

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

Called together to follow Jesus, we pray for the church, the world, and all in need.

A brief silence.

Call your people to seek your wisdom in difficult conversations and action. Give the church everywhere courage to repent for the ways we have tolerated and practiced injustice (*injustice such as systemic racism, church sanction of colonialism, church protection of sexual abusers may be named*). Merciful God, **receive our prayer.**

Inspire our wonder at creation, from the light of dawn to the beauty of the dark night. Sustain the unseen depths of the ocean to the plants and animals we know well. Bring healing to lands and communities experiencing natural disasters (*especially*). Merciful God, **receive our prayer.**

Instruct the powerful in your ways. Provide upright leadership in business and industry, that workers are not oppressed. Throughout the world, inspire voters and raise up politicians to heed your call for nations to practice righteousness. Merciful God, **receive our prayer.**

Preparing for Next Week

Monday Psalm 119:105-112. **Tuesday** 2 Corinthians 4:1-12. **Wednesday** John 8:12-30. **Thursday** Psalm 119:1-8. **Friday** 1 John 2:7-17. **Saturday** Deuteronomy 30:1-9a. **Sixth Sunday after Epiphany** Deuteronomy 30:15-20 *or* Sirach 15:15-20; Psalm 119:1-8; 1 Corinthians 3:1-9; Matthew 5:21-37.

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Loosen the bonds of injustice in our midst. Grant peace to endless quarrels, put an end to hunger, and break every yoke of oppression. Shelter all who flee abuse in their homes or violence in their communities. Satisfy those afflicted in any way (*especially*). Merciful God, **receive our prayer.**

Shape our congregation to be salt for the earth. Give us delight in your commandments, that we are generous with those in need. Make us steadfast in our trust in you, ready with tangible mercy and compassion for our neighbors. Merciful God, **receive our prayer.**

Here other intercessions may be offered.

The cross and resurrection bring redemption from sin and death. We praise you for (*the Martyrs of Japan and*) all whose unshaken faith in Christ shines forth in their witness. Keep them in our remembrance and bring us with them into the kingdom of heaven. Merciful God, **receive our prayer.**

We bring to you our needs and hopes, O God, trusting your wisdom and power revealed in Christ crucified. **Amen.**



Celebrate

Fifth Sunday after Epiphany
February 5, 2023

Light shines in the darkness for the upright, the psalmist sings. Isaiah declares that when we loose the bonds of injustice and share our bread with the hungry, the light breaks forth like the dawn. In another passage from the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus, the light of the world, calls his followers to let the light of their good works shine before others. Through baptism we are sent into the world to shine with the light of Christ.

Prayer of the Day

Lord God, with endless mercy you receive the prayers of all who call upon you. By your Spirit show us the things we ought to do, and give us the grace and power to do them, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. **Amen.**

First Reading

Isaiah 58:1-9a [9b-12]

Shortly after the return of Israel from exile in Babylon, the people were troubled by the ineffectiveness of their fasts. God reminds them that outward observance is no substitute for genuine fasting that results in acts of justice, such as feeding the hungry, sheltering the homeless, and clothing the naked.

Shout out, do not hold back!

Lift up your voice like a trumpet!
Announce to my people their rebellion,
to the house of Jacob their sins.

²Yet day after day they seek me
and delight to know my ways,
as if they were a nation that practiced
righteousness
and did not forsake the ordinance of
their God;

they ask of me righteous judgments,
they delight to draw near to God.

³“Why do we fast, but you do not see?
Why humble ourselves, but you do
not notice?”

Look, you serve your own interest on
your fast day,
and oppress all your workers.

⁴Look, you fast only to quarrel and to
fight

and to strike with a wicked fist.
Such fasting as you do today
will not make your voice heard on
high.

⁵Is such the fast that I choose,
a day to humble oneself?
Is it to bow down the head like a bulrush,
and to lie in sackcloth and ashes?
Will you call this a fast,
a day acceptable to the LORD?

⁶Is not this the fast that I choose:
to loose the bonds of injustice,
to undo the thongs of the yoke,
to let the oppressed go free,
and to break every yoke?

⁷Is it not to share your bread with the
hungry,
and bring the homeless poor into
your house;
when you see the naked, to cover them,
and not to hide yourself from your
own kin?

⁸Then your light shall break forth like
the dawn,
and your healing shall spring up
quickly;
your vindicator shall go before you,
the glory of the LORD shall be your
rear guard.

continued



Light shines in the dark - ness for the up - right.

