

Opening Devotions for Guild and Other Midweek Meetings



Compiled by
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INTRODUCTION

This collection of devotions is offered for the use of Guilds to either open or close their meetings. The hymns, prayers and readings, which cover a variety of topics, are suggestions only and may be freely altered for local choices.

Prayers for local concerns, the Lord's Prayer and the Grace may be included. Sometimes it may be appropriate to begin with a period of silence or music.

A selection of additional readings and prayers, which may be found useful, are included at the end. Although most of the material has been personally written, adaptations and contributions have been included from 'New Every Morning' (BBC), 'New Parish Prayers' (Frank Colquhoun) and 'Clouds and Glory' (David Adam), resources you may wish to obtain for yourself.

1

Prayer: God, our Father, help us by your presence with us to worship you in spirit and in truth; that our consciences may be quickened by your holiness, our minds nourished by your truth, our imaginations purified by your beauty, our hearts opened to your love, our wills surrendered to your purpose; and may all this be gathered up in adoration as we ascribe to you glory, praise and honour, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Intercession: Through our meeting together here, may we increase in knowledge, deepen in understanding, grow in love and discover even more the richness of fellowship which we find in Christ and share together. Amen.

Reading: Psalm No 1

Hymn: Immortal, invisible, God only wise (*Hymns and Psalms no 9*)

Blessing: The God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that you may abound in hope, and the peace of the Lord be always with you. Amen.

2

Prayer: Heavenly Father, give us a sense of your presence with us as we meet to share in this time of fellowship together. Grant us grateful hearts as we remember your goodness; penitence and the knowledge of your forgiveness as we remember our sins; joy as we remember your love; and enable us to lift up our hearts as an offering to you, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Intercession: Lord, in the world make us instruments of your peace.
Grant that we may seek
not so much to be consoled as to console,
not so much to be understood as to understand,
not so much to be loved as to love.
For it is in giving that we receive,
It is in pardoning that we are pardoned,
It is in dying that we are born again to eternal life. Amen.

(Prayers of local concern)

Reading: Psalm No 4

Hymn: Thy faithfulness, Lord, each moment we find, (*H&P no 805*)

Blessing: May you know that God is with you:
A light to your path,
A companion on the road,
A friend for your journey,
A sure presence and support at all times,
And the blessing of God almighty, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit be upon you and remain with you now and always. Amen.

————— 3 —————

Prayer: Lord Jesus Christ, your will for us is that through your spirit we should find wholeness of body mind and spirit. Sharing in the richness of your love and the fullness of your joy, lead us by your spirit into a life that is creative, compassionate and caring: a life that enriches our knowledge, increases our faith, and enlarges the boundaries of our love, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Intercession: Through our meeting together here, Lord, may we gain and deepen our vision of your kingdom as embracing the whole of our life within this world, and learn to discern the signs of your presence among us. Amen.

Reading: Psalm No 8

Hymn: With gladness we worship (*H&P no 19*)

Blessing: Christ, the Light of the World, scatter the darkness from our minds and hearts, and from before your path: and the blessing of God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, be upon you today and always. Amen.

————— 4 —————

Prayer: Heavenly Father, we come together as members of your family, to offer you our praise and thanksgiving; to share in fellowship in Christ; to bring before you the needs of the world; to seek your forgiveness and for your strength as we offer our lives anew to your service, in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, Amen.

Intercession: Grant us, O merciful God, to look with your eyes of compassion on the long travail of humankind. The wars, the hungry millions, the countless refugees, the natural disasters, the cruel and needless deaths, our inhumanity to one another, the heartbreak and hopelessness of many lives; hasten the coming of your kingdom, when nations shall be at peace, free from fear and free from want, with no more pain or tears, in the assurance of your love, and the security of your will, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Reading: Psalm No 12

Hymn: O worship the King (*H&P no 28*)

Blessing: The almighty Father be your strength;
The gracious Lord be your support;
The generous spirit surround you and shelter you. Amen.

————— 5 —————

Prayer: Enfold us Lord in your love
Surround us with your peace,
Encircle us with your power,
Enable us to be what you would have us be;
Empower us to do what you would have us do;
As you Lord are generous to us, may we be generous to others;
As you forgive us, may we learn to forgive others;
Lord, you give us life, you give us love, you give us yourself,
So may we give our lives, our love, ourselves to You;
Help us to choose the way of life and to lead others to Him,
our Lord Jesus Christ, who is the way, the truth and the life. Amen.

Intercession: Lord we pray that discord and anger may be taken away from our hearts and our communities, that broken relationships may find healing, that misunderstandings may be resolved, that our society be built on mutual respect, tolerance and a true sharing in each others lives; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Reading: Psalm No 15

Hymn: God is love, let heaven adore Him. (*H&P no 36*)

Blessing: May you hold in your hearts the assurance that there is nothing that can separate you from the love of God in Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

————— 6 —————

Prayer: God of grace, God of glory, guide us by your goodness, that we may walk in your ways, seek to do your will and worship you always; we give you thanks O Father, for the light that shines in our lives, through Jesus Christ our Lord, Amen.

