



**Desert Cross Daily Prayer, Scripture, & Devotion**  
**Week of August 31—September 5, 2020**

*You are encouraged to gather with the members of your household and join the members and friends of the Desert Cross community; though we be in separate locations, let us worship together at **6pm**.*

*(We will be reading and reflecting on texts from the daily and Sunday lectionary.)*

*Pastor Andrea Cain calls you to prayer this week.*

## **Monday, August 31, 2020**

Let us come before the Lord in worship and prayer united together by the power of the Holy Spirit.

### **Let us pray,**

O Lord, we thank you for your Son, who chose the path of suffering for the sake of the world. Be with us as we ingest your word and fill us with joy. Amen.

### **A reading from Jeremiah 15:15-21**

<sup>15</sup>*O Lord, you know;*

*remember me and visit me,*

*and bring down retribution for me on my persecutors.*

*In your forbearance do not take me away;*

*know that on your account I suffer insult.*

<sup>16</sup>***Your words were found, and I ate them,***

***and your words became to me a joy***

***and the delight of my heart;***

***for I am called by your name,***

*O Lord, God of hosts.*

<sup>17</sup>*I did not sit in the company of merrymakers,*

*nor did I rejoice;*

*under the weight of your hand I sat alone,*

*for you had filled me with indignation.*

<sup>18</sup>*Why is my pain unceasing,*

*my wound incurable,*

*refusing to be healed?*

*Truly, you are to me like a deceitful brook,*

*like waters that fail.*

<sup>19</sup>*Therefore thus says the Lord:*

*If you turn back, I will take you back,*

*and you shall stand before me.*

*If you utter what is precious, and not what is worthless,*

*you shall serve as my mouth.*

*It is they who will turn to you,*

*not you who will turn to them.*

<sup>20</sup>*And I will make you to this people*

*a fortified wall of bronze;*

*they will fight against you,*

*but they shall not prevail over you,*

***for I am with you***

***to save you and deliver you,***

*says the Lord.*

<sup>21</sup>*I will deliver you out of the hand of the wicked,*

*and redeem you from the grasp of the ruthless.*

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### **Devotion:**

The Prophet Jeremiah suffered under the weight of delivering God's word of judgment and grace to the Israelites who had been unfaithful in exile. This is a poem to God to express Jeremiah's sorrow at being persecuted for bringing God's unwanted word. It also expresses his joy in the Lord that brings him strength to follow God's difficult call. This section of Jeremiah brought God's word of care and love for the outcast, persecuted, suffering people of society, calling the people with resources to care for all of God's people. This made the elite people angry, and they didn't want to hear about it. They didn't want their sin and wrongdoing against God and other people to be in the light.

But Jeremiah shined the light anyway, and he was punished by the people. Therefore, he felt punished by God for doing God's work. But when Jeremiah "ate God's word," he was filled with joy and delight to know that God knew him, called him by name, and promised to be with him. He renewed his promise to bring God's word to the people. What does that look like in your life to "eat God's word" and what does it produce in your heart? How do you hear God calling you to live out God's concern for the least, the lost, and the little that Jesus loved and included?

This text reminds me of a David Hass song, "You are Mine." It is based on Isaiah, but it certainly fits here. This stanza is especially touching and might express what Jeremiah heard when he immersed himself in God's word:

*Do not be afraid, I am with you*

*I have called you each by name*

*Come and follow Me*

*I will bring you home*

*I love you and you are mine*

This poem is from the 7<sup>th</sup> Century B.C. and yet we still deal with these same types of issues. Jeremiah knows that following and trusting Jesus doesn't mean we will have an easy life. We Christ followers who take up our cross and follow Jesus also receive the comforting words of our saving God, "I have called you by name. I am with you. I love you."