Hallelujah! Happy are they who ¹ fear the LORD
and have great delight in ¹ God's commandments!

²**Their descendants will be mighty ¹ in the land;
the generation of the upright ¹ will be blessed.**

³Wealth and riches will be ¹ in their house,
and their righteousness will ¹ last forever.

⁴**Light shines in the darkness ¹ for the upright;
the righteous are merciful and full ¹ of compassion. R**

⁵It is good for them to be gener- ¹ous in lending
and to manage their af- ¹fairs with justice.

⁶**For they will nev- ¹er be shaken;
the righteous will be kept in everlast- ¹ing remembrance.**

⁷They will not be afraid of any ¹ evil rumors;
their heart is steadfast, trusting ¹ in the LORD.

⁸**Their heart is established and ¹ will not shrink,
until they see their desire up- ¹on their enemies.**

⁹They have given freely to the poor,
and their righteousness stands ¹ fast forever;
they will hold up their ¹ head with honor. [R] *here only if psalm ends at v. 9*

¹⁰**The wicked will see it and be angry;
they will gnash their teeth and ¹ pine away;
the desires of the wick- ¹ed will perish.] R**

First Reading, continued

^{9a}Then you shall call, and the LORD will
answer;
you shall cry for help, and he will say,
Here I am.

[^{9b}If you remove the yoke from
among you,
the pointing of the finger, the
speaking of evil,

¹⁰if you offer your food to the hungry
and satisfy the needs of the afflicted,
then your light shall rise in the darkness
and your gloom be like the noonday.

¹¹The LORD will guide you continually,
and satisfy your needs in parched
places,
and make your bones strong;
and you shall be like a watered garden,
like a spring of water, whose waters
never fail.

¹²Your ancient ruins shall be rebuilt;
you shall raise up the foundations of
many generations;
you shall be called the repairer of the
breach,
the restorer of streets to live in.]

Though people such as the Corinthians are enamored with human philosophy and wisdom, Paul continuously presents God's hidden wisdom which is Jesus Christ crucified. True spiritual maturity involves judging ourselves and others in light of God's revelation in the cross.

When I came to you, brothers and sisters, I did not come proclaiming the mystery of God to you in lofty words or wisdom. ²For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ, and him crucified. ³And I came to you in weakness and in fear and in much trembling. ⁴My speech and my proclamation were not with plausible words of wisdom, but with a demonstration of the Spirit and of power, ⁵so that your faith might rest not on human wisdom but on the power of God.

⁶Yet among the mature we do speak wisdom, though it is not a wisdom of this age or of the rulers of this age, who are doomed to perish. ⁷But we speak God's wisdom, secret and hidden, which God decreed before the ages for our glory. ⁸None of the rulers of this age understood this; for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. ⁹But, as it is written,

"What no eye has seen, nor ear heard,
nor the human heart conceived,
what God has prepared for those who
love him"—

¹⁰these things God has revealed to us through the Spirit; for the Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God. ¹¹For what human being knows what is truly human except the human spirit that is within? So also no one comprehends what is truly God's except the Spirit of God. ¹²Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit that is from God, so that we may understand the gifts bestowed on us by God. [¹³And we speak of these things in words not taught by human wisdom but taught by the Spirit, interpreting spiritual things to those who are spiritual.

¹⁴Those who are unspiritual do not receive the gifts of God's Spirit, for they are foolishness to them, and they are unable to understand them because they are spiritually discerned. ¹⁵Those who are spiritual discern all things, and they are themselves subject to no one else's scrutiny.

¹⁶"For who has known the mind of the Lord
so as to instruct him?"
But we have the mind of Christ.]

Gospel

Matthew 5:13-20

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus encourages his followers to be the salt of the earth and the light of the world, doing good works and keeping God's commandments.

[Jesus said:] "You are the salt of the earth; but if salt has lost its taste, how can its saltiness be restored? It is no longer good for anything, but is thrown out and trampled under foot.

¹⁴"You are the light of the world. A city built on a hill cannot be hid. ¹⁵No one after lighting a lamp puts it under the bushel basket, but on the lampstand, and it gives light to all in the house. ¹⁶In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven.

¹⁷"Do not think that I have come to abolish the law or the prophets; I have come not to abolish but to fulfill. ¹⁸For truly I tell you, until heaven and earth pass away, not one letter, not one stroke of a letter will pass from the law until all is accomplished. ¹⁹Therefore, whoever breaks one of the least of these commandments, and teaches others to do the same, will be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever does them and teaches them will be called great in the kingdom of heaven. ²⁰For I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven."