

CALL TO CONFESSION

Family of faith, one of the beautiful things about the prayer of confession is it is often a prayer we say together.

There are times when we close our eyes, bow our heads, and exchange private words with our Creator.

But there are other times when praying out loud as a community allows us to right our relationship with God and with one another as well.

This is one of those moments.

So as a community, please join me in our call and response prayer of confession. Join me in speaking the truth of our lives.

Join me in practicing grace.

PRAYER OF CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS

I have tried to make my own way.

I have tried to solve my own problems and to kindle my own faith. I have said a thousand times, “*turn back,*” as if I am fine on my own.

But the days are long and I am forgetful.

I need your help. Can you remind me?

We will remind you of this everlasting truth: You are not alone.

Where you go, God goes.

You are held in grace. Trust in this good news.

Thanks be to God! I remember. I believe.

Now we need your help.

We, too, have tried to make our own way.

We have tried to solve our own problems, to kindle our own faiths. We have said a thousand times, “*turn back,*” as if we are fine on our own.

But the days are long and we are forgetful.

We need your help. Can you remind us?

I will remind you of this everlasting truth: You are not alone.

Where you go, God goes.

You are held in grace.

Trust in this good news.

Thanks be to God! We remember. We believe. Alleluia! Amen.

GATHERING HYMN

HYMN 264 Prepare the Royal Highway

GREETING

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

And also with you

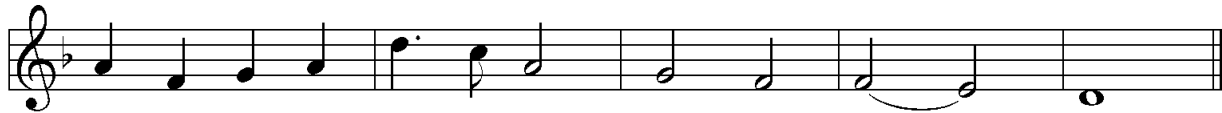
KYRIE



Ky - ri - e e - le - i - son: **☩ Lord, have mer - cy.**
Lord, have mer - cy:



Chri - ste e - le - i - son: **☩ Christ, have mer - cy.**
Christ, have mer - cy:



Ky - ri - e e - le - i - son: **☩ Lord, have mer - cy.**
Lord, have mer - cy:

PRAYER OF THE DAY

Let us pray: Stir up our hearts, Lord God,
to prepare the way of your only Son. By his coming give to all the people of the world knowledge
of your salvation; through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and
the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

Amen.

CHOIR *Light of Peace* Joel Raney (2007 Hope Publishing)

PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION

Holy God,

The words of this world whip around us like a mighty wind. We are caught up in news reports, in text messages, in emails and notifications. We are drowning in updates from the media, caught off guard by the constant hum of it all. But here on this bright morning we remember: you too are speaking.

Still the voices around us.

Calm our minds and center our hearts so that we can hear your words above the wind.

We are leaning closer.

We are at the edge of our chairs. We are beginning again.

Speak to us, as only you can.

Amen.

The assembly is seated

FIRST READING: Ecclesiastes 4:9-12

P: The Word of the Lord **C: Thanks be to God**

The assembly stands.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

Al - le - lu - ia. Lord, to whom shall we go?
Al - le - lu - ia. You have the words of e - ter - nal life.
Al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia.

GOSPEL : Luke 1:39-45

C: Glory to you, O Lord.

...

P: The Gospel of the Lord **C: Praise to you, O Christ**

The assembly is seated.

CHILDREN'S MESSAGE

SERMON

The assembly stands.

HYMN OF THE DAY

HYMN 656 Blest Be the Ties That Bind

AFFIRMATION OF FAITH

We believe in a with-us God:

a God who walks with us in the valley, dances with us on the mountaintop, sings with us through the night and rejoices in the morning.

We believe that this with-us God wired us for relationship,

saying to creation on the very first week, "Humans should not be alone."

Therefore, in an effort to be who God called us to be, we strive to live like the Trinity—connected, united, and centered.

We believe in the power of community.

We commit to learning each other's names.

We choose to journey with each other, like Elizabeth with Mary.

And we remember that no one can go through life alone.

Thanks be to God, for lighting our way.

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

Relational God,

There are certain truths we know about ourselves.

We know that we will make mistakes.

We know that we need you.

We know that some days are beautiful and some days are terrible. And we know that we cannot go through life alone.

Like flowers need the sun, we humans need relationships.

We need you.

We need this community.

So on this Sunday morning, we give you thanks for the connections we do have. Thank you for the friends who know us.

Thank you for the families who claim us.

Thank you for the church who welcomes us.

Thank you for the neighbors who remember us. Thank you for the mentors who believed in us, and for the saints who taught us.

Like Naomi needed Ruth, or Mary needed Joseph,

we know that we cannot make the long journey to Bethlehem alone. So for all who walk alongside us, we give you thanks.