Intercession: May the light that shines in us lead us to love, serve and care for those for whom life is a constant struggle with poverty, with pain, with personal hardship. Where there is darkness in our world, may the light of Christ radiate hope and healing. May the church be in the world as an instrument of Christ's light and of his life, ever seeking to discover

reveal and establish truth, peace and love to the glory of his name.
Amen.

Reading: Psalm No 16

Hymn: What shall I do my God to love (*H&P no 46*)

Blessing: Have your minds stayed on Christ that He may keep you in perfect peace. The almighty Father refresh you; the loving Saviour redeem you; the life-giving spirit restore you; and the blessing of God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit be with you, now and always. Amen.

————— 7 —————

Prayer: Grant us, O God, to see you in all the beauty of the world around us; the reflection of your own eternal glory. Open our eyes to all the signs of your love, and enable us to live that we may hold all created things in reverence, for Your sake, Amen.

Intercession: Awaken us, O Lord, to your presence, that we may walk in your world as your children. Give us reverence for all creation, that we may treat all living things with respect and gentleness and our fellow men and women with courtesy, through Christ our Lord, Amen.
Almighty God, from whom alone came insight and understanding; guide and prosper all who are engaged in scientific study and research, that through them knowledge may be increased and the life of humankind may be enriched, through Christ the Lord, Amen.

Reading: Psalm No 19

Hymn: Christ from whom all blessings flow (*H&P no 746*)

Blessing: Lord God, whose we are and whom we serve, help us to glorify you this day in all the thoughts of our hearts, in all the words of our lips, and in all the works of our hands, as becomes those who are your servants, through Jesus Christ our Lord, Amen.

————— 8 —————

Prayer: God, our Father, creator and Lord of all things, the earth belongs to you. Land, sea and air, all are yours, and so are the vast galaxies of space. Nothing is beyond your power, nothing is beneath your notice. For you are a loving father to your great family. You provide for our needs; you encourage and strengthen us with your spirit. May we always give you thanks, in the way we live as well as in the things we say. Forgive us Lord, in all that we have failed to do to uphold your truth and to share your love; Renew us and let your light and truth lead us; through Jesus Christ our Lord, Amen.

Intercession: Eternal God, may your spirit direct the passions and designs of our human lives, that the nations, their leaders and people may bring forth out of discord, a harmony more perfect than we can conceive; a new humility, a new understanding, a new hunger and thirst for righteousness; that your will may be done on earth as it is in heaven. Amen.

Reading: Psalm No 23

Hymn: All praise to our redeeming Lord (*H&P no 753*)

Blessing: Eternal God and Father, by whose life-giving power we are created and by whose love we are redeemed, guide and strengthen us by your spirit, that we may give ourselves to your service, and live each day in love to one another and to you, through Jesus Christ our Lord, Amen.

————— 9 —————

Prayer: Lord God, our Creator, keep alive in us a sense of wonder as we contemplate Your creation and our place within it. Fill our minds with the sense of mystery and help us to live with reverence for the whole of life and for all people; so inspire our senses with your spirit that we may touch with respect, look with excitement and joy, breathe with gratitude, and listen with appreciation and understanding. Fill every moment of our lives, Lord, with Your presence. Amen.

Intercession: Lord, the miracle of turning stones to bread, would be a minor miracle compared with turning the hatred of human hearts to love, indifference to compassion, greed to generosity, self-interest to self-offering; Lord, for these miracles of transformation we pray, so that in the midst of this world Your kingdom may come; Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Reading: Psalm No. 24

Hymn: My God how wonderful Thou art (*H&P no 51*)

Blessing: May you see life not flowing away from you, carrying away your hopes and your dreams, but coming as a stream towards you, bringing to you the life and the love of God, and filling your hearts with gratitude and new opportunities for the fulfilment of God's promises of joy to you. Amen.

————— 10 —————

Prayer: Almighty and eternal God, we bring to you the thankfulness of our hearts for all the enrichment of our lives that we receive through your love for us.

Forgive us our ingratitude and our neglect of sharing your love with others. We acknowledge that we find our greatest joy in worshipping and serving you. Lord, we ask that on those days when we are weary in body and spirit, that you will walk with us encouragingly; when we are uncertain and confused, lead us in your way; when we are fearful, embrace us with your love; when hope abandons us, show to us new horizons of life that lie ahead, and new opportunities that lie within us. Amen.

Intercession: On our journey, Lord, strengthen us to bring healing, comfort, companionship, love, joy and peace to those we meet along the road, For Jesus Christ's sake. Amen.

Reading: Psalm No. 27

Hymn: Great is Thy faithfulness (*H&P no 66*)

Blessing: May the Lord Bless you and make your life a breathing in of the fullness of His love, and a breathing out of the fragrant joy of gratitude. Amen.

11

Prayer: Eternal God, our Heavenly Father, this earth is filled with the beauty and the bounty of your spirit of love, amazing shapes and sounds, wonderful colours and textures given form in plants and animals, in the world of nature and the world of our humanity. We thank you for the beauty that we witness in the life of Jesus and for the bountiful love of His spirit. Amen.

Intercession: May the life that we see in Jesus invest and inspire the life of this world, transforming human greed to goodness, shaping our lives to the pattern of his care and compassion, overcoming our hatred and our hurtfulness, healing our divisions, creating harmony and understanding, so we may become members of the one universal kingdom of Christ. Amen.

