

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

Trusting in God's good news of great joy for all people, we offer our prayers for ourselves, our neighbors, and the world God loves.

A brief silence.

Glory to you, God, for the song of the angels, proclaiming to the world Christ's holy birth. Give your church a joyful song to sing, that we bring the good news of peace and salvation to all people. Hear us, O God.

**Your mercy is great.**

Glory to you, God, for the stars that shine in the depth of the night. Provoke awe in our hearts at the expansive mystery of the cosmos. Open us to find beauty in the clear darkness of night and in the first glimmers of dawn. Hear us, O God.

**Your mercy is great.**

Glory to you, God, for the child born to us who establishes a kingdom of justice and righteousness. Break bonds of oppression, bring reconciliation to warring lands, and establish peace from this time onward and forevermore. Hear us, O God.

**Your mercy is great.**

## Preparing for Next Week

**Monday** (Nativity of Our Lord, Christmas Day) John 1:1-14. **Tuesday** (Stephen, Deacon and Martyr) Acts 6:8—7:2a, 51-60. **Wednesday** (John, Apostle and Evangelist) John 21:20-25. **Thursday** (The Holy Innocents, Martyrs) Matthew 2:13-18. **Friday** Psalm 148. **Saturday** 2 Peter 3:8-13. **First Sunday of Christmas** Isaiah 61:10—62:3; Psalm 148; Galatians 4:4-7; Luke 2:22-40.

CELEBRATE Nativity of Our Lord

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# Celebrate

## Nativity of Our Lord

*In winter's deepest night, we welcome the light of the Christ child. Isaiah declares that the light of the long-promised king will illumine the world and bring endless peace and justice. Paul reminds us that the grace of God through Jesus Christ brings salvation to all people. The angels declare that Jesus' birth is good and joyful news for everyone, including lowly shepherds. Filled with the light that shines in our lives, we go forth to share the light of Christ with the whole world.*

### Prayer of the Day

Almighty God, you made this holy night shine with the brightness of the true Light. Grant that here on earth we may walk in the light of Jesus' presence and in the last day wake to the brightness of his glory; through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen.**

### First Reading

#### Isaiah 9:2-7

*This poem promises deliverance from Assyrian oppression, a hope based on the birth of a royal child with a name full of promise. While Judah's king will practice justice and righteousness, the real basis for faith lies in God's passion for the people: The zeal of the LORD of hosts will do this!*

The people who walked in darkness  
have seen a great light;  
those who lived in a land of deep  
darkness—

on them light has shined.

<sup>3</sup>You have multiplied the nation,  
you have increased its joy;  
they rejoice before you  
as with joy at the harvest,  
as people exult when dividing  
plunder.

<sup>4</sup>For the yoke of their burden,  
and the bar across their shoulders,  
the rod of their oppressor,  
you have broken as on the day of  
Midian.

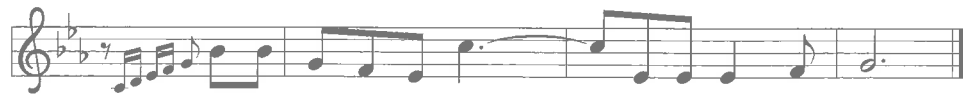
<sup>5</sup>For all the boots of the tramping  
warriors

and all the garments rolled in  
blood  
shall be burned as fuel for the fire.

<sup>6</sup>For a child has been born for us,  
a son given to us;  
authority rests upon his shoulders;  
and he is named  
Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,  
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.  
<sup>7</sup>His authority shall grow continually,  
and there shall be endless peace  
for the throne of David and his  
kingdom.

He will establish and uphold it  
with justice and with righteousness  
from this time onward and  
forevermore.

The zeal of the LORD of hosts will  
do this.



Let the heav-ens re-joice, and the earth be glad.

Sing to the LORD <sup>1</sup>a new song;  
sing to the LORD, <sup>1</sup>all the earth.

