



**Desert Cross Daily Prayer, Scripture, & Devotion**  
**Week of September 7—September 12, 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 Doris Nolan calls you to prayer this week.*

## **Monday, September 7, 2020**

Let us come before the Lord in worship and prayer; we are united into community by the power of the Spirit of God.

### **Let us pray,**

Gracious God, we give thanks for our faith and the teachings of Christ that direct our thoughts and actions. Help us to live our faith in our every action. Amen.

### **A reading from Ezekiel 33:7-11**

<sup>7</sup>*So you, mortal, I have made a sentinel for the house of Israel; whenever you hear a word from my mouth, you shall give them warning from me. <sup>8</sup>If I say to the wicked, "O wicked ones, you shall surely die," and you do not speak to warn the wicked to turn from their ways, the wicked shall die in their iniquity, but their blood I will require at your hand. <sup>9</sup>But if you warn the wicked to turn from their ways, and they do not turn from their ways, the wicked shall die in their iniquity, but you will have saved your life.*

<sup>10</sup>*Now you, mortal, say to the house of Israel, Thus you have said: "Our transgressions and our sins weigh upon us, and we waste away because of them; how then can we live?" <sup>11</sup>Say to them, As I live, says the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from their ways and live; turn back, turn back from your evil ways; for why will you die, O house of Israel?*

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### **Devotion:**

The Israelites are in captivity in Babylon when Ezekiel is their prophet. They are enduring a time of crisis as a people. In this text, the prophet is described as a sentry who has the responsibility to warn the people of impending trouble. The sentry accomplishes his duty when he gives the warning and then the responsibility shifts to the people to take action. If the sentry does not give the warning, then the responsibility for what occurs to the people falls on him.

The point of this sentry image is to emphasize the importance of prophetic

ministry and the people's responsibility to heed the words of the prophet. It is part of the call of the prophet, and, in our time, the call of the pastor, to speak the truth clearly. It is explained in the ELCA constitution in this way: *Every ordained minister shall speak publicly to the world in solidarity with the poor and oppressed calling for justice and proclaiming God's love for the world.*

We are in a time of crisis in our nation and in our world, actually a time when various crises are assailing us: the COVID-19 virus and its impact on our lives and our way of living, the many 'isms' that keep so many oppressed, the ever-growing, huge income gap between the wealthy and the poor in our country, the food insecurity that too many Americans experience. This is not an exhaustive list by any means; you may want to add some other elements of the crises before us to your list of prayer petitions in your daily prayers.

Eight weeks from tomorrow is election day. Our faith in God must inform our political choices; our choices must reflect the demands of our faith. Our faith calls us to act in solidarity with the poor and oppressed; our faith calls us to seek justice for everyone.

We are to call out to God in prayer for help with the brokenness of the world, while at the same time acknowledging our responsibility to act in accordance with the commandments of God.

### *A Litany for our Nation*

#### **Let us pray,**

O God, the Father in heaven,

**have mercy on us.**

O God, the Son, Redeemer of the world,

**have mercy on us.**

O God, the Holy Spirit,

**have mercy upon us.**

O Christ, merciful Savior, hear us in this hour:

**O Christ, visit us with your compassion.**

For our sins by which we have grieved you;

for the ways in which we forget your steadfast love;

for our indifference to the gospel and the witness of your church;

for our apathy toward your call to faith;

for our failure to see the spiritual needs of those around us:

**we beg your forgiveness, O Lord.**

O Christ, forgive us.

**O Christ, deliver us.**

That our nation may remember you

as the God of mercy and truth;

that the fulfillment of your will may be our desire;

that we may be healed from the motives of greed and revenge;

that we may discover through you a deeper experience of prayer;

that we may offer unselfish devotion

to the well-being of our nation;

that you would uphold and guide all in authority;

that you would protect and preserve all who serve in our nation's military;

and that all our people may seek courage  
and a spirit of endurance:

**we ask this, O Lord.**

To comfort those under the constant strain of apprehension;  
to remember those in physical, emotional or spiritual captivity;  
to bind up the wounded, sheltering them under your care;  
to stretch out your arm

to all who are lonely, tempted, or discouraged;

to have mercy upon all who trust in you:

**we ask this, O Lord.**

To hasten the end of racism and the days of civil peace;

Silence the divisive rhetoric

Help us to cast away the threads of hate;

to forgive our enemies;

and to renew steadfast faith within us:

**we ask this, O Lord.**

Give us the wisdom and the will to conquer COVID-19,

heal us of the selfishness that causes us to speak of our rights over our responsibilities,  
help us to have the understanding that this virus thrives on our inability to sacrifice for

the common good of our neighbors,

give us the courage as a nation to lay down our denials of the science that heals.

**hear us, good Lord, and receive our prayer.**

O Christ, spare us.

**O Christ, heal us.**

(Prayer adapted from the Prayer Book for the Armed Services)

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 8, 2020

We come before the Lord in worship and prayer, united by the power of the Spirit of God.

**Let us pray,**

Loving God, deepen our faith and help us to follow Jesus in the way of love. Open our hearts and minds to hear the truth of your Word; we pray in the name of Jesus. Amen.

### A reading from Psalm 119:33-40

<sup>33</sup>Teach me, O Lord, the way of your statutes,  
and I shall keep it to the end.

<sup>34</sup>Give me understanding, and I shall keep your teaching;  
I shall keep it with all my heart.

<sup>35</sup>Lead me in the path of your commandments,  
for that is my desire.

<sup>36</sup>Incline my heart to your decrees  
and not to unjust gain.

<sup>37</sup>Turn my eyes from beholding falsehood;  
give me life in your way.

<sup>38</sup>Fulfill your promise to your servant,  
which is for those who fear you.

<sup>39</sup>Turn away the reproach that I dread,  
because your judgments are good.

<sup>40</sup>Behold, I long for your commandments;  
by your righteousness enliven me.

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### Devotion:

What follows is an excerpt from the book "*Psalms: The Prayer Book of the Bible*" by Dietrich Bonhoeffer that offers a commentary on this text:

Psalm 119 "...in a special way make(s) the law of God the object of thanks, praise, and petition to seek to show us, above all, the blessing of the law. Under "law," then, is to be understood usually the entire salvation act of God and the direction for a new life in obedience. Joy in the law and in the commands of God comes to us if God has given the great new direction to our life through Jesus Christ ... It is grace to know God's commands. They release us from self-made plans and conflicts. They make our steps certain and our way joyful. God gives his commands in order that we may fulfill them, and "his commandments are not burdensome" (1John 5:3) for him who has found all salvation in Jesus Christ. Jesus has himself been under the law and has fulfilled it in total obedience to the Father. God's will becomes his joy, his nourishment.

Now we confess our love for the law, we affirm that we gladly keep it, and we ask that we may continue to be kept blameless in it. We do that not in our own power, but we pray it in the name of Jesus Christ, who is for us and in us....we recognize that the apparent repetitions (in Psalm 119) are always new variations on one theme, namely the love of God's word. As this love can never cease, so also the words which confess it can never cease. They want to accompany us through all of life, and they become in their simplicity the prayer of the child, of the young man, and of the old man."

(Excerpted from "Psalms: The Prayer Book of the Bible, by Dietrich Bonhoeffer, © 1970 Augsburg Fortress, Minneapolis, MN)

**Let us pray,**

Almighty and eternal God, so draw our hearts to you, so guide our minds, so fill our imaginations, so control our wills, that we may be wholly yours, utterly dedicated unto you; and then use us, we pray, as you will, but always to your glory and the welfare of your people, through our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

**Amen.**

(From sundaysandseasons.com.; Copyright © 2020 Augsburg Fortress.)

**Sing or pray these words:**

Thy Word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path  
Thy Word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path  
    When I feel afraid  
    Think I've lost my way  
    Still you're there right beside me  
    And nothing will I fear  
    As long as you are near  
    Please be near me to the end  
Thy Word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path  
Thy Word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path  
    I will not forget  
    Your love for me and yet  
    My heart forever is wandering  
    Jesus be my guide  
    And hold me to your side  
    I will love you to the end  
    Nothing will I fear as long as you are near  
    Please be near me to the end  
Thy Word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path  
Thy Word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path  
    And a light unto my path  
    You're the light unto my path

(Songwriters: Amy Lee Grant / Michael Whitaker Smith; Thy Word lyrics © Warner Chappell Music, Inc)

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 9, 2020**

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

**Let us pray,**

Loving God, help us to follow Jesus and to live in the way of love; in the name of Jesus, we pray. Amen.

**A reading from Romans 13:8-14**

<sup>8</sup>Owe no one anything, except to love one another; for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law. <sup>9</sup>The commandments, "You shall not commit adultery; You shall not murder; You shall not steal; You shall not covet"; and any other commandment, are summed up in this word, "Love your neighbor as yourself." <sup>10</sup>Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore, love is the fulfilling of the law.

<sup>11</sup>Besides this, you know what time it is, how it is now the moment for you to wake from sleep. For salvation is nearer to us now than when we became believers; <sup>12</sup>the night is far gone, the day is near. Let us then lay aside the works of darkness and put on the armor of light; <sup>13</sup>let us live honorably as in the day, not in reveling and drunkenness, not in debauchery and licentiousness, not in quarreling and jealousy. <sup>14</sup>Instead, put on

*the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires.*

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**Devotion:**

Paul makes it very clear that loving our neighbor is how we fulfill the law of God. This echoes the words of Jesus who simplified the law for us into two simple commands – love God and love our neighbor. Love acts for the good of the other, love promotes good for the neighbor.

The love of neighbor in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, as indeed it was in Jesus' day, includes not just our physical neighbor next door or down the street, but it includes everyone, including those who are culturally and ethnically very different from us and whom we would rather disdain than embrace. How does one grow in love of neighbor; what intentionality can we bring to growing and deepening our love for those who inhabit this planet with us?

In these days of COVID-19 when our circle has been made smaller, we are not likely to have many experiences with people who are different from us. The gift of travel has been suspended for this time, so we are not able to grow in understanding through travel to other countries and, to a lesser extent, even other areas of our own country.

What we are still able to control and manage is how we think about other people, especially people who are different than we are. Let us hold fast to the understanding that ALL people, no matter their country of origin, their socio-economic status, their race, their gender identity, their faith are ALL made in the image of God.

Let us be very careful about the speech we listen to regarding our neighbor. As Christians, we should guard ourselves from anyone who speaks in negative, sweeping generalities about people because they poison our thinking and make loving our neighbor more difficult. You can't control what other people say, but you can control whether you listen. Especially during this season of divisive political rhetoric, don't listen to politicians whose speech is full of hate and who broadly malign groups of people.

One of my favorite portions of Luther's Small Catechism (do you remember it from Confirmation class?) is the explanation to the 8<sup>th</sup> commandment: **You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.** Martin Luther, in answer to the question – *what does this mean for us* – wrote this explanation: "We are to fear and love God so that we do not betray, slander, or lie about our neighbor, but defend him, speak well of him, and explain his actions in the kindest way." Luther's instructions are critical for us to put into practice in order to grow in neighborly love – [explain our neighbors' actions in the kindest way, defend and speak well of our neighbor.](#)

We are always, always to explain our neighbors' actions with kindness. Think the best of all people, and, in this way of kindness, we can best live into the commandment to love our neighbor.

**Let us pray and confess our faith,**

Holy Love,  
Beginning and End,  
beyond all Names:  
giver of food and drink,

clothing and warmth,  
love and hope:  
life in all its goodness –  
**We praise and adore you.**

Jesus Christ,  
Wisdom and Word:  
lover of outcasts,  
friend of the poor;  
one of us, yet one with God;  
crucified and risen:  
life in the midst of death—  
**We praise and adore you.**

Holy Spirit,  
Storm and Breath:  
building bridges  
breaking chains  
waking the oppressed,  
making us one,  
unseen and unexpected,  
untamable energy of life—  
**We praise and adore you.**

Holy Trinity, forever One,  
whose nature is community,  
unbounded dance of love;  
in whom we live, and grow,  
and know our neighbor,  
life in all its fulness,  
making all things new—  
**We praise and adore you.**

O most loving Father, you want us to give thanks in all circumstances and to lay all our cares on you, knowing that you care for us. Grant that fears and anxieties in this mortal life may not hide from us the light of your immortal love shown to us in your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. Help us to follow Jesus in the way of love of our neighbor and of our God. 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 10, 2020**

Let us come before the Lord, the maker of heaven and earth, to offer worship and praise and prayer.