Reading: Psalm No. 30

Hymn: Come let us sing of a wonderful love (*H&P no 691*)

Blessing: Heavenly father, in whom we live and move and have our being, we pray that you will so guide and govern us by your Holy Spirit, that in all the cares and occupations of our daily life we may never forget you, but remember that we are always walking in your sight, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

12

Prayer: We thank you Lord, for the journeys we have made through life that have brought us to this time and place; we thank you for being with us and leading us through the shadows and the sunshine, times of sorrow and of joy.

We thank you for the discoveries we have made that have filled us with wonder and gratitude, especially the discovery of Your love, Your forgiveness, Your healing and renewing grace in Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Intercession: We thank you Lord for those who have shared the journey with us, our friends and our families, and for strengthening our bonds of love. We thank you too Lord, for the opportunities that have been provided for us to share and to care for others, for whom the journey has been difficult; the lonely, the neglected, the sick and the suffering, the fearful, and those without hope. Bring them, with us, into the joy and new life of Your Kingdom. Amen.

Reading: Psalm No. 34

Hymn: Awake our souls (*H&P no 663*)

Blessing: O God, whose compassions fail not, give us grace so to recognise and receive your mercies that we may fashion our own lives after the pattern of Your love, and learn to give as freely as we have received. Lord, help us to understand what has been done for our redemption, so that Christ may live in our hearts by faith, and be proclaimed in our lives by love. Amen.

13

Prayer: Almighty God, to whom all hearts are open, all desires known, and from whom no secrets are hid; cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of Your Holy Spirit, that we may perfectly love you, and worthily magnify Your holy name. Through Christ our Lord, Amen.

Intercession: O God and Father of us all, we pray that in our society we may learn to seek first Your kingdom of truth, love and righteousness; to care for justice more than gain, and for sharing more than for domination; so that in all of us suspicion may give place to trust, and bitterness to goodwill, and we may live together in peace, expressing the harmony of our humanity. Amen.

Reading: Psalm No. 37

Hymn: O how blessed the hour (*H&P no 655*)

Blessing: Go forth into the world in peace; be of good courage; hold fast that which is good; render to no-one evil for evil; strengthen the faint-hearted; support the weak; help the afflicted; honour all men; love and serve the Lord, rejoicing in the power of the Holy Spirit. And the blessing of God Almighty, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, be upon you and remain with you always. Amen.

14

Prayer: O Lord, whose mercy reaches to the heavens, whose faithfulness knows no end: Let the greatness of Your love be known to us, that we may worship You with wonder, joy and thanksgiving. Amen. Most merciful Father, who through your son Jesus Christ gave us a new commandment that we should love one another: give us also grace that we may fulfil it. Make us gentle, courteous and forbearing; and so direct our lives that we may look each to the good of others in word and deed; for his sake who loved us and gave Himself for us, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Intercession: Teach us good Lord, to serve You as You deserve; to give and not count the cost; to fight and not heed the wounds; to toil and not seek for rest; to labour and not to ask for any reward save that of knowing that we do your will; serving You in the comfort, care and compassion we minister to those in need; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Reading: Psalm No. 40 verses 1 - 11

Hymn: Through all the changing scenes of life (*H&P no 73*)

Blessing: The peace of God which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in the knowledge and love of God, and of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord; and the blessing of God Almighty, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, be among you and remain with you always. Amen.

15

Advent Season

Prayer: Lord, we watch, we wait, we look, we long for your coming among us; dispel the darkness and awaken us to Your glory, that we may walk in Your light. Enfold us, Lord, in your love, encircle us with Your power, embrace us with Your peace; enable us to be who you would have us be, through our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

For the World: Lord, to the peoples of the world seeking freedom, justice and peace, make yourself known; Lord in our homes, to our families

and to all seeking to live in love, make yourself known; Lord, to all who are suffering and in pain, make yourself known; Lord, to those who are facing death and to those who watch and wait with them, make Yourself known; Lord, so make Yourself known that we may see the glory of God in every place, in every face, and know the peace of the Lord always. Amen.

Suggested Readings: Isaiah, 9. v2 - 7 or 2. v 6 - 7 and 11. v 1 - 9
Luke 1. v 26 - 38, 39 - 45, v 57 - 66 and 67 - 68,

Hymn: Joy to the World (*H&P no 77*)

Blessing: God, who ever comes to us, draw us to His love, draw us to His light, draw us to Himself; and the blessing of God Almighty, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, be with us and remain with us always. Amen.

16

Christmas Season

Prayer: Lord Jesus Christ, may we come to worship You with the Shepherds, proclaim You with the Angels, seek You with the Wise Men, offer ourselves to You with Joseph and Mary and rejoice in Your love for us; Jesus, Son of Mary, You have come among us, to be one with us; we welcome You into our communities, we welcome You into our homes, we welcome You into our hearts.

Intercession: Lord, You could find no room at the Inn. We remember before You all who are homeless and can find no place of rest; especially refugees outcast from their countries; for street children and all children in care or victims of abuse in their own homes; for all who are lonely this Christmas, or who feel neglected; for those in hospital or terminally ill in hospice; Prince of Peace, give them all Your peace. Amen.

