Prayers of Intercession

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

Calling on the spirit of Wisdom to guide our hearts and our minds, let us pray for the church, the world, and all in need.

A brief silence.

Holy God, you have the words of eternal life. Lead the church to put its trust in Jesus, the living Word. Direct preachers, teachers, writers, and all the baptized in faithful speech and bold witness. Merciful God,
receive our prayer.

Creator God, we and all creation are sustained by your Word. We pray for all who remind us of our interconnectedness with all living things. Prosper the work of conservation organizations, ELCA advocacy, and local climate justice advocates. Merciful God,
receive our prayer.

God of wisdom, as our nation navigates another election cycle, guide our leaders to act justly for the sake of the world. Bring about fruitful conversation among your people and bring about change where you see fit. Sustain all who serve on juries in their deliberations. Merciful God,
receive our prayer.

God of restoration, bring healing and wholeness to all who cry to you. Where pain is sharp, bring a sense of comfort and relief. Where grief runs deep, bring your tender mercy. Care for those on our hearts (*especially*). Merciful God,
receive our prayer.

God of new life, protect students and teachers for a new school year. Bring an end to school shootings and cycles of violence. Move us to do all that is necessary to ensure a safe future for our children. Merciful God,
receive our prayer.

Here other intercessions may be offered.

God of every generation, we remember with thanksgiving all who have completed their baptismal journeys (*especially*). Strengthen us in our baptismal callings to serve you faithfully until our journey's end. Merciful God,
receive our prayer.

We lift up these prayers to you, gracious God. Receive them into your holy keeping.
Amen.

Preparing for Next Week

Monday Psalm 119:97-104. **Tuesday** Nehemiah 9:16-31. **Wednesday** (commemoration of Augustine, Bishop of Hippo, 430; Moses the Black, monk, martyr, c. 400) Isaiah 33:10-16. **Thursday** Psalm 15. **Friday** James 1:9-16. **Saturday** John 18:28-32. **15th Sunday after Pentecost** Deuteronomy 4:1-2, 6-9; Psalm 15; James 1:17-27; Mark 7:1-8, 14-15, 21-23.

CELEBRATE (ISSN 1083-3242, USPS 763-460) is published quarterly by Augsburg Fortress, 411 Washington Avenue North, Third Floor, Minneapolis, MN, 55401. Periodicals postage paid in St. Paul, MN and additional mailing offices. Postmaster: Send address changes to Celebrate, Augsburg Fortress Publishers, P.O. Box 1553, Minneapolis, MN 55440-8730. Printed in U.S.A. Price per weekly part $5.79 per 100 copies; price in Canada subject to exchange rates. Minimum order 50 copies of each issue; all orders must be in multiples of 50. Copyright © 2024 Augsburg Fortress. All rights reserved. May not be reproduced. Revised Common Lectionary © 1992 Consultation on Common Texts. Readings from New Revised Standard Version Bible with Apocrypha © 1989 Division of Christian Education of the National Council of Churches of Christ in the U.S.A. Prayer of the day, psalm, and readings during the week from *Evangelical Lutheran Worship* © 2006, admin. Augsburg Fortress. Refrain music by Bruce Bengtson. Refrain accompaniment is in *Psalter for Worship, Year B* (Augsburg Fortress, 2008). Please visit our Website at augsburgfortress.org. Lectionary year B.
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Celebrate

Sunday, August 25, 2024
14th Sunday after Pentecost

In today's gospel many people take offense at Jesus' invitation to eat his flesh and drink his blood; even many of Jesus' disciples peel off. This is the backdrop in John's gospel for Peter's confession of faith. "To whom can we go?" asks Peter, in words we sometimes sing just before the gospel is read. "You have the words of eternal life." In order to take such a stand, as Peter and Joshua did, Paul tells us to arm ourselves with the word of God. We pray in the Spirit that we might be bold ambassadors of the gospel.

Prayer of the Day

Holy God, your word feeds your people with life that is eternal. Direct our choices and preserve us in your truth, that, renouncing what is false and evil, we may live in you, through your Son, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. **Amen.**

First Reading — Joshua 24:1-2a, 14-18

In the Near East, covenant *means "agreement" or "alliance." It describes relationships and is the primary word used to characterize the relationship between God and Israel. By delivering Israel, God has already begun the relationship. Joshua calls upon the people to respond.*

