

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

As God's beloved children united in Christ, let us pray for the church, the whole human community, and the well-being of the earth, our home.

A brief silence.

God our wisdom, renew the church in the power of the Spirit, that it may do justice, love kindness, live humbly, and boldly proclaim Christ crucified. We pray for social justice and humanitarian aid ministries (*faith-based organizations may be named*). Merciful God,

receive our prayer.

God our source, we honor you by caring wisely for your creation. We pray for the health of old growth forests, ice caps, and ocean currents. Preserve the diversity of life on earth. Merciful God,

receive our prayer.

God our righteousness, raise up visionary leaders who serve with integrity and respect human rights. Increase freedom in every nation. Protect educators, journalists, artists, and religious activists who are reviled for speaking truth. Merciful God,

receive our prayer.

God our joy, we give thanks for the lives of those before us who journeyed humbly with you. Merciful God,

receive our prayer.

Confident that the Holy Spirit receives our prayers and answers us, we commend all for whom we pray to God's loving-kindness made known to us in Christ Jesus our Savior.

Amen.

God our advocate, you give hope to all who suffer because of persecution, poverty, or war. Reunite separated families and bring orphaned children to safety. Comfort any who grieve or suffer in any way (*especially*). Merciful God,

receive our prayer.

God our blessing, we pray for the children and youth of this congregation, and for parents, grandparents, mentors, teachers, and youth ministers who model love for their neighbor and care for others. Merciful God,

receive our prayer.

Here other intercessions may be offered.

Who are the blessed ones of God? For Micah, they are those who do justice, love kindness, and walk humbly with God. For Paul, they are the ones who find wisdom in the weakness of the cross. For Jesus, they are the poor, the meek, the merciful, the pure in heart, the peacemakers, those who mourn, and those who hunger for righteousness. In baptism we find our blessed identity and calling in this countercultural way of living and serving.



Celebrate

Fourth Sunday after Epiphany
February 1, 2026

Prayer of the Day

Holy God, you confound the world's wisdom in giving your kingdom to the lowly and the pure in heart. Give us such a hunger and thirst for justice, and perseverance in striving for peace, that in our words and deeds the world may see the life of your Son, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen.

First Reading

With the mountains and the foundations of the earth as the jury, God brings a lawsuit against Israel. God has "wornied" Israel with a long history of saving acts. God does not want or expect lavish sacrifices to attempt to earn divine favor. Rather God empowers the people to do justice, to love loyalty to God, and to walk shrewdly in God's service.

Hear what the LORD says:

Rise, plead your case before the mountains,

and let the hills hear your voice.

²Hear, you mountains, the case of the

LORD,

and you enduring foundations of

the earth,

for the LORD has a case against his

people,

and he will contend with Israel.

³"O my people, what have I done to you?
In what have I wearied you?
Answer me!

Shall I give my firstborn for my

transgression,

the fruit of my body for the sin of

my soul?⁴

Shall I come before him with burnt offerings,

with calves a year old?

"Will the LORD be pleased with

with ten thousands of rams,

and what does the LORD require

of you

but to do justice and to love kindness

and to walk humbly with your God?

Preparing for Next Week

Monday (Presentation of Our Lord) Luke 2:22-40. **Tuesday** (commemoration of Ansgar, Bishop of Hamburg, missionary to Denmark and Sweden, died 865) Psalm 37:1-17. **Wednesday** Luke 6:17-26. **Thursday** (commemoration of the Martyrs of Japan, died 1597) Psalm 112:1-9 [10]. **Friday** James 3:13-18. **Saturday** Isaiah 29:13-16. **Fifth Sunday after Epiphany** Isaiah 58:1-9a [9b-12]; Psalm 112:1-9 [10]; 1 Corinthians 2:1-12 [13-16]; Matthew 5:13-20.

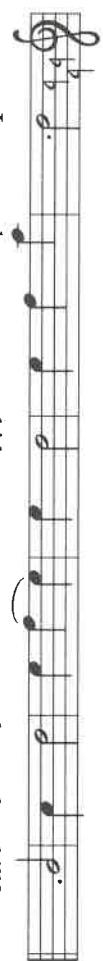
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According to the world's standards of power and might, the message of the cross seems stupid and offensive. Yet this word reveals the paradoxical way God has chosen to work power and salvation through weakness, rejection, and suffering. Hence the message of the cross becomes true wisdom and power for believers.

LORD, who may a - bide up - on your ho - ly hill?

Lord, who may dwell in your ¹ tabernacle?

Who may abide upon your ¹ holy hill?

2Those who lead a blameless life and do ¹ what is right,

3who speak the truth ¹ from their heart; R

³they do not slander with the tongue, they do no evil ¹ to their friends;

4In their sight the wicked are rejected,

but they honor those who ¹ fear the Lord.

5They have sworn upon their health

and do not take ¹ back their word.

5They do not give their money in hope of gain,

nor do they take bribes a-¹ gainst the innocent.

Those who do these things shall never be ¹ overthrown. R

The message about the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. ¹⁹For it is written, "I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and the discernment of the discerning I will thwart."

20Where is the one who is wise? Where is the scholar? Where is the debater of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? ²¹For since, in the wisdom of God, the world did not know God through wisdom, God decided, through the foolishness of the proclamation, to save those who believe. ²²For Jews ask for signs and Greeks desire wisdom, ²³but we proclaim Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to gentiles, ²⁴but to those who are the called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ

the power of God and the wisdom of God. ²⁵For God's foolishness is wiser than human wisdom, and God's weakness is stronger than human strength.

²⁶Consider your own call, brothers and sisters: not many of you were wise by human standards, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth.

²⁷But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong; ²⁸God chose what is low and despised in the world, things that are not, to abolish things that are, ²⁹so that no one might boast in the presence of God.

³⁰In contrast, God is why you are in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification and redemption, ³¹in order that, as it is written, "Let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord."

Gospel

Jesus opens the Sermon on the Mount by naming those who are blessed in the reign of God.

When Jesus saw the crowds, he went up the mountain, and after he sat down, his disciples came to him. ²And he began to speak and taught them, saying:

³"Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

⁴"Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.

⁵"Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.

⁶"Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.

⁷"Blessed are the merciful, for they will receive mercy.

Matthew 5:1-12

⁸"Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.

⁹"Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.

¹⁰"Blessed are those who are persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

¹¹"Blessed are you when people revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. ¹²Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you."