Let us in this pandemic of our suffering and our joy, pray together this prayer of Mother Theresa which sounds very much like a challenging prayer of Jeremiah, addressing suffering in the world and being a servant of all:

**Let us pray,**  
**(O Jesus, You Who Suffer** from *In the Heart of the World*)

*O Jesus, you who suffer,  
grant that today and every day I may be able to  
see you in the person of your sick ones and that,  
by offering them my care, I may serve you.*

*Grant that, even if you are hidden under the  
unattractive disguise of anger, of crime, or of  
madness, I may recognize you and say, "Jesus,  
you who suffer, how sweet it is to serve you."*

*Give me, Lord, this vision of faith,  
and my work will never be monotonous.  
I will find joy in harboring the small whims and  
desires of all the poor who suffer.*

*Dear sick one, you are still more beloved to me  
because you represent Christ.*

*What a privilege I am granted in being able to take  
care of you!*

*O God, since you are Jesus who suffers, design to  
be for me also a Jesu who is patient, indulgent  
with my faults, who only looks at my intentions,  
which are to love you and to serve you in the  
person of each of these children of yours who  
suffer.*

*Lord, increase my faith.*

*Bless my efforts and my work,  
Now and forever. Amen.*

May the God of hope fill us with all joy and peace in believing, so that we may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Gathered into community through the power of the Holy Spirit of God, let us pray the prayer that Jesus taught us,

**Our Father, who art in heaven,  
hallowed be thy name,  
thy kingdom come,  
thy will be done,  
on earth as it is in heaven.**

**Give us this day our daily bread;  
and forgive us our trespasses,  
as we forgive those**

**who trespass against us;  
and lead us not into temptation,  
but deliver us from evil.  
For thine is the kingdom,  
and the power, and the glory,  
forever and ever. Amen.**

We give our hearts to the Lord, who is gracious and merciful and abounding in steadfast love. Amen.

## **Tuesday, September 1, 2020**

We open our hearts and minds to the blessing of God, as we gather together to hear God's word and pray.

### **Let us pray,**

O God, humble us by Jesus' example, point us to the path of obedience, and give us strength to follow your commands. Amen.

### **A reading from Psalm 26**

#### **Plea for Justice and Declaration of Righteousness - Of David.**

- <sup>1</sup>Vindicate me, O Lord,  
for I have walked in my integrity,  
and I have trusted in the Lord without wavering.
- <sup>2</sup>Prove me, O Lord, and try me;  
test my heart and mind.
- <sup>3</sup>For your steadfast love is before my eyes,  
and I walk in faithfulness to you
- <sup>4</sup>I do not sit with the worthless,  
nor do I consort with hypocrites;
- <sup>5</sup>I hate the company of evildoers,  
and will not sit with the wicked.
- <sup>6</sup>I wash my hands in innocence,  
and go around your altar, O Lord,
- <sup>7</sup>singing aloud a song of thanksgiving,  
and telling all your wondrous deeds.
- <sup>8</sup>O Lord, I love the house in which you dwell,  
and the place where your glory abides.

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### **Devotion:**

Did you know that our lectionary readings flow in a pattern each week, and they "speak" and "respond" to each other? Psalm 26 is a response to yesterday's

Jeremiah reading. We could hear Jeremiah reading this psalm asking for vindication for his suffering and declaring his faithful work for God. David says to the Lord, "I walk in faithfulness to you." Where do you see yourself in the poem of Jeremiah and Psalm 26?

This is a psalm of King David, and certainly he focuses on his relationship of trust with God and on worship as an important element of that relationship. He also focuses on attempting to serve God in all things and being thankful by telling what God has done for him. A key element of this psalm is the link between our relationship with God and our integrity that depends on God's mercy. It takes constant connection with God and God's word to continue making ethical decisions and maintain integrity in all situations we face. It is good to invite God to examine our minds and hearts and see where there is a wavering of our trust in God and God's steadfast love (v. 3). David focuses on steadfast love and on God's house of worship. One way we stay connected to God and our community is faith through worship. Of course, we cannot yet gather in person at our church buildings as we would like, but our online worship services keep us connected to God's word and each other. Remember that the church is not a building, but WE are the church wherever we are! Be sure to tune in each weekend on our *Desert Cross Lutheran Church* YouTube channel to join us in worship and then find ways to be thankful each day, so we can share our stories of joy in the Lord.

**Let us pray,**

Confident of your care and helped by the Holy Spirit, we pray for the church, the world, and all who are in need.