**Let us pray,**  
Gracious God, we give thanks for your abiding presence with us. During these difficult days, give us a sign of your presence and power with us; we pray in the name of Jesus. Amen.

### **A reading from Exodus 12:1-14**

<sup>1</sup>The Lord said to Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt: <sup>2</sup>This month shall mark for you the beginning of months; it shall be the first month of the year for you. <sup>3</sup>Tell the whole congregation of Israel that on the tenth of this month they are to take a lamb for each family, a lamb for each household. <sup>4</sup>If a household is too small for a whole lamb, it shall join its closest neighbor in obtaining one; the lamb shall be divided in proportion to the number of people who eat of it. <sup>5</sup>Your lamb shall be without blemish, a year-old male; you may take it from the sheep or from the goats. <sup>6</sup>You shall keep it until the fourteenth day of this month; then the whole assembled congregation of Israel shall slaughter it at twilight. <sup>7</sup>They shall take some of the blood and put it on the two doorposts and the lintel of the houses in which they eat it. <sup>8</sup>They shall eat the lamb that same night; they shall eat it roasted over the fire with unleavened bread and bitter herbs. <sup>9</sup>Do not eat any of it raw or boiled in water, but roasted over the fire, with its head, legs, and inner organs. <sup>10</sup>You shall let none of it remain until the morning; anything that remains until the morning you shall burn. <sup>11</sup>This is how you shall eat it: your loins girded, your sandals

on your feet, and your staff in your hand; and you shall eat it hurriedly. It is the Passover of the Lord. <sup>12</sup>For I will pass through the land of Egypt that night, and I will strike down every firstborn in the land of Egypt, both human beings and animals; on all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgments: I am the Lord. <sup>13</sup>The blood shall be a sign for you on the houses where you live: when I see the blood, I will pass over you, and no plague shall destroy you when I strike the land of Egypt.

<sup>14</sup>This day shall be a day of remembrance for you. You shall celebrate it as a festival to the Lord; throughout your generations you shall observe it as a perpetual ordinance.

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### **Devotion:**

This text tells the familiar story of the first Passover which we read each year on Maundy Thursday since, on the day before his death, Jesus and his disciples were celebrating the Passover together. This text is the basis for the Passover celebration that religious Jews continue to celebrate each year. This celebration featured the Passover lamb, whose blood was used as a sign to protect God's people from the threat of death. The early church described the Lord's supper using imagery from the Passover, especially in portraying Jesus as the lamb who delivers God's people from sin and death.

The Israelites were instructed to mark their front doors with the blood of the lamb so that the angel of death would pass over their homes. Blood symbolizes life and, in the Passover, blood is the sign that preserves and protects life. The blood of the lamb is a sign of the divine promise of redemption; God uses creation to achieve redemption.

We remember and celebrate this cycle of redemption each year in the celebration of the Passover. God continues God's salvific work in the world through the wonders of creation; the power of the created order generates life and also participates in God's redemptive work.

The connection between humanity and the created order was established in Genesis when human beings were made the stewards of this world. Environmental degradation of God's creation is a sin and is in opposition to God's purposes for this world, which is to generate and sustain life. We are to honor God's creation and protect its diversity, not exploit it for our own selfish use and profit. The beauty and diversity of the earth teaches us about the nature and imagination of God who created it. The biodiversity of this planet is to be protected. This is an important element in the responsibilities of a Christian, to be good stewards of this earth.

### **A Prayer for Our Earth**

**Let us pray,**  
All-powerful God, you are present in the whole universe  
*and in the smallest of your creatures.*  
*You embrace with your tenderness all that exists.*  
*Pour out upon us the power of your love,*  
*that we may protect life and beauty.*  
*Fill us with peace, that we may live*  
*as brothers and sisters, harming no one.*

O God of the poor,  
*help us to rescue the abandoned and forgotten of this earth,  
so precious in your eyes.  
Bring healing to our lives,  
that we may protect the world and not prey on it,  
that we may sow beauty, not pollution and destruction.  
Touch the hearts  
of those who look only for gain  
at the expense of the poor and the earth.  
Teach us to discover the worth of each thing,  
to be filled with awe and contemplation,  
to recognize that we are profoundly united  
with every creature  
as we journey towards your infinite light.  
We thank you for being with us each day.  
Encourage us, we pray, in our struggle  
for justice, love and peace. 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.

## Friday, September 11, 2020

We come before the Lord, to offer our worship and praise and prayers of intercession.

### Let us pray,

God of grace, we pray that you would deepen our faith, so that through these unusual and uncertain times, we may trust completely in your abiding presence with us. May we find new and creative ways to be instruments of your love and grace at this time. Amen.

### Psalm 149

<sup>1</sup>*Hallelujah! Sing to the Lord | a new song,  
God's praise in the assembly of the faithful.*  
<sup>2</sup>*Let Israel rejoice in their maker;  
let the children of Zion be joyful in their ruler.*  
<sup>3</sup>*Let them praise their maker's name with dancing;  
let them sing praise with tambourine and harp.*  
<sup>4</sup>*For the Lord takes pleasure in the people  
and adorns the poor with victory.*  
<sup>5</sup>*Let the faithful rejoice in triumph;  
let them sing for joy on their beds.*  
<sup>6</sup>*Let the praises of God be in their throat  
and a two-edged sword in their hand,*  
<sup>7</sup>*to wreak vengeance on the nations  
and punishment on the peoples,*  
<sup>8</sup>*to bind their kings in chains  
and their nobles with links of iron,*  
<sup>9</sup>*to inflict on them the judgment decreed;  
this is glory for all God's faithful ones. Hallelujah!*

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### Devotion:

This is the second to last psalm in the psalter, and it strikes an unusual tone. It is a song of praise for the Israelite covenant community to sing to God, but there is also a militancy to it; there is almost a revolutionary quality to it. Verse 4 tells us that the Lord is granting victory and liberation to the poor and the powerless. And, when the poor and powerless are lifted up and granted liberation, there is by necessity, a revolutionary new order – this is after all a new song that is being sung; <sup>1</sup>***Hallelujah! Sing to the Lord | a new song,***

The Old Testament scholar Walter Brueggemann offers this provocative commentary on the meaning of this psalm: “The psalm thus is likely to reflect a more self-conscious and militant agenda not interested in broad-based accommodation ... It is a statement of sobering historical realism. Praise of God is not flight from historical reality. In its songs Israel does not escape from either historical responsibility or historical temptation ... There is no liturgical or spiritual escape from the hardness of history.” (The Message of the Psalms : A Theological Commentary, by Walter Brueggemann, © 1984 Augsburg Publishing House, Minneapolis, MN, pg 166)

Yes, history, as it tends to repeat itself, does provide us with some hard and difficult lessons. We should heed the warning offered by this psalm when we consider its message, and not allow ourselves to fall into the temptation to turn our political leaders into saviors appointed and blessed by God. Often it is our desire to shift the historical responsibility to God, especially when our political leaders are mirrors of the worst within us. There is an effort on the part of believers to cast these leaders as God's chosen, rather than what they are – the reflection of our most base and selfish impulses and sinfulness.

This psalm ends with a note of resistance and sweeping change. The power of the psalms is their ability to speak to every age. Ponder these closing verses of this psalm and meditate on what its application might be in our time and place:

*<sup>6</sup>Let the praises of God be in their throat  
and a two-edged sword in their hand,  
<sup>7</sup>to wreak vengeance on the nations  
and punishment on the peoples,  
<sup>8</sup>to bind their kings in chains  
and their nobles with links of iron,  
<sup>9</sup>to inflict on them the judgment decreed;  
this is glory for all God's faithful ones. Hallelujah!*

These verses are reminiscent of Mary's revolutionary words in the Magnificat in Luke 1:49-53:

*for the Mighty One has done great things for me,  
and holy is his name.  
<sup>50</sup> His mercy is for those who fear him  
from generation to generation.  
<sup>51</sup> He has shown strength with his arm;  
he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts.  
<sup>52</sup> He has brought down the powerful from their thrones,  
and lifted up the lowly;  
<sup>53</sup> he has filled the hungry with good things,  
and sent the rich away empty.*

#### **Let us pray,**

God of all power and love, we give thanks for your unfailing presence and the hope you provide in times of uncertainty and loss. Give us a new song to sing during these days of resistance and change, Days in which justice is sought for all. Continue to bless these United States of America with the freedom of the Christian, Freedom forged in neighbor love and tempered with a holy responsibility for others.