However, at the same time,

we also know that more than ever, we live in a lonely world.

The US General Surgeon has declared loneliness an epidemic.

So today, as we remember our human need for connection, we also lift up every person who has ever felt disconnected.

We pray for anyone who has ever felt invisible in a crowded room.

We pray for those who put their heart on their sleeve, extend the invite, and still find themselves eating alone.

We pray for those who feel distanced from their family, by choice or circumstance.

We pray for those who doubt their worthiness, allowing self narratives to get in the way of meaningful connection.

We all long to have a Ruth in our lives. So for those of us still looking for people with loyalty like Ruth, draw near. Remind us that with you, we are never truly alone. With you, we are seen.

We are loved.

We are known.

We are celebrated.

Where we go, you go.

What greater love is there than that?

(Conclude the prayer)

SHARING OF THE PEACE

The peace of Christ be with you always.

And also with you.

The assembly is seated.

OFFERING

OFFERTORY *Comfort, Comfort Ye My People* - P. Manz - © 1962 Concordia Publishing House

The assembly stands and sings as the offerings are brought forward.



Let the vine-yards be fruit-ful, Lord, and fill to the brim our cup of



bles - sing. Gath - er a har - vest from the seeds that were



sown, that we may be fed with the bread of life.



Gath - er the hopes and dreams of all; u - nite them with the prayers we



of - fer now. Grace our ta - ble with your pres - ence,



Lord, and give us a fore - taste of the feast to come.

COMMUNION DIALOG

Pastor: The Lord be with you.

People: And also with you.

Pastor: Lift up your hearts.

People: We lift them to the Lord

Pastor: Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

People: It is right to give our thanks and praise.

THE GREAT THANKSGIVING

It is indeed right and salutary that we should at all times and in all places offer thanks and praise to you,

O Lord, holy Father, almighty and everliving God.

You comforted your people with the promise of the Redeemer, through whom you will also make all things new

in the day when he comes again to judge the world in righteousness.

And so, with the Church on earth and the hosts of heaven,

we praise your name and join their unending hymn:

Ho - ly, ho - ly, ho - ly Lord, God of pow - er and
might, heav - en and earth are full of your glo - ry.
Ho - san - na in the high - est. Bless - ed is he who
comes in the name of the Lord. Ho - san - na in the
high - est. Ho - san - na in the high - est.

The image shows a musical score for a hymn. It consists of five staves of music, each with a treble clef and a key signature of one flat (B-flat). The lyrics are written below the notes. The first staff begins with a common time signature 'C'. The music is written in a simple, melodic style with various note values and rests. The lyrics are: 'Ho - ly, ho - ly, ho - ly Lord, God of pow - er and might, heav - en and earth are full of your glo - ry. Ho - san - na in the high - est. Bless - ed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Ho - san - na in the high - est. Ho - san - na in the high - est.' The final staff ends with a double bar line.

GREAT PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING

Loving God,

We come to this Table today longing for a new beginning.

In a world that so often feels like it's ending,

we crave the hope of a new beginning.

We long to heal from the endings and crash landings of our hurting world and start again, rooted in your good news.

So week by week, bit by bit, we return to your Word.

Week by week, bit by bit, we return to each other.

Week by week, and bit by bit, we repeat the truths that we so often need to hear, trusting that by your grace, it is never too late to start again.

In the night in which he was betrayed,
our Lord Jesus took bread, and gave thanks;
broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying:
Take and eat; this is my body, given for you.
Do this for the remembrance of me.

Again, after supper, he took the cup, gave thanks,
and gave it for all to drink, saying:
This cup is the new covenant in my blood,
shed for you and for all people for the forgiveness of sin.
Do this for the remembrance of me.

So in this spirit of beginnings, we come to your Table.

Once more we ask that you would meet us here.

Pour out your Spirit on this ordinary meal, that in this bread and cup we may glimpse a new day.

May the sight of everyone being welcomed at this Table remind us that all are loved by you.

May the evidence that there is food for all remind us that no one is meant to go hungry.

May the fact that our own sin, shame, and doubt do not keep us from this Table remind us that you welcome and love us as we are.

And may all of these Communion truths serve as building blocks for a new day, for a new beginning.

With hope in our hearts, we pray.

With hope in our hearts, we gather.

With hope in our hearts, we begin again.

Meet us here.

Allow this joyful feast to be the start of something new.

With joy and hope, we weave our voices together
to pray the words your son taught us to pray, saying . . .

THE LORD'S PRAYER

***About Communion:** This is Christ's table and meal of grace! All are welcome! Ushers will guide you forward. Receive the bread (gluten free available); wine or white grape juice is received from a cup from the gold tray..If you have difficulty coming forward for the distribution, please let one of the ushers know and they will ask the pastor to bring you communion in the pew. Children may come forward for a blessing.*

INVITATION TO THE TABLE

When we come to this Table, for just a moment, we get a glimpse of God's promised day. We get a glimpse of a world where all are fed and all are welcomed.

