

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

As we celebrate Christ embodied in human form, we pray for God's blessing on the church, the world, and all of creation.

A brief silence.

Everlasting God, you bring your healing power to the church. Give your church a spirit of unity and prayer, that we discern your way for us in the world. God of grace, receive our prayer.

Creator of the ends of the earth, you make the grass grow and send rain for the soil. Bring your creation into harmony and balance. Give animals their food and provide healthy shelter for your people. Inspire us to honor the miraculous beauty of all you have made. God of grace, receive our prayer.

God without equal, your steadfast love endures forever. Bring the leaders, elected officials, and peacekeepers of our towns and countries into understanding and unity. Guide them to serve with compassion and understanding. God of grace, receive our prayer.

Preparing for Next Week

Monday (commemoration of the Martyrs of Japan, 1597) Psalm 102:12-28. Tuesday 2 Kings 8:1-6. Wednesday Mark 3:7-12. Thursday Psalm 50:1-6. Friday 1 Timothy 1:12-20. Saturday Luke 19:41-44. Transfiguration of Our Lord 2 Kings 2:1-12; Psalm 50:1-6; 2 Corinthians 4:3-6; Mark 9:2-9.

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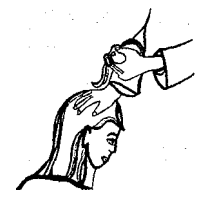
God who strengthens, you lift up with your hand any who are suffering. Heal those who are brokenhearted and strengthen the weak and all in need (especially). God of grace, receive our prayer.

God who gives power to the faint, challenge us to share the faith stories of what God has done in our lives. Open us to receive the unique ways God is at work in your people, especially those whose perspectives challenge our own. God of grace, receive our prayer.

Here other intercessions may be offered.

God who calls each star by name, we remember all who have died. Shelter all who mourn with your mercy and care, and give us hope in your promised salvation. God of grace, receive our prayer.

Knowing the Holy Spirit intercedes for us, we offer these prayers and the silent prayers of our hearts in the name of our Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.



Celebrate

Fifth Sunday after Epiphany February 4, 2024

In Isaiah the one God who sits above the earth and numbers the stars also strengthens the powerless. So in Jesus' healing work we see the hand of the creator God, lifting up the sick woman to health and service (diakonia). Like Simon's mother-in-law, we are lifted up and healed to serve. Following Jesus, we strengthen the powerless; like Jesus, we seek to renew our own strength in quiet times of prayer.

Prayer of the Day

Everlasting God, you give strength to the weak and power to the faint. Make us agents of your healing and wholeness, that your good news may be made known to the ends of your creation, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen.

First Reading

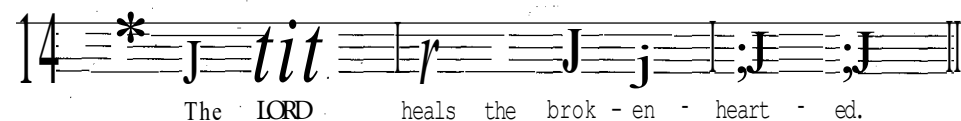
Isaiah 40:21-31

The Judeans in exile have a good reason to be hopeful: the one who will bring them to freedom is the God who created the world, the God who subdues the rulers of the earth and gives strength to those who are weary.

Have you not known? Have you not heard? Has it not been told you from the beginning? Have you not understood from the foundations of the earth? It is he who sits above the circle of the earth, and its inhabitants are like grasshoppers; who stretches out the heavens like a curtain, and spreads them like a tent to live in; who brings princes to naught, and makes the rulers of the earth as nothing. Scarcely are they planted, scarcely sown, scarcely has their stem taken root in the earth, when he blows upon them, and they wither, and the tempest carries them off like stubble.