Joshua gathered all the tribes of Israel
to Shechem, and summoned the elders, the heads, the judges, and the
officers of Israel; and they presented
themselves before God. [2a]And Joshua
said to all the people,
[14]"Now therefore revere the LORD,
and serve him in sincerity and in faithfulness; put away the gods that your
ancestors served beyond the River
and in Egypt, and serve the LORD.
[15]Now if you are unwilling to serve the
LORD, choose this day whom you will
serve, whether the gods your ancestors
served in the region beyond the River
or the gods of the Amorites in whose
land you are living; but as for me and
my household, we will serve the LORD."
[16]Then the people answered, "Far
be it from us that we should forsake
the LORD to serve other gods; [17]for it
is the LORD our God who brought us
and our ancestors up from the land of
Egypt, out of the house of slavery, and
who did those great signs in our sight.
He protected us along all the way that
we went, and among all the peoples
through whom we passed; [18]and the
LORD drove out before us all the peoples, the Amorites who lived in the
land. Therefore we also will serve the
LORD, for he is our God."

Psalm

Psalm 34:15-22; refrain, Ps. 34:15

The eyes of the LORD are up- | on the righteous,
and God's ears are open | to their cry.
16 **The face of the LORD is against those | who do evil,**
to erase the remembrance of them | from the earth.
17 The righteous cry, and | the LORD hears them
and delivers them from | all their troubles.
18 **The LORD is near to the | brokenhearted**
and saves those whose spir- | its are crushed. R
19 Many are the troubles | of the righteous,
but the LORD delivers them from | every one.
20 **God will keep safe | all their bones;**
not one of them | shall be broken.
21 Evil will bring death | to the wicked
and those who hate the righteous | will be punished.
22 **O LORD, you redeem the life | of your servants,**
and those who put their trust in you will | not be punished. R

Second Reading

Ephesians 6:10-20

Like a general giving a rousing speech to troops before battle, this letter closes by calling on Christians to be equipped for spiritual warfare against evil. The full armor of God includes truth, righteousness, peace, faith, the gift of salvation, and the word of God inspired by the Spirit.

Be strong in the Lord and in the strength
of his power. 11 Put on the whole armor
of God, so that you may be able to stand
against the wiles of the devil. 12 For our
struggle is not against enemies of blood
and flesh, but against the rulers, against
the authorities, against the cosmic pow-
ers of this present darkness, against the
spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly
places. 13 Therefore take up the whole
armor of God, so that you may be able
to withstand on that evil day, and hav-
ing done everything, to stand firm.
14 Stand therefore, and fasten the belt
of truth around your waist, and put on
the breastplate of righteousness. 15 As
shoes for your feet put on whatever will
make you ready to proclaim the gospel
of peace. 16 With all of these, take the
shield of faith, with which you will be
able to quench all the flaming arrows of
the evil one. 17 Take the helmet of salva-
tion, and the sword of the Spirit, which
is the word of God.

18 Pray in the Spirit at all times in
every prayer and supplication. To that
end keep alert and always persevere in
supplication for all the saints. 19 Pray
also for me, so that when I speak, a mes-
sage may be given to me to make known
with boldness the mystery of the gos-
pel, 20 for which I am an ambassador in
chains. Pray that I may declare it boldly,
as I must speak.

Gospel

John 6:56-69

The "hard saying" that offends Jesus' disciples is his claim that his followers must eat his flesh and drink his blood. The followers who return to their old lives know something about how odd this sounds. Simon Peter, on the other hand, knows something about the scarcity of living, gracious words. He asks the most important question: "To whom shall we go?"

[Jesus said,] "Those who eat my flesh
and drink my blood abide in me, and I
in them. 57 Just as the living Father sent
me, and I live because of the Father, so
whoever eats me will live because of me.
58 This is the bread that came down from
heaven, not like that which your ances-
tors ate, and they died. But the one who
eats this bread will live forever." 59 He
said these things while he was teaching
in the synagogue at Capernaum.

60 When many of his disciples heard
it, they said, "This teaching is difficult;
who can accept it?" 61 But Jesus, being
aware that his disciples were complain-
ing about it, said to them, "Does this
offend you? 62 Then what if you were to
see the Son of Man ascending to where
he was before? 63 It is the spirit that gives
life; the flesh is useless. The words that
I have spoken to you are spirit and life.
64 But among you there are some who do
not believe." For Jesus knew from the
first who were the ones that did not be-
lieve, and who was the one that would
betray him. 65 And he said, "For this
reason I have told you that no one can
come to me unless it is granted by the
Father."

66 Because of this many of his dis-
ciples turned back and no longer went
about with him. 67 So Jesus asked the
twelve, "Do you also wish to go away?"
68 Simon Peter answered him, "Lord, to
whom can we go? You have the words of
eternal life. 69 We have come to believe
and know that you are the Holy One of
God."