Suggested Readings: Matthew 1. v 18 - 24, 2. v 1 - 12
Luke 2. v 1 - 40, (divide up as appropriate)

Hymn: Love came down (*H&P no 105*)

Blessing: The wisdom of the wonderful counsellor guide you;
The strength of the mighty God protect you;
The love of the everlasting Father enfold you;
The peace of the Prince of Peace be within you;
Throughout this Christmas season and forever.
Amen.

Season of Epiphany

Prayer: O God, who by the leading of a star revealed Your Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, to the nations of the world, lead us to a clearer vision of Your presence, and the nations into ways of unity and peace; open our ears to Your call, and open our eyes to Your glory. Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.
 Lord, we give You thanks that You have called us to know You, that You have called us to serve You; Lord make us worthy of our calling. Amen.

Intercession: We pray especially for all who are called to the caring professions – for social workers and home helps, for doctors and nurses and all who work in hospitals and hospices; for all volunteers and charitable organisations working with children and the elderly; for counsellors and support workers. Encourage and support them with Your spirit of love and care. Amen.

Suggested Readings: Matthew 2. v 1 – 12, 13 – 18

Hymn: Brightest and Best (*H&P no 123*)

Blessing: Arise shine for your light is come; the glory of the Lord is risen upon you, Christ be a bright flame before you, a guiding star above you, a kindly shepherd behind you, and a supporting strength beneath you; And the blessing of God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit be with you always. Amen.

Season of Light

Prayer: Almighty God, give us grace to cast away the works of darkness, cleanse and deliver us from all our sins, confirm and strengthen us in all goodness, and lead us in the way of eternal life; through Him who is the way, the truth and the life, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Intercession: Lord, we remember before You our faults and failings, knowing Your passion to heal and forgive us; we fail to live up to our ideals; we are often too concerned about material things, and often not concerned enough; we do not put our trust in You, but trust in our own strength alone; we neglect to care for your world, and despoil it by our selfishness, greed and indifference; we create discord, division and destruction in our human relationships; Lord, more and more reveal Your beauty, goodness and love to us; renew our life by Your fulfilment in us. Amen.

Suggested Readings: Matthew 4. v 12 – 17. 5. v 14 – 16
 John 1. v 1 – 9

Hymn: Hark my soul (*H&P no 521*)

Blessing: Walk in the light of Christ, that you may become children of light, and the peace of the Lord be always with you. Amen.

Holy Week

Prayer: We adore You O Christ, and we praise You because by Your cross and passion You have redeemed the world.
 Holy Lord God, You did not spare Your own Son, but gave him up for us all. We remember His obedience to Your will, even to death upon the cross. We remember His forgiveness of those who crucified Him and nailed Him to the cross. We rejoice in Christ's love for the world which nothing could destroy. We rejoice in the victory over all evil and the power of death. We confess to You, God our Father, how often we avoid the discipline and pain of self-surrender; how often we fail to see the cross in the needs and sufferings of others; how often we deny the cross by asserting instead of giving ourselves. May we so love in loving others that in them we may find You and live in You, Christ our Lord. Amen.

Suggested Readings:

Palm Sunday: Matthew 21. v 1 – 9, v 10 – 17.

Mark 11. v 1 – 11

Luke. V 29 – 40

Monday: Luke 19 v 41 – 48

Matthew 21. v 12 – 17

John 2. v 13 – 22

Tuesday: Mark 11. v 12 – 19

Wednesday: Matthew 26 v 16

Thursday: 26. v 17 – 25, v 26-30, v 31 – 35
 V 36 – 46 and so on to v 75.

Friday: 27. As required from v 1 to 61

Saturday: Matthew 27. v 62 – 66

Hymn: We sing the praise of Him who died (*H&P no 182*)

Blessing: Thanks be to you, our Lord Jesus Christ, for all the benefits which you have given us, for all the pains and insults which You have borne for us. Most merciful redeemer, friend and brother, may we know You more clearly, love You more dearly and follow You more clearly, day by day. Amen.

Season of Easter

- Prayer: The Lord is risen; He is risen indeed. Eternal God and Father, by whose power our Lord Jesus Christ was raised from the dead: With the whole company of Your people in heaven and on earth, we rejoice and give thanks, that He who was dead is alive again and lives for evermore; that He is with us now and always; and that nothing can separate us from Your love in Him; that He has opened the way to Your kingdom and brought us the gift of eternal life; to You be all praise, glory, honour and thanksgiving, almighty and everlasting God, in time and for all eternity. Amen.
- Intercession: Lord, be present with Your love to those in this world who are lonely, those who feel rejected, those who are broken-hearted, those whose hopes have died, those bearing suffering and pain, those who are coming to the end of their journey in this world; help us, Lord, to walk with these and with all who are downcast and fearful, and as we walk may we know Your presence very near. Amen.
- Suggested Readings:
 Sunday: Matthew 28. v 1 - 9
 Mark. 16. v 1 - 10
 Luke 24. v 1 - 12
 John. 20 v 1 - 10
 Jesus appears to his disciples:
 Matthew 28. v 16 - 20
 Mark. 16 v 14 - 18
 Luke. 24 v 36 - 49
 John. 20 v 19 - 23
 Acts 1. v 6 - 8
- Hymn: I know that my redeemer lives (*H&P no 196*)
- Blessing: Receive into Your keeping, O God, ourselves and all those we love, and teach us in life and death to put our trust in You, our strength and redeemer. Amen.
 Risen Lord, who on the first Easter day drew near Your two disciples on the Emmaus road, and at evening stayed with them in their village home: Be our unseen companion along the daily journey of our life, and at the ending of the day come and abide with us in our dwellings; for Your love's sake. Amen.