<sup>2</sup>**Sing to the LORD, bless the name <sup>1</sup>of the LORD;  
proclaim God's salvation from <sup>1</sup>day to day.**

<sup>3</sup>Declare God's glory a- <sup>1</sup>mong the nations  
and God's wonders a- <sup>1</sup>mong all peoples.

<sup>4</sup>**For great is the LORD and greatly <sup>1</sup>to be praised,  
more to be feared <sup>1</sup>than all gods. R**

<sup>5</sup>As for all the gods of the nations, they <sup>1</sup>are but idols;  
but you, O LORD, have <sup>1</sup>made the heavens.

<sup>6</sup>**Majesty and magnificence are <sup>1</sup>in your presence;  
power and splendor are in your <sup>1</sup>sanctuary.**

<sup>7</sup>Ascribe to the LORD, you families <sup>1</sup>of the peoples,  
ascribe to the LORD hon- <sup>1</sup>or and power.

<sup>8</sup>**Ascribe to the LORD the honor due the <sup>1</sup>holy name;  
bring offerings and enter the courts <sup>1</sup>of the LORD. R**

<sup>9</sup>Worship the LORD in the beau- <sup>1</sup>ty of holiness;  
tremble before the LORD, <sup>1</sup>all the earth.

<sup>10</sup>**Tell it out among the nations: "The <sup>1</sup>LORD is king!  
The one who made the world so firm that it  
cannot be moved will judge the peo- <sup>1</sup>ples with equity."**

<sup>11</sup>Let the heavens rejoice, and let the <sup>1</sup>earth be glad;  
let the sea thunder and all that is in it;  
let the field be joyful and all that <sup>1</sup>is therein.

<sup>12</sup>**Then shall all the trees of the wood shout for joy  
at your com- <sup>1</sup>ing, O LORD,**

**for you come to <sup>1</sup>judge the earth.**

<sup>13</sup>You will judge the <sup>1</sup>world with righteousness  
and the peoples <sup>1</sup>with your truth. R

*The appearance of God's grace in Jesus Christ brings salvation for all humanity. Consequently, in the present we live wisely and justly while also anticipating the hope of our Savior's final appearance.*

The grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all, <sup>12</sup>training us to renounce impiety and worldly passions, and in the present age to live lives that are self-controlled, upright, and godly, <sup>13</sup>while we wait for the blessed hope

and the manifestation of the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ. <sup>14</sup>He it is who gave himself for us that he might redeem us from all iniquity and purify for himself a people of his own who are zealous for good deeds.

## Gospel

Luke 2:1-14 [15-20]

*God's greatest gift comes as a baby in a manger. Angels announce the "good news of great joy" and proclaim God's blessing of peace.*

In those days a decree went out from Emperor Augustus that all the world should be registered. <sup>2</sup>This was the first registration and was taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria. <sup>3</sup>All went to their own towns to be registered. <sup>4</sup>Joseph also went from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to the city of David called Bethlehem, because he was descended from the house and family of David. <sup>5</sup>He went to be registered with Mary, to whom he was engaged and who was expecting a child. <sup>6</sup>While they were there, the time came for her to deliver her child. <sup>7</sup>And she gave birth to her first-born son and wrapped him in bands of cloth, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.

<sup>8</sup>In that region there were shepherds living in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. <sup>9</sup>Then an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. <sup>10</sup>But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid; for see—I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: <sup>11</sup>to you is born this day

in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord. <sup>12</sup>This will be a sign for you: you will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger." <sup>13</sup>And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and saying,

<sup>14</sup>"Glory to God in the highest  
heaven,

and on earth peace among those  
whom he favors!"

[<sup>15</sup>When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let us go now to Bethlehem and see this thing that has taken place, which the Lord has made known to us." <sup>16</sup>So they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the child lying in the manger. <sup>17</sup>When they saw this, they made known what had been told them about this child; <sup>18</sup>and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds told them. <sup>19</sup>But Mary treasured all these words and pondered them in her heart. <sup>20</sup>The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them.]