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.

Keep watch, dear Lord, with those who work or watch or weep, and give your angels charge over those who sleep. Tend the sick, give rest to the weary, bless the dying, soothe the suffering, comfort the afflicted, shield the joyous; and all for your love's sake.

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.**

(Adapted and edited from *A Prayer for the Power of the Spirit among the People of God*)

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 12, 2020**

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

**Let us pray,**

Gracious God, we are grateful for this weekend and the sabbath rest that it allows. Help us to focus on resting in you; draw our hearts into the circle of your loving embrace. We pray in the name of Jesus. Amen.

**A reading from Psalm 103:8-13**

*The Lord is merciful and gracious,  
slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.*

<sup>9</sup> *He will not always accuse,  
nor will he keep his anger forever.*

<sup>10</sup> *He does not deal with us according to our sins,  
nor repay us according to our iniquities.*

<sup>11</sup> *For as the heavens are high above the earth,  
so great is his steadfast love toward those who fear him;*

<sup>12</sup> *as far as the east is from the west,  
so far he removes our transgressions from us.*

<sup>13</sup> *As a father has compassion for his children,  
so the Lord has compassion for those who fear him.*

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**Devotion:**

This psalm sings praises to God for being merciful: <sup>10</sup> ***He does not deal with us according to our sins, nor repay us according to our iniquities.*** We depend on God's mercy.

The Bible Dictionary defines mercy as follows: "**Mercy**, an attribute of both God and the good human being. Hebrew uses several words for "mercy," of which the most frequent is *hesed*, which means loving-kindness, love, loyalty, and faithfulness." In the dictionary app on my phone, the definition of mercy includes the idea that mercy is given to one over whom one has power. There is a power differential and a choice in granting mercy. By definition, the merciful have power. One with power can choose to be merciful or can choose to exact a just punishment.

A familiar refrain in the psalms and in all faithful prayers, is the understanding that God treats us better than we deserve to be treated. If God were to really note our sins and deficiencies and treat us accordingly, who could stand up to that?

As the Bible Dictionary notes, mercy is an attribute of God, but also of good human beings. In the same way that God is merciful to us and acts out of God's steadfast love when responding to a flawed humanity, let us be good human beings, and act mercifully in all our dealings with our neighbors, who are like us, members of this flawed humanity that God loves so well. Let us follow the God of steadfast love in the way of mercy.

**Let us pray,**

Gracious God, in your mercy you love all that you have made and forget none. We bring before you this day the cries of the world and the concerns of our hearts. With deep gratitude for our many blessings, trusting in your continued care for all of humanity and your whole creation, we are so bold as to pray:

For all who are sick with COVID-19, for those who fear contracting this virus, as well as those suffering from other illnesses, we pray for healing and peace. God of mercy,

**Hear our prayer.**

For those who care for the needs of others, especially the medical professionals who are faithfully laboring to care for the increased needs of the sick during this pandemic, that you might be their source of strength and hope, God of mercy,

**Hear our prayer.**

For all our nation's leaders and decision makers, grant them courage, wisdom and compassion. May they be unfailing in their efforts to protect and provide for the citizens of this nation. God of mercy,

**Hear our prayer.**

For the unemployed, the homeless, or those facing economic hardships; grant the leaders of this nation the compassion and ability of working together to provide for them, God of mercy,

**Hear our prayer.**

For those who are lonely, unsettled, fearful, or anxious during this period of social distancing when our opportunities for fellowship are so restricted, grant them a sign that you are with them and fill them with your peace, God of mercy,

**Hear our prayer.**

For the leaders of nations, as they struggle with decisions that affect the lives of millions of people, that their deliberations be grounded in truth and compassion, God of mercy,

**Hear our prayer.**

O compassionate God, as we live through these difficult and uncertain days, guide us and give us a daily sign of your presence and power in our lives. We trust that you hear our prayers. 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.