Ascension Day

- Prayer: We give You thanks and praise our Lord Jesus Christ, that in Your ascension You elevated and enhanced our human nature, so that we shall be as You are, filled with love and beautified by the truth - true children of God, the Father to whom with You and the Holy Spirit be all honour and glory. Amen.
- Intercession: Give to us, O God, a vision of Your world as love would make it; a world where the weak are protected and none go hungry; a world whose benefits and beauty are shared, so that everyone may enjoy them; a world whose different people and cultures and religions live together with tolerance, mutual respect and reverence; a world where peace is built with justice, and where justice is fired with love; so this world and all within it delight in Your heart and glorify Your name. Amen.
- Suggested Readings: Luke 24. v 36 - 53 (esp. v 45 - 51)
 Acts 1. v 4 - 11
- Hymn: There's a light upon the mountain (*H&P no 246*)
- Blessing: The risen and ascended Lord be with you to uplift you, to inspire you, to guide you, to give you a glimpse of His glory and to kindle in you the vision of His eternal kingdom. Amen.

Season of Pentecost

- Prayer: O God, we pray that as the Holy Spirit came in wind and fire to the apostles, so he may come to us, breathing life into our souls and kindling in our hearts the flames of love; through our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.
 Come Holy Spirit of God, restore our lives which without You are dead; kindle the hearts which without You are cold and dull; enlighten the minds which without You are dark and blind; fill the church which without You is an empty shrine; through of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.
- Intercession: Lord God, Creator and Father of us all, you have made of one blood people of all races and nations of the earth; increase among us the spirit of sympathy and understanding, of tolerance and goodwill; that the prejudices, arrogance and pride which cause division between those of different race, creed or colour may be done away, and all peoples may live together in unity and peace; through our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

Prayer for Local Concerns

Suggested Readings: Acts 2. v 1 – 47 (as required)

Hymn: Come down O love divine (*H&P no 281*)

Blessing: O God, by Your spirit dwelling in our hearts, may we know this day the joy of Your presence and be given wisdom and strength for every task; defend us, O Lord, with Thy heavenly grace, that we may continue Thine for ever, and daily increase in Thy Holy Spirit more and more, until we come to Thy everlasting kingdom. Amen.

————— 23 —————
Season of All Saints

Prayer: Almighty God, from whose love neither death nor life can separate us: with the whole company of the redeemed in heaven and on earth we praise and magnify Your glorious name, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, one God, blessed forever.

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ; by His great mercy we have been born anew to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and to an inheritance which is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, reserved in heaven for all who put their faith in God. Amen.

Intercession: Father, we pray for all who are finding the last stage of their journey a trial of their physical and spiritual stamina: those who are seriously ill, those who are lonely, those who are dying; keep them in the fellowship of all the faithful souls on earth and in heaven and bring them renewed and whole into Your eternal kingdom. Amen.

Suggested Readings:

Romans 8. v 24 – 28

Colossians 5. v 9 – 12

Revelations 5 v 8 (and those before and /or following)

7. v 9 – 14

Psalm 24.

1 John 3. v 1 – 3

Matthew 5. v 1 - 12

Hymn: Give me the faith (*H&P no 767*)

Blessing: O Lord, support us all the day long of this troublous life, until the shadows lengthen, and the evening comes, and the busy world is hushed, the fever of life is over, and our work is done. Then, Lord, in Your mercy, grant us safe lodging, a holy rest and peace at the last; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

————— 24 —————

Prayer: Lord, You have brought us into life as if into an enchanted paradise. We have seen the sky like a chalice of deepest blue, where in the heights birds are singing.

We have listened to the soothing murmur of the forest and the melodious music of the streams.

We have tasted fruit of fine flavour and sweet-scented honey.

We can live very well on Your earth.

It is a pleasure to be Your guest.

Glory to You for the feast day of life

Glory to You for the perfume of lilies and roses.

Glory to You for each different taste of berry and fruit.

Glory to You for the sparkling silver of early morning dew.

Glory to You for the joy of dawn's awakening.

Glory to You for the new life each day brings.

Glory to You, O God, from age to age. Amen.

Reading: Psalm No. 46

Hymn: Now thank we all our God (*H&P no 566*)

Blessing: Watch Thou, dear Lord, with those who wake, or watch, or weep tonight and give Thine angels charge over those who sleep. Tend Thy sick ones, O Lord Christ; rest Thy weary ones. Bless Thy dying ones; soothe Thy suffering ones and be present with each one of us to enfold us in Your loving arms. Amen.

————— 25 —————

Prayer: Glory to you O Lord,. You have triumphed over the powers of darkness and brought us to share in the inheritance of your saints in light. Raise us up to the newness of life, that we may live to serve you, Living Lord, who with the Father and the life giving spirit are one God, world without end. Amen.