God of faithfulness, you bid your people to follow Jesus. Set the mind of your church on divine things. Grant us trust in you, that we lose our lives for the sake of Christ and thereby discover joy in life through him. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

God of all nations, you call us to live peaceably with all. Give us ears to hear one another, even those we name as enemies. Fill us all with mercy and understanding, that we advocate and genuinely care for those who are poor and most vulnerable in our communities. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

God of salvation, you promise to deliver us. Give those who suffer a strong sense of your presence and love. Accompany those who are uncertain, raise the spirits of those who are despairing, and heal the sick – especially all who are suffering in any way due to COVID-19. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

God of community, you call us to rejoice in hope, be patient in suffering, and persevere in prayer. Make our congregation a workshop of your love. When we quarrel, bring reconciliation. Help us overcome evil with good. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

In the certain hope that nothing can separate us from your love, we offer these prayers to you; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

May the God of hope fill us with all joy and peace in believing, so that we may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Gathered into community through the power of the Holy Spirit of God, let us pray the prayer that Jesus taught us,

**Our Father, who art in heaven,  
hallowed be thy name,  
thy kingdom come,  
thy will be done,  
on earth as it is in heaven.  
Give us this day our daily bread;  
and forgive us our trespasses,  
as we forgive those  
who trespass against us;  
and lead us not into temptation,  
but deliver us from evil.  
For thine is the kingdom,  
and the power, and the glory,  
forever and ever. Amen.**

We give our hearts to the Lord, who is gracious and merciful and abounding in steadfast love. Amen.

## **Wednesday, September 2, 2020**

We come before you, Holy God, to offer worship and praise and prayer.

**Let us pray,**

God of the welcome table, unite us by your presence with us. Empower and sustain us by your gifts of grace so that we may share your neighborly love with all. Amen.

**A reading from Romans 12:9-21**

<sup>9</sup>Let love be genuine; hate what is evil, hold fast to what is good; <sup>10</sup>love one another with mutual affection; outdo one another in showing honor. <sup>11</sup>Do not lag in zeal, be ardent in spirit, serve the Lord. <sup>12</sup>Rejoice in hope, be patient in suffering, persevere in prayer. <sup>13</sup>Contribute to the needs of the saints; extend hospitality to strangers. <sup>14</sup>Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them. <sup>15</sup>Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep. <sup>16</sup>Live in harmony with one another; do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly; do not claim to be wiser than you are. <sup>17</sup>Do not repay anyone evil for evil, but take thought for what is noble in the sight of all. <sup>18</sup>If it is possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all. <sup>19</sup>Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave room for the wrath of God; for it is written, "Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord." <sup>20</sup>No, "if your enemies are hungry, feed them; if they are thirsty, give them something to drink; for by doing this you will heap burning coals on their heads." <sup>21</sup>Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

## Devotion:

Live in harmony. That is the crux of Paul's writing. Romans is the longest of his letters and one where Martin Luther discovered the gift of salvation by grace through faith. Romans forms us and renews us in our Christian faith. Paul helps Christ followers to know how to grow and maintain faithful relationships with Christ, believers, non-believers, friends, and enemies. Peace is the goal. This passage relates ethics with living out faith. Paul instructs believers to do all things in love never with revenge or retribution in mind. He encourages the Romans to sacrifice and help those who suffer and work for peace by overcoming evil.

Paul's letter lets us know that the Christian life was not an easy life. There was suffering, struggles, and pain. That's why it is still so timely to us today. We need to hear these words of forgiveness and mercy right now. Harmony is something we need now more than ever. On August 14th, I shared a "Unity Fest" in my weekly letter. If you didn't celebrate that yet, you may join the harmony party [here](#). Let it be our prayer that personally and as a church community, we might model Paul's strong urgings to live out our faith by being in harmony with others. Then they will know we are Christians by our love and might want to join the party!

## Let us pray,

### **A Prayer for the Power of the Spirit among the People of God** (ELCA/Episcopalian)

God of all power and love, we give thanks for your unfailing presence

and the hope you provide in times of uncertainty and loss.

Send your Holy Spirit to enkindle in us your holy fire.

Revive us to live as Christ's body in the world:

a people who pray, worship, learn, break bread, share life, heal neighbors,

bear good news, seek justice, rest and grow in the Spirit.

Wherever and however we gather,

unite us in common prayer and send us in common mission,

that we and the whole creation might be restored and renewed,

through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

May the God of hope fill us with all joy and peace in believing, so that we may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Gathered into community through the power of the Holy Spirit of God, let us pray the prayer that Jesus taught us,

**Our Father, who art in heaven,**

**hallowed be thy name,**

**thy kingdom come,**

**thy will be done,**

**on earth as it is in heaven.**

**Give us this day our daily bread;**

**and forgive us our trespasses,**

**as we forgive those**

**who trespass against us;**

**and lead us not into temptation,**

**but deliver us from evil.**

**For thine is the kingdom,**

**and the power, and the glory,**

**forever and ever. Amen.**

We give our hearts to the Lord, who is gracious and merciful and abounding in steadfast love. Amen.

