

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

Drawn close to the heart of God, we offer these prayers for the church, the world, and all who are in need.

A brief silence.

We pray for the church around the world in all its forms: for pastors, deacons, bishops, chaplains, and mission developers; for church councils, committee chairs, and all lay ministry leaders; for congregations that contemplate difficult decisions about the future of their ministry. Merciful God, **receive our prayer.**

For the health of this planet and the well-being of its creatures: for lands impacted by droughts and at risk of wildfires; for fig trees and vineyards that produce fruit for our nourishment and delight; for animal habitats threatened by climate change. Merciful God, **receive our prayer.**

For those called into positions of civic responsibility: for judges, attorneys, and court administrators tasked with uncovering truth and delivering justice; for activists and community leaders who cast a vision of a more compassionate

and equitable society. Merciful God, **receive our prayer.**

For those who call upon you for mercy: for all who live in poverty and experience hunger; for any who feel tested beyond their strength; for those who are hospitalized or near death, and for all in need of healing (*especially*). Merciful God, **receive our prayer.**

For the advocacy efforts of this congregation: for those whose faith leads them to speak difficult truths and engage in difficult conversations with policymakers; for those who promote mercy over vengeance or retaliation. Merciful God, **receive our prayer.**

Here other intercessions may be offered.

For those whose earthly journeys have ended, we give thanks. With (*names and*) all the saints, we praise you for the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Merciful God, **receive our prayer.**

Accept the prayers we bring, O God, on behalf of a world in need, for the sake of Jesus Christ. **Amen.**

## Preparing for Next Week

**Monday** (commemoration of Thomas Cranmer, Bishop of Canterbury, martyr, 1556) Psalm 39. **Tuesday** (commemoration of Jonathan Edwards, teacher, missionary to American Indians, 1758) Romans 2:12-16. **Wednesday** Numbers 13:17-27. **Thursday** (commemoration of Oscar Arnulfo Romero, Bishop of El Salvador, martyr, 1980) Psalm 32. **Friday** (Annunciation of Our Lord) Luke 1:26-38. **Saturday** Exodus 32:7-14. **Fourth Sunday in Lent** Joshua 5:9-12; Psalm 32; 2 Corinthians 5:16-21; Luke 15:1-3, 11b-32.

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# Celebrate

Third Sunday in Lent  
March 20, 2022

The warnings are plentiful and blunt on the third Sunday in Lent. Cut it out or get cut down! The warnings are accompanied by God's invitation to attentiveness: "Incline your ear, and come to me; listen, so that you may live." The landowner's ultimatum is forestalled by the gardener's readiness to till the ground one more year. That is good news for all of us. Thanks be to God!

## Prayer of the Day

Eternal God, your kingdom has broken into our troubled world through the life, death, and resurrection of your Son. Help us to hear your word and obey it, and bring your saving love to fruition in our lives, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen.**

## First Reading

Isaiah 55:1-9

To those who have experienced long years in exile, the return to their homeland is a celebration of abundant life. God calls them into an everlasting covenant of love. Those who return to God will enjoy new life and forgiveness, because God's ways are not our ways.

Ho, everyone who thirsts,  
come to the waters;  
and you that have no money,  
come, buy and eat!

Come, buy wine and milk  
without money and without price.

<sup>2</sup>Why do you spend your money for that  
which is not bread,  
and your labor for that which does  
not satisfy?

Listen carefully to me, and eat what is  
good,  
and delight yourselves in rich food.

<sup>3</sup>Incline your ear, and come to me;  
listen, so that you may live.

I will make with you an everlasting  
covenant,  
my steadfast, sure love for David.

<sup>4</sup>See, I made him a witness to the  
peoples,  
a leader and commander for the  
peoples.

<sup>5</sup>See, you shall call nations that you do  
not know,  
and nations that do not know you  
shall run to you,  
because of the LORD your God,  
the Holy One of Israel,  
for he has glorified you.

<sup>6</sup>Seek the LORD while he may be found,  
call upon him while he is near;

<sup>7</sup>let the wicked forsake their way,  
and the unrighteous their thoughts;

let them return to the LORD, that he  
may have mercy on them,  
and to our God, for he will

abundantly pardon.

<sup>8</sup>For my thoughts are not your  
thoughts,  
nor are your ways my ways, says the  
LORD.

<sup>9</sup>For as the heavens are higher than the  
earth,

so are my ways higher than your ways  
and my thoughts than your  
thoughts.

*Paul uses images from Hebrew scripture and prophecy to speak the truth of Jesus Christ: He is our rock, our water, and our drink. Christ is the living sign of God's faithfulness.*

them did, and twenty-three thousand fell in a single day.<sup>9</sup> We must not put Christ to the test, as some of them did, and were destroyed by serpents.<sup>10</sup> And do not complain as some of them did, and were destroyed by the destroyer.<sup>11</sup> These things happened to them to serve as an example, and they were written down to instruct us, on whom the ends of the ages have come.<sup>12</sup> So if you think you are standing, watch out that you do not fall.<sup>13</sup> No testing has overtaken you that is not common to everyone. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tested beyond your strength, but with the testing he will also provide the way out so that you may be able to endure it.

*Asked about current tragic events, Jesus turns a parable that holds out hope that the timeline for ultimate judgment will be tempered by patience.*

you will all perish just as they did.”<sup>6</sup> Then he told this parable: “A man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard; and he came looking for fruit on it and found none.<sup>7</sup> So he said to the gardener, ‘See here! For three years I have come looking for fruit on this fig tree, and still I find none. Cut it down! Why should it be wasting the soil?’<sup>8</sup> He replied, ‘Sir, let it alone for one more year, until I dig around it and put manure on it.<sup>9</sup> If it bears fruit next year, well and good; but if not, you can cut it down.’”

I do not want you to be unaware, brothers and sisters, that our ancestors were all under the cloud, and all passed through the sea,<sup>2</sup> and all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea,<sup>3</sup> and all ate the same spiritual food,<sup>4</sup> and all drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank from the spiritual rock that followed them, and the rock was Christ.<sup>5</sup> Nevertheless, God was not pleased with most of them, and they were struck down in the wilderness.<sup>6</sup> Now these things occurred as examples for us, so that we might not desire evil as they did.<sup>7</sup> Do not become idolaters as some of them did; as it is written, ‘The people sat down to eat and drink, and they rose up to play.’<sup>8</sup> We must not indulge in sexual immorality as some of

At that very time there were some present who told him about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices.<sup>2</sup> [Jesus] asked them, “Do you think that because these Galileans suffered in this way they were worse sinners than all other Galileans? No, I tell you; but unless you repent, you will all perish as they did.<sup>4</sup> Or those eighteen who were killed when the tower of Siloam fell on them—do you think that they were worse offenders than all the others living in Jerusalem? No, I tell you; but unless you repent,



O God, ea-ger-ly I seek you; my soul thirsts for you.

O God, you are my God; eager-ly I seek you; my soul thirsts for you, my flesh faints for you, as in a dry and weary land where there is no water.<sup>1</sup> Therefore I have gazed upon you in your holy place, that I might behold your power, and your glory.<sup>2</sup> For your steadfast love is better than life itself, my lips shall give you praise.<sup>3</sup> So will I bless you as long as I live and lift up my hands in your name. R My spirit is content, as with the richest of foods, and my mouth praises you with joyful lips, when I remember you up- on my bed, and meditate on you in the night watches.<sup>7</sup> For you have been my helper, and under the shadow of your wings I will rejoice.<sup>8</sup> My whole being clings to you; your right hand holds me fast. R