Intercession: Lord, as You have opened for us the gate of everlasting life, help us to live life to the full. May we help others to extend their lives and their vision. Bless our homes and our loved ones with the fullness of life. We remember before you all those whose lives are restricted or handicapped physically or emotionally. We pray for those whose lives are impaired through the cruelty or neglect of others. We pray for all who are sick, that they may know your healing presence. Amen.

Reading: Psalm No 51 verses 1-4, 10-17.

Hymn: Sweet is the work (*H&P no 514*)

Blessing: Be present, O merciful God, and protect us through the hours of this night; so that we who are wearied by the changes and chances of this fleeting world may repose upon thy eternal changelessness; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

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Prayer: Lord, for setting our feet upon the path of beauty, we thank You.
May we walk that path with reverence and joy.
Lord, for entrusting into our hands the task of caring, we thank You.
May we perform that task with kindness and compassion.
Lord, for opening our eyes to see Your living presence, we thank You.
May we look for You and finding You, reveal to others Your living and loving presence.
Lord, for filling our hearts with faith, we thank You.
May that faith be our daily breath, and inspire us to live, to believe and to trust in You always. Amen.

Reading: Psalm No 57

Hymn: The King of love my shepherd is (*H&P no 69*)

Blessing: O God, with whom there is no darkness, but the night shines as the day: keep and defend us and all your children through the coming night. Renew our hearts with your forgiveness, and our bodies with untroubled sleep, that we may wake to use more faithfully Your gift of life, through Jesus Christ our Lord, Amen.

27

Prayer: Almighty God, our creator and redeemer, we praise You for all Your wonderful works, for the beauty and bounty of the world around us, for everything You have given us so richly to enjoy. We bless You for our own creation as men and women made in Your image, with minds to know You, hearts to love You and wills to obey You. Accept O God, this, our praise and thanksgiving, and to Your name be honour and glory for ever. Amen.

Intercession: We thank You our Father for those whose work sustains our nation and this community in which we live; we thank You for those who, day and night, maintain the public services, for the police, for emergency services and all who work in health and social care. Help us to live thankfully and not grudgingly as members of our human family. Amen.

Reading: Psalm No 67.

Hymn: Jesu, thou joy of loving hearts (*H&P no 258*)

Blessing: To God's gracious mercy and protection we commit each other.
The Lord bless us and keep us.
The Lord make His face to shine upon us and be gracious to us.
The Lord lift up the light of his countenance upon us and give us His peace. Amen.

28

Prayer: Eternal God and Heavenly Father, we open our hearts to You now and pray that You will fill us with Your peace. Create in our hearts that deep and sure trust in Your love made known to us through our Lord Jesus Christ. Awaken in our hearts the abiding joy and gratitude for all Your goodness to us and inspire in us Your spirit of compassion. Amen.

Intercession: Filled with Your love, O God, and empowered by Your spirit, may we seek to love and care for all those who find life difficult, who are coping with ill-health, with fears and uncertainties, with sorrow and loss of hope. Make us Lord, instruments of Your peace and love, true and faithful servants of our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

Reading: Psalm No 71 verses 1-19.

Hymn: Author of faith (*H&P no 662*)

Blessing: Teach us, O God, to begin our works with faith, to go on with obedience, and to finish them in love; and then to wait patiently in hope, knowing that Your promises can never fail. Through Jesus Christ our Lord, Amen.

29

Prayer: Creator God, You are at the heart of all that You have made, present in our hearts, too. In Jesus You show that You are a God with us in all things, at all times; in our joys and our sorrows, in our hopes and our fears. Thank You God our Father that there is no journey we make where You do not walk with us; no pain we bear or suffering we know that You do not share with us. We thank You for the faith and love You invest in us, that helps to shape our lives for good and to reveal in us Your own image. Amen.

Intercession: Enable us, O Lord, to live in this world as Your children and to share with our brothers and sisters in bearing their burdens and in sharing with them the joys to which we are all heirs in Christ. Amen.

Reading: Psalm No 84

Hymn: Yes, God is good (*H&P no 363*)
Blessing: Deep peace of the running wave to you,
Deep peace of the flowing air to you,
Deep peace of the quiet earth to you,
Deep peace of the shining stars to you,
Deep peace of the God of peace to you. Amen.

————— 30 —————

Prayer: Almighty God and Father, help us to be still in Your presence, that we may know ourselves to be Your people and You to be our God, through Jesus Christ our Lord.
Lord, we come to You in the assurance that You are present with us now.
We do not have to seek Your presence; we are daily living in Your presence.
Make us aware of it; make it real to us.
So may we be relaxed in Your presence and our hearts be at peace.
Through Christ our Lord, Amen.

Intercession: Lord God Almighty, pour Your spirit into our hearts and set us on fire with love for You, that we may bring forth the fruits of love, joy and peace, and live to the praise of Your holy name. May that fire of love that burns in our hearts create a flame of faith, of hope, of peace in the hearts of all those whose lives we touch; through Jesus Christ our Lord, Amen.

Reading: Psalm No 95 verses 1-7.

Hymn: Walk in the light (*H&P no 464*)

Blessing: Father, give to us and to all Your people,
in times of anxiety, serenity;
in times of hardship, courage;
in times of uncertainty, patience;
and at all times a quiet trust in Your wisdom and love.
Through Jesus Christ our Lord, Amen.