## Thursday, September 3, 2020

We open our hearts and minds to the mercy and grace of God, as we gather together to hear God's word and pray.

## Let us pray,

Alleluia. May the God of our Lord Jesus Christ enlighten the eyes of our hearts so that we may know the hope to which God has called us. Alleluia! Amen! (Eph. 1:17-18)

## **A reading from Exodus 3:1-15**

<sup>1</sup>Moses was keeping the flock of his father-in-law Jethro, the priest of Midian; he led his flock beyond the wilderness, and came to Horeb, the mountain of God. <sup>2</sup>There the angel of the Lord appeared to him in a flame of fire out of a bush; he looked, and the bush was blazing, yet it was not consumed. <sup>3</sup>Then Moses said, "I must turn aside and look at this great sight, and see why the bush is not burned up." <sup>4</sup>When the Lord saw that he had turned aside to see, God called to him out of the bush, "Moses, Moses!" And he said, "Here I am." <sup>5</sup>Then he said, "Come no closer! Remove the sandals from your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground." <sup>6</sup>He said further, "I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." And Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look at God.

<sup>7</sup>Then the Lord said, "I have observed the misery of my people who are in Egypt; I have heard their cry on account of their taskmasters. Indeed, I know their sufferings, <sup>8</sup>and I have come down to deliver them from the Egyptians, and to bring them up out of that land to a good and broad land, a land flowing with milk and honey, to the country of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites. <sup>9</sup>The cry of the Israelites has now come to me; I have also seen how the Egyptians oppress them. <sup>10</sup>So come, I will send you to Pharaoh to bring my people, the Israelites, out of Egypt." <sup>11</sup>But Moses said to God, "Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh, and bring the Israelites out of Egypt?" <sup>12</sup>He said, "I will be with you; and this shall be the sign for you that it is I who sent you: when you have brought the people out of Egypt, you shall worship God on this mountain."

<sup>13</sup>But Moses said to God, "If I come to the Israelites and say to them, 'The God of your ancestors has sent me to you,' and they ask me, 'What is his name?' what shall I say to them?" <sup>14</sup>God said to Moses, "I am who I am." He said further, "Thus you shall

say to the Israelites, 'I am has sent me to you.' " <sup>15</sup> God also said to Moses, "Thus you shall say to the Israelites, 'The Lord, the God of your ancestors, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has sent me to you':

*This is my name forever,  
and this my title for all generations."*

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**Devotion:**

What a call story! Part of the process of becoming a pastor and going to seminary is sharing your call story of how you heard God calling you to become a pastor through personal revelation and outer confirmation. No one could ever top Moses' story! Moses, a Hebrew, grew up in Egypt as Pharaoh's adopted grandchild but had to flee after murdering an Egyptian slave master for abusing a Hebrew slave. Moses was now working as a shepherd for his father-in-law's flock in Midian. So far Moses was known as a foreigner, a murderer, and a lowly shepherd. Yet God saw Moses as a leader for mission.

Moses led the flock to Mt. Horeb (Sinai) where he encountered the burning bush of God and began his commissioning to free the Hebrews from slavery in Egypt. Moses objected 4 times through the extended story into Chapter 4. Moses was unsure, afraid, questioning, and felt unworthy. Yet God answered each objection full of grace with assurances of God's help and presence every step of the way. Moses acquiesced and the rest is history. It was a difficult journey, yet God was with Moses every step of the way and the fruits of his mission live on today.

Not just pastors or seminary candidates have call stories. Everyone has a call story. It's the story of your faith and how you have seen God leading you and calling you to serve in various ways throughout your life. Reflect on your call story. How do you think God has called you to mission in your family, work, church, neighborhood? Write it down and/or share with a trusted friend. It might be revealing to see where God has been with you, leading and equipping you in ways you never imagined possible!

