Prayers of Intercession

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

Rejoicing with all creation at the birth of Christ, we pray with thanksgiving for the church, the world, and God's good creation.

A brief silence.

Kindle creativity, hope, and joy in the church as we proclaim the good news of your promise for all people. (*In the spirit of John, apostle and evangelist,*) inspire preachers, teachers, and all who share the story of Christ. God, in your mercy,
hear our prayer.

All creation praises you, from the depths of the earth to the far reaches of the heavens. Protect fragile places, especially polar ice caps, melting glaciers, and rising seas. God, in your mercy,
hear our prayer.

Send your Spirit into communities experiencing conflict. Reconcile nations at war, bring an end to genocide, and cause violence based on religion to cease around the world. God, in your mercy,
hear our prayer.

Protect all people experiencing persecution or discrimination, create a safe haven for those who flee violence, and mend our communities so that such violence is no more. Surround your children with your healing love (*especially*). God, in your mercy,
hear our prayer.

Bless older adults in our congregation and in our community. Nurture relationships among generations, sustain all who care for aging loved ones, and strengthen ministries with elders (*local organizations or ministries may be named*). God, in your mercy,
hear our prayer.

Here other intercessions may be offered.

You raise up prophets like Anna to speak your grace and truth into the world. We give thanks for their faith, wisdom, and courage that resonates throughout the ages. God, in your mercy,
hear our prayer.

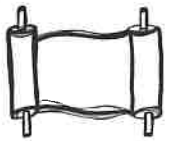
God-with-us, we commend these and all our prayers to your care, in the name of Jesus Christ our Savior.
Amen.

Preparing for Next Week

Monday (The Holy Innocents, Martyrs) Matthew 2:13-18. **Tuesday** (John, Apostle and Evangelist [transferred]) John 21:20-25. **Wednesday** 2 Peter 3:8-13. **Thursday** John 8:12-19. **Friday** (Name of Jesus) Numbers 6:22-27. **Saturday** (Johann Konrad Wilhelm Loehe, renewer of the church, 1872) Psalm 148. **Second Sunday of Christmas** Jeremiah 31:7-14 *or* Sirach 24:1-12; Psalm 147:12-20 *or* Wisdom of Solomon 10:15-21; Ephesians 1:3-14; John 1:[1-9] 10-18.

CELEBRATE December 27, 2026 Volume 58, Number 1

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 Robert Benson. Refrain accompaniment is in *Psalter for Worship, Year B* (Augsburg Fortress, 2008). Please visit our website at augsburgfortress.org. Lectionary year B.
CELEBRATE is protected through trademark registration in the U.S.A. and Canada. ITEM016065 Tracks 1 and 2



Celebrate

First Sunday of Christmas
December 27, 2026

The psalmist calls on the natural world, celestial bodies, fire and earth, creatures, and all humanity to praise God. The voices of Simeon and 84-year-old Anna join the chorus today, recognizing what God is doing in Jesus. Simeon's song is often sung after communion, for we have seen God's salvation in the assembled community and have held Jesus in our hands in the bread. Then, like the prophet Anna, we tell of Jesus to all who look for the healing of the world.

Prayer of the Day

Almighty God, you wonderfully created the dignity of human nature and yet more wonderfully restored it. In your mercy, let us share the divine life of the one who came to share our humanity, Jesus Christ, your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen.**

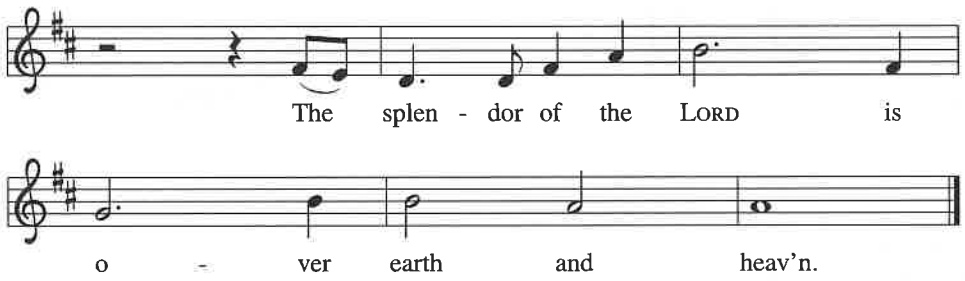
First Reading — Isaiah 61:10—62:3

To the people who returned to Jerusalem after the exile, the prophet proclaims that God's salvation will fully come to pass. Jerusalem will become a shining light to the nations and righteousness and praise will spring up as surely as the earth puts forth vegetation.