ADDITIONAL PRAYERS AND READINGS

1. Creed

I believe in beauty – I have been inspired by it.
I believe in goodness – I have been nurtured by it.
I believe in truth – I have been guided by it.
I believe in joy – I have been uplifted by it.
I believe in love – I have been challenged and changed by it.
I believe in the source of beauty, of goodness,
of truth, of joy, of love.
I believe in God who is that source
who has inspired me
who has nurtured me
who has guided me
who has uplifted me
who has challenged and changed me,
I believe.

2. The most precious gift

The most precious gift that we possess
Is one that we share in common
with every other creature on this planet;
We cannot buy it
nor win it in a lottery
or on a field of battle.

No nation, no political party, no religious group
has exclusive rights to it.

It is gifted to the richest and to the poorest,
the strongest and the weakest,
the wise and the unlearned.

Our common need of it is what unites us
as creatures and beneficiaries of this planet Earth
making us, creating us,
brothers and sisters to each other
and to all living things.

It has only one source on which we all depend,
And for which our shared gratitude should be unbounded.
It is the breath of life, the gift of this Earth, to all who dwell here.

3.

Give me, O Lord, the grace
to reach as high as I am able to achieve
and the humility to stoop
as low as is necessary to serve.

4.

Jesus tilts the balance of belief
from a God “up there” to a God “down here”;
from a God “out there” to a God “in here”;
from a God who is apart from us to a God who is apart of us;
from a God enthroned in Heaven to a God who walks this earth;
from a God who is an absentee landlord to a God who is a sitting tenant;
from a God who intervenes to save us out of the world
to a God who inspires us to save the world by living in it with us;
from a God who gets us out of our difficulties
to a God who gets into difficulty with us;
from a God who finds fault with us
to a God who has faith in us;
from a God who looks to see the wrong that is in us
to the God who looks to enjoy the good that is in us;
from a God we have to work hard to please,
to a God who accepts us as we are;
from a God who is all-powerful to a God who is all-loving;
from a controlling God to an empowering God
from a God displaying His glory, to a God who becomes our servant;
from a God approachable only through special rituals,
to a God who approaches us from every part of creation;
from a God who is the possession of a special people,
to a God for whom all people are a special possession;
from a God who demands our obedience
to a God who offers us His love;
from a God who belongs to the sacred, the holy,
to a God who makes all things sacred, holy;
from a God who awaits us beyond death,
to a God who is with us through life and leads us into eternal life.

5.

The Eyes of a Child

Oh, the eyes of a child will speak to you
with a look so bright and clear:
If you dare to hear them
they will speak to you of their joy, their fear,
their acceptance and their expectation,
their trust and simplicity:
Their wonder, pain or sorrow
in their eyes you can plainly see:
Oh yes, the eyes of a child will speak to you
of what's in their heart or mind,
but if you really dare to look at them,
be prepared for what you'll find,
for the eyes of a child will question you,
they can penetrate your soul;

their honest gaze can judge you,
their looks can make you whole;
for the eyes of a child are pure,
their looks have no pretence,
filled with natural curiosity
and the light of innocence.

6.

Lord, I thank You

For the love that heals,
For the love that forgives,
For the love that strengthens,
For the love that supports,
For the love that encourages,
For the love that trusts,
For the love that believes the best,
For the love that understands,
For the love that rejoices,
For the love that perseveres,
For the love that creates hope,
For the love that unites,
For the love that endures through all things,
For the love of Christ, I thank You.

7.

Come, Lord Jesus, come to me

With your light so I might see
All the love which you impart
To my waiting, longing heart.

Come, Lord Jesus, my Lord, my friend,
Whose faithfulness will never end;
Walk with me Lord on every road
Sharing, bearing every load.

Come, Lord Jesus, dwell in me,
At home to You I'd always be.
So your love I'd learn to know,
And in Your love my life would grow.

Come, Lord Jesus with Your light;
Journey with me through the night;
Then take me with You, Lord, I pray
Into those realms of eternal day.

8. Additional psalms (or alternatives)

Psalm nos 96, 98, 103, 121, 130, 139 (verses 1-18, 23-24), 145.

PRAYERS

1. For those who suffer

Lord, there are so many people, who, moment by moment, day by day, Are bearing great pain with courage and with determination not to be overcome by it; their response to suffering is a testimony to their strength of spirit, to their faith and self-belief, to their refusal to allow suffering to confine or define their lives; their testimony and courage gives strength and encouragement to others; so, Lord, we thank You for all the victims of pain – that great cloud of witnesses who surround us and uphold us by the example of their faith. Amen.

2. For writers and broadcasters

O God, who chose the written word to speak an eternal gospel to every age, give to those who handle words as writers, speakers, journalists and broadcasters a constant loyalty to truth and a heart concerned with wisdom. May they raise, and not lower, our moral standards; may they increase, not diminish, the true welfare of mankind; for the sake of Jesus Christ our Lord, Amen.

3. Health

Lord God, from whose creative power all health and healing flows, we thank You for medical knowledge and skill, and for every advance in the care of those who are ill or suffering or facing disease and death. We pray especially for the work and the workers of the Nigeria Health Care project; may it continue and increase its aid and care, especially for mothers and babies, and give thanks for the help and support it has already given. We pray for a more equitable sharing of medical resources among the peoples of the world. Amen.