**Let us pray,**

We pray with the words from the 20<sup>th</sup> century hymn, "Rise, O church, like Christ arisen" (ELW 548):

- 1 Rise, O church, like Christ arisen,  
from this meal of love and grace;  
may we through such love envision  
whose we are, and whose, our praise.  
Alleluia, alleluia;  
God, the wonder of our days.
- 2 Rise, transformed, and choose to follow  
after Christ, though wounded, whole;  
broken, shared, our lives are hallowed  
to release and to console.  
Alleluia, alleluia;  
Christ, our present, past, and goal.

3 Rise, remember well the future  
God has called us to receive;  
present by God's loving nurture,  
Spirited then let us live.  
Alleluia, alleluia;  
Spirit, grace by whom we live.

4 Service be our sure vocation;  
courage be our daily breath;  
mercy be our destination  
from this day and unto death.  
Alleluia, alleluia.  
Rise, O church, a living faith. Amen.

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May the God of hope fill us with all joy and peace in believing, so that we may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Gathered into community through the power of the Holy Spirit of God, let us pray the prayer that Jesus taught us,

**Our Father, who art in heaven,  
hallowed be thy name,  
thy kingdom come,  
thy will be done,  
on earth as it is in heaven.  
Give us this day our daily bread;  
and forgive us our trespasses,  
as we forgive those  
who trespass against us;  
and lead us not into temptation,  
but deliver us from evil.  
For thine is the kingdom,  
and the power, and the glory,  
forever and ever. Amen.**

We give our hearts to the Lord, who is gracious and merciful and abounding in steadfast love. Amen.

## Friday, September 4, 2020

We open our hearts and minds to the unity of God, as we gather together to hear God's word and pray.

### Let us pray,

Dear God, let your Word shine in our hearts by your Holy Spirit. Make it so bright and warm that we always find our comfort and joy in it. Amen. (Martin Luther, *A Collection of Prayers*, #195)

### A reading from Psalm 105:1-6, 23-26, 45b

<sup>1</sup>Give thanks to the Lord and call upon God's name;  
make known the deeds of the Lord among the peoples.

<sup>2</sup>**Sing to the Lord, sing praises,  
and speak of all God's marvelous works.**

<sup>3</sup>Glory in God's holy name;  
let the hearts of those who seek the Lord rejoice.

<sup>4</sup>**Search for the strength of the Lord;  
continually seek God's face.**

<sup>5</sup>Remember the marvels God has done,  
the wonders and the judgments of God's mouth,

<sup>6</sup>**O offspring of Abraham, God's servant,  
O children of Jacob, God's chosen ones.**

<sup>23</sup>Israel came into Egypt,  
and Jacob became a sojourner in the land of Ham.

<sup>24</sup>**The Lord made the people of Israel very fruitful,  
more numerous than their enemies,**

<sup>25</sup>whose hearts God turned, so that they hated God's people,  
and dealt unjustly with the servants of God.

<sup>26</sup>**O Lord, you sent Moses your servant,  
and Aaron, your chosen one.**

<sup>45b</sup> Hallelujah!

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### Devotion:

Psalm 105 is the response to Exodus 3 from yesterday. It is broken down into two parts today and tomorrow. It confirms God's promises to Moses in his call to mission were steadfast and retells the history from Abraham's call to the final settlement in Canaan in the promised land. This section extols God's faithful actions through Moses and his brother, Aaron, from the story of Israel's rescue from slavery in Exodus. The title of the Psalm is "God's Faithfulness to Israel." Psalms are a book of songs that cover every possible element of life and leave nothing hidden. They praise God and cry out to God. They whine and they sing. They lift up God and they curse their enemies. They tell the truth of life that is full of grace and judgment, good and evil.

Psalm 106 is the sister to this psalm which outlines the failure of Israel to remain faithful to God. There were consequences to that failure but God always remained faithful.

That is why there is so much praising and singing going on in Psalm 105. Even though the Israelites suffered greatly, this psalm is full of thanksgiving, proclamation, praise and lifting God up. We are each on our own journeys of suffering and joy, despair and hope. God is also with us through it all. Verse 4 is apt for these difficult days of suffering that we are going through now. "Search for the strength of the Lord; continually seek God's face." God is faithful. Be faithful to God. God is truth. Be truthful with God. God is with you. Call upon God's name! This faithfulness of God became flesh in Jesus Christ who fulfills all of God's promises for you! God loves you!

