Prayers of Intercession

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

In hope and expectation, we bring to God our prayers for the church, the world, and all in need.

A brief silence.

Pour out your Spirit upon the church. Fill all who teach and preach with courage and compassion to speak boldly of your good news at work among us. God, in your mercy,
receive our prayer.

Preserve wilderness places and protect public lands from exploitation. Lighten human impact on soil, water, and air, that we might live in balance with the natural world. God, in your mercy,
receive our prayer.

Empower community leaders and organizers in their efforts to strengthen relationships for the common good. Sustain judges, legal advocates, and all who serve on juries, that justice is advanced for all people. God, in your mercy,
receive our prayer.

Bring healing to all who are brokenhearted and release us from that which holds us captive. Draw near to all who suffer in mind, body, and spirit (*especially*). Assure all who despair that you are near. God, in your mercy,
receive our prayer.

Bless and grow the service and outreach ministries of this congregation (*specific ministries may be named*), that our work in the world proclaims your healing love to all whom we encounter. God, in your mercy,
receive our prayer.

Here other intercessions may be offered.

We rejoice in the gift of those saints who have come before us. We give thanks for (*Lucy and*) all the faithful departed whose lives testify to your light among us in the world. God, in your mercy,
receive our prayer.

We entrust these and the prayers of our hearts to you, most holy God, in the name of Christ Jesus our Savior.
Amen.

Preparing for Next Week

Monday (commemoration of John of the Cross, renewer of the church, 1591) Psalm 125. **Tuesday** Acts 3:17—4:4. **Wednesday** Mark 9:9-13. **Thursday** Psalm 89:1-4, 19-26. **Friday** Hebrews 1:5-14. **Saturday** John 7:40-52. **Fourth Sunday of Advent** (commemoration of Katharina von Bora Luther, renewer of the church, 1552) 2 Samuel 7:1-11, 16; Luke 1:46b-55 *or* Psalm 89:1-4, 19-26; Romans 16:25-27; Luke 1:26-38.

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 55440-1553. Printed in U.S.A. Price per weekly part $6.79 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 © 2026 Augsburg Fortress. All rights reserved. May not be reproduced. Revised Common Lectionary © 1992 Consultation on Common Texts. Readings from the New Revised Standard Version Updated Edition. Copyright © 2021 National Council of Churches of Christ in the United States of America. Used by permission. All rights reserved worldwide. Prayer of the day, psalm, and readings during the week from *Evangelical Lutheran Worship* © 2006, admin. Augsburg Fortress. Refrain music by Mark Sedio. 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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ITEM016062 Tracks 1 and 2



Celebrate

Third Sunday of Advent
December 13, 2026

"Rejoice always," begins the reading from 1 Thessalonians. Isaiah and the psalmist make clear that God is turning our mourning into laughter and shouts of joy. "All God's children got a robe," go the words of a spiritual. It is not so much a stately, formal, pressed outfit as it is a set of party clothes, clothes we are happy to wear. We receive that robe in baptism, and in worship we gather for a foretaste of God's party.

Prayer of the Day

Stir up the wills of your faithful people, Lord God, and open our ears to the words of your prophets, that, anointed by your Spirit, we may testify to your light; 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 61:1-4, 8-11

Though the people had returned to Jerusalem from exile in Babylon, they continued to face hardship and oppression. In the language of the jubilee year described in Leviticus 25, the prophet, moved by the spirit of God, announces deliverance for those who are oppressed and comfort for those who mourn.

The spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me
because the LORD has anointed me;
he has sent me to bring good news to the oppressed,
to bind up the brokenhearted,
to proclaim liberty to the captives
and release to the prisoners,
[2]to proclaim the year of the LORD's favor
and the day of vengeance of our God,
to comfort all who mourn,
[3]to provide for those who mourn in Zion—
to give them a garland instead of ashes,
the oil of gladness instead of mourning,
the mantle of praise instead of a faint spirit.
They will be called oaks of righteousness,
the planting of the LORD, to display his glory.
[4]They shall build up the ancient ruins;
they shall raise up the former devastations;
they shall repair the ruined cities,
the devastations of many generations.

[8]For I, the LORD, love justice,
I hate robbery and wrongdoing;
I will faithfully give them their recompense,
and I will make an everlasting covenant with them.
[9]Their descendants shall be known among the nations
and their offspring among the peoples;
all who see them shall acknowledge
that they are a people whom the LORD has blessed.

continued

[10]I will greatly rejoice in the LORD;
my whole being shall exult in my God,
for he has clothed me with the garments of salvation;
he has covered me with the robe of righteousness,
as a bridegroom decks himself with a garland
and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels.
[11]For as the earth brings forth its shoots
and as a garden causes what is sown in it to spring up,
so the Lord GOD will cause righteousness and praise
to spring up before all the nations.

Psalm

Psalm 126; refrain, Ps. 126:3



When the LORD restored the for- | tunes of Zion,
then were we like | those who dream.
[2]Then was our mouth filled with laughter,
and our tongue with | shouts of joy.
Then they said among the nations,
"The LORD has done great | things for them."
[3]The LORD has done great | things for us,
and we are | glad indeed.
[4]Restore our for- | tunes, O LORD,
like the watercourses | of the Negeb. R
[5]Those who | sowed with tears
will reap with | songs of joy.
[6]Those who go out weeping, carry- | ing the seed,
will come again with joy, shoulder- | ing their sheaves. R

or **Luke 1:46b-55; refrain, Luke 1:52** [not printed]

Second Reading

1 Thessalonians 5:16-24

Paul concludes his letter to the Thessalonians by encouraging them to live lives of continual joy, prayer, and thanksgiving. The closing blessing is grounded in the hope of Christ's coming.

Rejoice always, [17]pray without ceasing,
[18]give thanks in all circumstances, for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you. [19]Do not quench the Spirit.
[20]Do not despise prophecies, [21]but test everything; hold fast to what is good;
[22]abstain from every form of evil.

[23]May the God of peace himself sanctify you entirely, and may your spirit and soul and body be kept sound and blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. [24]The one who calls you is faithful, and he will do this.

Gospel

John 1:6-8, 19-28

John's gospel describes Jesus as the "light of the world." John the Baptist is presented as a witness to Jesus, one who directs attention away from himself to Christ, the true light.

There was a man sent from God whose name was John. [7]He came as a witness to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him. [8]He himself was not the light, but he came to testify to the light.

[19]This is the testimony given by John when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, "Who are you?" [20]He confessed and did not deny it, but he confessed, "I am not the Messiah." [21]And they asked him, "What then? Are you Elijah?" He said, "I am not." "Are you the prophet?" He answered, "No." [22]Then they said to him, "Who are you? Let us have an answer for those who sent us. What do you say about yourself?" [23]He said,

"I am the voice of one crying out in the wilderness,
'Make straight the way of the Lord,'"

as the prophet Isaiah said.

[24]Now they had been sent from the Pharisees. [25]They asked him, "Why, then, are you baptizing if you are neither the Messiah, nor Elijah, nor the prophet?" [26]John answered them, "I baptize with water. Among you stands one whom you do not know, [27]the one who is coming after me; I am not worthy to untie the strap of his sandal." [28]This took place in Bethany across the Jordan where John was baptizing.