4. Music and musicians

Heavenly Father, we give You thanks and praise for the joy of music and its ability to awaken in us depths of awareness of the spiritual nature of life. We thank You for music and musicians who can inspire in us experiences of peace, of love and can give expression to the deep longings of our spirits, the yearnings of our hearts. For all who make music with instrument or voice, we praise You, O Lord. Amen.

5. Other religions

Draw us closer, our Father, to those who practise a religion different from our own. Help us not to trample on what they hold sacred, but to respect their convictions, to learn from them insights we have neglected or forgotten, and to share with them the light of truth we have received through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

6. The hungry world

Lord of the harvest, we rejoice in the bounty of Your world; We thank You for the rich harvests it produces.

As we do so, we remember those who do not have enough, the thousands who are daily dying of hunger.

We pray for those who have more than they require, for ourselves and our churches. Show us what needs to be done, and how to share the world's harvest more fairly.

Teach us to value people more than things. Above all help us to set our hearts on Your kingdom of love and justice, and to seek to do Your will here on earth, as servants of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

7. United Nations Organisation

God and Father of us all, we ask Your blessing on the United Nations Organisation in all its manifold work; in education and health, in relief of poverty and hunger, and in keeping the light of peace shining in the world. We pray that the leaders of the nations may be given the discernment and courage always to choose the good and refuse the evil, in obedience to Your will: through Jesus Christ our Lord, Amen.

8. The human family

Heavenly Father, who made us in Your own image and redeemed us through Jesus Your son, look with compassion on the whole human family. Take from us the arrogance and hatred which infect our hearts; break down the walls that separate us; and unite us in bonds of trust and understanding, that we may work together to accomplish Your purposes on earth, for the glory of Your name; through Jesus Christ our Lord, Amen.

9. Today's world – world poverty

Father, we who live in the midst of affluence confess that much of the world's poverty is caused by selfishness and our indifference to the suffering of our fellow men.

Teach us to remember that the good things of this life are given to us not only to enjoy but to use and to share and help us to exercise our stewardship more faithfully and generously as we think of the needs of others; for the sake of Jesus Christ our Lord, Amen.

10. Today's world

O God, whose wisdom has set within our hearts the quest for knowledge and dominion in the natural world, teach us to use all scientific invention and technology not to hurt but to heal, not to destroy but to build, not to divide but to unite Your human family in prosperity and dignity together. And let not our knowledge outstrip our wisdom; through Jesus Christ our Lord, Amen.

11. Armed Forces

To Your care and protection, O Lord of hosts, we commend the men and women of our armed forces at home and overseas. Defend them in the fulfilment of their duty; and enable them to serve their country with loyalty, courage and honour, through Jesus Christ our Lord, Amen.

12. Leaders of Nations – Parliament

Almighty God, we pray for those engaged in the political life of our nation as members of Parliament. Help them to put loyalty to what is right above loyalty to party or class, above popularity or the praise of men; and may their only motive be to serve their country and promote the welfare of their fellow men. We ask this for the honour of Your holy name, Amen.

13. Life of Society

Lord Christ, You have taught us that our life does not consist in the abundance of our possessions. Write this word on all our hearts today. Save us from the sin of covetousness, from love of money, from the materialistic spirit of the age. Help us to set our affections on the things of eternal worth, the things that money cannot buy; that we may lay up treasure in heaven, and may know that even now, in possessing you, we possess true riches. Amen.

14. Industry – Industrial relations

As we pray, creator God, for the complex world of industry, we remember the delicate balance of relationships, the heavy responsibility of management, the often monotonous and repetitive job-assignments; and the ever-present fear of redundancy and unemployment.

We pray that harmony may reign in the industrial areas of our land, and that the creative skills with which You have endowed mankind may be employed to Your glory and the well-being of society. We pray this in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, Amen.

15. Education – Schools and colleges

Eternal God, bless all schools, colleges and universities, and especially..... That they may be lively centres for sound learning, new discovery and the pursuit of wisdom; and grant that those who teach and those who learn may find You to be the source of all truth. Through Jesus Christ our Lord, Amen.

16. The sanctity of life – the medical profession

Lord God, the giver of life, may it be the constant aim of all members of the medical profession to preserve life as well as to heal sickness and alleviate suffering. Help them, and all of us, to face the challenge of secular humanist thinking and to take a clear stand for Christian values, and to affirm our conviction that life is sacred from conception to the grave. This we ask in the name of Christ our Lord, Amen.

17. The ministry of healing

Heavenly Father, we know that all healing comes from You, and therefore we ask Your blessing on all who are engaged in the ministry of healing. We pray for doctors, surgeons and psychiatrists, for health visitors and district nurses, for the staff who work in our local hospitals, and for those who nurse the sick at home. Give them, O Lord, all needful wisdom skill and patience; and may they know that in ministering to the sick, they are fellow workers with You and are furthering Your purposes of love; through Jesus Christ our Lord, Amen.

18. Marriage – Christian marriage

God our Father, who made men and women to live together in families; we pray that marriage may be held in honour; that husbands and wives may live faithfully together according to their vows; and that the members of every family may grow in mutual love and kindness, so that they may bear one another's burdens and so fulfil the law of Christ; for His name's sake, Amen.