### Let us pray,

Lord God almighty,  
You do not disregard  
The cries of the poor,  
And you do not despise  
The longing of troubled hearts.  
Look upon our prayers  
Which we bring to you  
In our needs and hear us graciously,  
So that everything that the sinful world set against us  
Comes to nothing,  
And that they may be converted by your good counsel,  
So that we may be undisturbed by any affliction,  
Thank you in your congregation,  
And praise you at all times;  
Through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen. (Martin Luther, *The German Litany*, #3)

May the God of hope fill us with all joy and peace in believing, so that we may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Gathered into community through the power of the Holy Spirit of God, let us pray the prayer that Jesus taught us,

**Our Father, who art in heaven,  
hallowed be thy name,  
thy kingdom come,  
thy will be done,  
on earth as it is in heaven.**

**Give us this day our daily bread;  
and forgive us our trespasses,  
as we forgive those  
who trespass against us;  
and lead us not into temptation,  
but deliver us from evil.  
For thine is the kingdom,  
and the power, and the glory,  
forever and ever. Amen.**

We give our hearts to the Lord, who is gracious and merciful and abounding in steadfast love. Amen.

## Saturday, September 5, 2020

We open our hearts and minds to the healing of God, as we gather together to hear God's word and pray.

### Let us pray,

God of light, shine the light of Christ into our hearts, quiet our spirits, and illuminate our minds as your Spirit works your word in our lives.

### A reading from Psalm 105:23-26, 45b

<sup>23</sup>Israel came into Egypt,

and Jacob became a sojourner in the land of Ham.

<sup>24</sup>**The Lord made the people of Israel very fruitful,  
more numerous than their enemies,**

<sup>25</sup>whose hearts God turned, so that they hated God's people,  
and dealt unjustly with the servants of God.

<sup>26</sup>**O Lord, you sent Moses your servant,  
and Aaron, your chosen one.**

<sup>45b</sup>Hallelujah!

### Devotion:

This psalm begins and ends on a positive note. It begins with thanksgiving and songs of praise and ends with a hallelujah, which means praise the Lord! It outlines the time of famine when Jacob and his sons came to Egypt for help and found Joseph there in the highest position of power with the power to help or harm the brothers who had sold him into slavery. Joseph forgave his brothers and welcomed them with open arms. Israel came into Egypt and multiplied, but the Egyptians became enemies who enslaved them. It circles us back to Moses' mission to save these servants of God who were enslaved and bring them to the promised land. These themes of forgiveness and justice swirl throughout the Old Testament. We see thanksgiving and rejoicing to God even in times of difficulty. How does our faith allow us to have joy in the midst of sadness? We give thanks for God's presence and mercy at all times in our lives! These psalms open us to remembering the sufferings of others, to see the suffering around us now, and lift up our own suffering to God. In Philippians 4, Paul says, *Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice. The Lord is near.* In 1 Thessalonians 5, he tells us, *Rejoice always, pray without ceasing.* That is our call. Trust that the Lord is indeed near. Hallelujah!

### Let us pray,

Loving Lord, We give you thanks for the week that has been and for each day in it. We lift up ourselves, our lives, our church, our neighborhoods, our country, and our world into your loving hands. We have much that might worry, concern, or cause anxiety in

our world of pandemic, social injustice, and political division. We ask you to guide the leaders of the pandemic response, government and social service agencies, and churches, schools, teachers and administrators. We have so very much to pray about, Lord. And yet, we ask you to help us rejoice. Help us rejoice in you and your promises to be with us always. Help us rejoice in the forgiveness and new life we have each day with Jesus. Help us rejoice together with our families and friends, as we give thanks for the time that we have together, even if apart. Help us serve you to bring about a just and peaceful world. Thank you for hearing us and for the grace that we receive through faith. Amen.

May the God of hope fill us with all joy and peace in believing, so that we may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit

Gathered into community through the power of the Holy Spirit of God, let us pray the prayer that Jesus taught us,

**Our Father, who art in heaven,  
hallowed be thy name,  
thy kingdom come,  
thy will be done,  
on earth as it is in heaven.  
Give us this day our daily bread;  
and forgive us our trespasses,  
as we forgive those  
who trespass against us;  
and lead us not into temptation,  
but deliver us from evil.  
For thine is the kingdom,  
and the power, and the glory,  
forever and ever. Amen.**

We give our hearts to the Lord, who is gracious and merciful and abounding in steadfast love. Amen.