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.

[62:1]For Zion's sake I will not keep silent,
and for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest,
until her vindication shines out like the dawn
and her salvation like a burning torch.
[2]The nations shall see your vindication
and all the kings your glory,
and you shall be called by a new name
that the mouth of the LORD will give.
[3]You shall be a beautiful crown in the hand of the LORD
and a royal diadem in the hand of your God.

Psalm — Psalm 148; refrain, Ps. 148:13



Hallelujah! Praise the LORD | from the heavens;
praise God | in the heights.
[2]Praise the LORD, | all you angels;
sing praise, all you | hosts of heaven.
[3]Praise the LORD, | sun and moon;
sing praise, all you | shining stars.
[4]Praise the LORD, heav- | en of heavens,
and you waters a- | bove the heavens.
[5]Let them praise the name | of the LORD,
who commanded, and they | were created,
[6]who made them stand fast forev- | er and ever,
giving them a law that shall not | pass away. **R**
[7]Praise the LORD | from the earth,
you sea monsters | and all deeps;
[8]fire and hail, | snow and fog,
tempestuous wind, do- | ing God's will;
[9]mountains | and all hills,
fruit trees | and all cedars;
[10]wild beasts | and all cattle,
creeping things and | flying birds;
[11]sovereigns of the earth | and all peoples,
princes and all rulers | of the world;
[12]young | men and maidens,
old and | young together. **R**
[13]Let them praise the name | of the LORD,
whose name only is exalted,
whose splendor is over | earth and heaven.
[14]The LORD has raised up strength for the people
and praise for all | faithful servants,
the children of Israel, a people who are near
the LORD. | Hallelujah! **R**

Second Reading — Galatians 4:4-7

Paul seeks to show the Galatians that the purpose of Christ's birth was to liberate us from the law's condemnation so that we would be fully adopted into God's family as beloved children.

When the fullness of time had come,
God sent his Son, born of a woman,
born under the law, [5]in order to re-
deem those who were under the law,
so that we might receive adoption
as children. [6]And because you are
children, God has sent the Spirit of
his Son into our hearts, crying, "Abba!
Father!" [7]So you are no longer a slave
but a child, and if a child then also an
heir through God.

Gospel — Luke 2:22-40

Luke's narrative continues with stories that emphasize Jesus' connection to Judaism. His family is devout in its observance of the law, and Jesus himself is recognized as one who will bring glory to Israel.

When the time came for their purifi-
cation according to the law of Moses,
[Mary and Joseph] brought [Jesus]
up to Jerusalem to present him to the
Lord [23](as it is written in the law of
the Lord, "Every firstborn male shall
be designated as holy to the Lord"),
[24]and they offered a sacrifice accord-
ing to what is stated in the law of the
Lord, "a pair of turtledoves or two
young pigeons."

[25]Now there was a man in Jerusalem
whose name was Simeon; this man
was righteous and devout, looking
forward to the consolation of Israel,
and the Holy Spirit rested on him. [26]It
had been revealed to him by the Holy
Spirit that he would not see death be-
fore he had seen the Lord's Messiah.
[27]Guided by the Spirit, Simeon came
into the temple, and when the par-
ents brought in the child Jesus to do
for him what was customary under the
law, [28]Simeon took him in his arms
and praised God, saying,

[29]"Master, now you are dismissing
your servant in peace,
according to your word,
[30]for my eyes have seen your
salvation,
[31]which you have prepared in
the presence of all peoples,
[32]a light for revelation to the
gentiles
and for glory to your people
Israel."

[33]And the child's father and moth-
er were amazed at what was being said
about him. [34]Then Simeon blessed
them and said to his mother Mary,
"This child is destined for the falling
and the rising of many in Israel and
to be a sign that will be opposed [35]so
that the inner thoughts of many will
be revealed—and a sword will pierce
your own soul, too."

[36]There was also a prophet, Anna
the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe
of Asher. She was of a great age, hav-
ing lived with her husband seven years
after her marriage, [37]then as a widow
to the age of eighty-four. She never
left the temple but worshiped there
with fasting and prayer night and day.
[38]At that moment she came and began
to praise God and to speak about the
child to all who were looking for the
redemption of Jerusalem.

[39]When they had finished everything
required by the law of the Lord, they
returned to Galilee, to their own town
of Nazareth. [40]The child grew and be-
came strong, filled with wisdom, and
the favor of God was upon him.