And for just a moment we can believe the angels when they say,
"Be not afraid."

For just a moment, Mary's words tumble through our minds—
words of justice and hope, words like, "the hungry have been filled" and "the humble have been lifted."

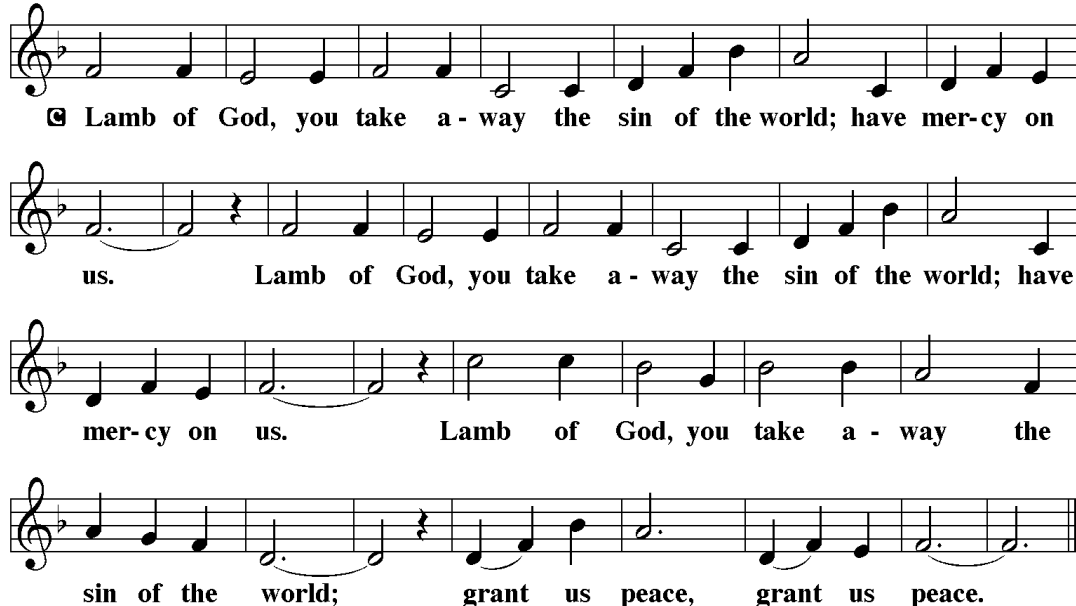
So come to this Table.

Come catch a glimpse of what could be.

Come end your waiting, for love is hovering close. This is what it's all about.

God is all around us.

So come. This good news is for you. All are welcome here.



☒ Lamb of God, you take a - way the sin of the world; have mer-cy on
us. Lamb of God, you take a - way the sin of the world; have
mer-cy on us. Lamb of God, you take a - way the
sin of the world; grant us peace, grant us peace.

The assembly is seated.

COMMUNION HYMN

HYMN 244 Rejoice, Rejoice Believers

The assembly stands.

POST COMMUNION BLESSING

The body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ strengthen you and keep you in his grace.

Amen.

CANTICLE



☞ Thank - ful hearts and voice - es raise; tell ev - 'ry -
one what God has done. Let all who seek the
Lord re - joice and bear Christ's ho - ly name.
Send us with your prom - is - es, O God, and
lead us forth in joy with shouts of thanks -
giv - ing. Al - le - lu - ia.

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

Nourishing God,
Sometimes we tell ourselves that too much has taken place to begin again.

We think the world is too far gone.
We think we have made too many mistakes.
We tell ourselves that we couldn't possibly begin again.

But then we come to this Table and we get a glimpse of your kingdom. We come to this Table and all are welcomed, all are seen, all are fed. And just like that, we have hope.
Just like that, we begin again.

Thank you for the gift of this fresh start.
Thank you for planting hope deep in our bones.
Thank you for meeting us in ordinary bread and juice to remind us that it's never too late to build your kingdom here.
We are grateful.
We are *so* grateful.

Amen

BENEDICTION

As you leave this place,
 may you have the wisdom to lean on one other.
May you have the courage to hold onto hope,
 the compassion to do the good that is yours to do,
 and the confidence to trust that God sees you as a blessing. For in a world full of dead ends,
Advent invites us to begin again.
So start here.
Start now.
Start with love and begin again.
In the name of Christ,
 our new beginning,
 go in peace.

SENDING HYMN

HYMN 266 **All Earth is Hopeful**

DEPART TO SERVE

POSTLUDE *Rejoice, Rejoice, Believers* - P. Manz - © 1990 Morning Star

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Principal Pianist and Sanctuary Choir Director: Judith Jackson

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