25 To whom then will you compare me, or who is my equal? says the Holy One. 26 Lift up your eyes on high and see: He who brings out their host and numbers them, calling them all by name; because he is great in strength, mighty in power, not one is missing. 27 Why do you say, O Jacob, and speak, O Israel, "My way is hidden from the LORD, and my right is disregarded by my God"? 28 Have you not known? Have you not heard? The LORD is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. He does not faint or grow weary; his understanding is unsearchable. 29 He gives power to the faint, and strengthens the powerless.

continued



Hallelujah! How good it is to sing praises | to our God!

How pleasant it is to honor | God with praise!

**²The LORD re- | builds Jerusalem,
and gathers the ex- | iles of Israel.**

³The LORD heals the | brokenhearted
and binds | up their wounds.

**⁴The LORD counts the number | of the stars
and calls them all | by their names. R**

⁵Great is our LORD and might- | y in power;
there is no limit | to God's wisdom.

**⁶The LORD lifts | up the lowly,
but casts the wicked | to the ground.**

⁷Sing to the LORD | with thanksgiving;
make music upon the harp | to our God,

**⁸who covers the heav- | ens with clouds
and prepares rain for the earth,
making grass to grow up- | on the mountains. R**

⁹God provides food | for the cattle
and for the young ravens | when they cry.

**¹⁰God is not impressed by the might | of a horse,
and has no pleasure in the speed | of a runner,**

¹¹but finds pleasure in those who | fear the LORD,
in those who await God's steadfast love.^{20c} | Hallelujah! R

³⁰Even youths will faint and be weary,
and the young will fall exhausted;
³¹but those who wait for the LORD shall
renew their strength,

they shall mount up with wings like
eagles;
they shall run and not be weary,
they shall walk and not faint.

Second Reading

1 Corinthians 9:16-23

God entrusted Paul with the responsibility of bringing the gospel to diverse people. Hence the focus of Paul's ministry is not his own rights or privileges as an apostle but the privilege of serving God by freely sharing the good news of Christ with others.

If I proclaim the gospel, this gives me no ground for boasting, for an obligation is laid on me, and woe to me if I do not proclaim the gospel! ⁷For if I do this of my own will, I have a reward; but if not of my own will, I am entrusted with a commission. ⁸What then is my reward? Just this: that in my proclamation I may make the gospel free of charge, so as not to make full use of my rights in the gospel.

⁹For though I am free with respect to all, I have made myself a slave to all, so that I might win more of them. ²⁰To the Jews I became as a Jew, in order

to win Jews. To those under the law I became as one under the law (though I myself am not under the law) so that I might win those under the law. ²¹To those outside the law I became as one outside the law (though I am not free from God's law but am under Christ's law) so that I might win those outside the law. ²²To the weak I became weak, so that I might win the weak. I have become aU things to all people, that I might by all means save some. ²³I do it all for the sake of the gospel, so that I may share in its blessings.

Gospel

Mark 1:29-39

Everywhere Jesus goes, many people expect him to set them free from oppression. Everywhere he goes, he heals people and sets them free. Disease, devils, and death are running for their lives. The forces that diminish human life are rendered powerless by Jesus.

As soon as Jesus and the disciples] left the synagogue, they entered the house of Simon and Andrew, with James and John. ³⁰Now Simon's mother-in-law was in bed with a fever, and they told him about her at once. ³¹He came and took her by the hand and lifted her up. Then the fever left her, and she began to serve them.

³²That evening, at sundown, they brought to him all who were sick or possessed with demons. ³³And the whole city was gathered around the door. ³⁴And he cured many who were sick with various diseases, and cast out many demons; and he would not

permit the demons to speak, because they knew him.

³⁵In the morning, while it was still very dark, he got up and went out to a deserted place, and there he prayed. ³⁶And Simon and his companions hunted for him. ³⁷When they found him, they said to him, "Everyone is searching for you." ³⁸He answered, "Let us go on to the neighboring towns, so that I may proclaim the message there also; for that is what I came out to do." ³⁹And he went throughout Galilee, proclaiming the message in their synagogues and casting out demons.