573
Freedom Train

Gloria

Glory, Glory, Hallelujah

Go, Tell It on the Mountain

Guide My Feet

Holy, Holy, Holy