

The prayers are prepared locally for each occasion. The following examples may be adapted or used as appropriate.

Joining our voices with the heavenly host and Christians throughout time and space, let us pray for the church, the world, and all in need.

A brief silence.

You come to us in gatherings of your church across the globe. Unite us with those who celebrate your birth even when they are weighed down by grief, loss, poverty, hunger, or injustice. Merciful God,
receive our prayer.

You come to us in the diverse splendor of the universe. Grant us the humility to trust our place in the network of creation, that we live in service to you and the natural world. Merciful God,
receive our prayer.

You come to us through relationships of many kinds: families, friendships, communities, and nations. Guide us in these relationships, that we recognize the Christ child in one another and show your love to those most vulnerable. Merciful God,
receive our prayer.

You come to us through people whom the world forgets. Poor shepherds and an imprisoned Paul announced your good news. Send your Spirit to all who are imprisoned, struggling with addiction, unwell, or in any need this day (*especially*). Merciful God,
receive our prayer.

You come to us in acts of justice and forgiveness. Open our hearts to forgive one another, without permitting injustice. Supply us with the wisdom to be clothed with love, binding all things together in perfect harmony. Merciful God,
receive our prayer.

Here other intercessions may be offered.

You come to us through those who have died yet live with you forever (*especially*). We give thanks for Stephen, deacon and martyr, who gave his life to tell the story of your love. Merciful God,
receive our prayer.

Rejoicing in your Word made flesh among us, we commend these prayers to you, confident of your grace and love made known to us in Jesus Christ, our Savior.
Amen.



Celebrate

First Sunday of Christmas
December 26, 2021

On the first Sunday of Christmas we find the boy Samuel and the boy Jesus, both in the temple, both growing in wisdom and stature and in favor with God and human-kind. We too have returned to the house of God “to sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs to God,” who has gifted us with a savior. As the festival continues, “let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts.” It is Christmas, still.

Prayer of the Day

Shine into our hearts the light of your wisdom, O God, and open our minds to the knowledge of your word, that in all things we may think and act according to your good will and may live continually in the light of your Son, Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen.**

First Reading

1 Samuel 2:18-20, 26

Having dedicated her son Samuel to God’s service, Hannah visits him every year when she and her husband Elkanah come to the temple to offer sacrifices. God grants Hannah more children, and Samuel himself gains favor in the sight of all.

Samuel was ministering before the LORD, a boy wearing a linen ephod.¹⁹His mother used to make for him a little robe and take it to him each year, when she went up with her husband to offer the yearly sacrifice.²⁰Then Eli would bless Elkanah and his wife, and say, “May the LORD

repay you with children by this woman for the gift that she made to the LORD”; and then they would return to their home.

²⁶Now the boy Samuel continued to grow both in stature and in favor with the LORD and with the people.

Preparing for Next Week

Monday (John, Apostle and Evangelist) John 21:20-25. **Tuesday** (The Holy Innocents, Martyrs) Matthew 2:13-18. **Wednesday** (Stephen, Deacon and Martyr [transferred]) Matthew 23:34-39. **Thursday** 2 Chronicles 1:7-13. **Friday** Psalm 147:12-20. **Saturday** (Name of Jesus) Luke 2:15-21. **Second Sunday of Christmas** (commemoration of Johann Konrad Wilhelm Loehe, renewer of the church, 1872) Jeremiah 31:7-14 or Sirach 24:1-12; Psalm 147:12-20 or Wisdom 10:15-21; Ephesians 1:3-14; John 1:[1-9] 10-18.

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The splen- dor of the LORD is o - ver earth and heav'n.

Hallelujah! Praise the LORD ¹ from the heavens;
praise God ¹ in the heights.

²Praise the LORD, ¹ all you angels;
sing praise, all you ¹ hosts of heaven.

³Praise the LORD, ¹ sun and moon;
sing praise, all you ¹ shining stars.

⁴Praise the LORD, heav- ¹ en of heavens,
and you waters a- ¹ bove the heavens.

⁵Let them praise the name ¹ of the LORD,
who commanded, and they ¹ were created,

⁶who made them stand fast forev- ¹ er and ever,
giving them a law that shall not ¹ pass away. **R**

⁷Praise the LORD ¹ from the earth,
you sea monsters ¹ and all deeps;

⁸fire and hail, ¹ snow and fog,
tempestuous wind, do- ¹ ing God's will;

⁹mountains ¹ and all hills,
fruit trees ¹ and all cedars;

¹⁰wild beasts ¹ and all cattle,
creeping things and ¹ flying birds;

¹¹sovereigns of the earth ¹ and all peoples,
princes and all rulers ¹ of the world;

¹²young ¹ men and maidens,
old and ¹ young together. **R**

¹³Let them praise the name ¹ of the LORD,
whose name only is exalted, whose splendor is over ¹ earth and heaven.

¹⁴The LORD has raised up strength for the people
and praise for all ¹ faithful servants,

the children of Israel, a people who are near the LORD.
¹ Hallelujah! **R**

Just as newly baptized Christians in the early church were clothed with new garments upon arising from the baptismal waters, so all who have received God's gift of life in Jesus Christ are covered with the character of Christ.

As God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience. ¹³Bear with one another and, if anyone has a complaint against another, forgive each other; just as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. ¹⁴Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. ¹⁵And let the peace of Christ rule

in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in the one body. And be thankful. ¹⁶Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly; teach and admonish one another in all wisdom; and with gratitude in your hearts sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs to God. ¹⁷And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

Gospel

Luke 2:41-52

Jesus grew up in a family that went to the Passover festival each year. It was in this environment of faithful adherence to the law that Jesus grew into spiritual maturity and an understanding of his identity and mission.

Now every year [Jesus'] parents went to Jerusalem for the festival of the Passover. ⁴²And when he was twelve years old, they went up as usual for the festival. ⁴³When the festival was ended and they started to return, the boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem, but his parents did not know it. ⁴⁴Assuming that he was in the group of travelers, they went a day's journey. Then they started to look for him among their relatives and friends. ⁴⁵When they did not find him, they returned to Jerusalem to search for him. ⁴⁶After three days they found him in the temple, sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions. ⁴⁷And all who heard him

were amazed at his understanding and his answers. ⁴⁸When his parents saw him they were astonished; and his mother said to him, "Child, why have you treated us like this? Look, your father and I have been searching for you in great anxiety." ⁴⁹He said to them, "Why were you searching for me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?" ⁵⁰But they did not understand what he said to them. ⁵¹Then he went down with them and came to Nazareth, and was obedient to them. His mother treasured all these things in her heart.

⁵²And Jesus increased in wisdom and in years, and in divine and human favor.