



Order of Worship

Twelfth Sunday after Pentecost
August 20, 2023

Call to worship

Turn us, O God,

away from the world's temptations and distractions.

Return us, O God,

to the quiet calm of your presence.

Restore us, O God,

to the path you call us to follow.

Orient us, O God,

to the hope of all that is possible through you.

Call to confession

Let us honestly acknowledge how we have gone astray and confess our sins to God.

Prayer of confession

God our refuge, you hear our cries for mercy. You lift the lowly and offer hope to the hopeless. But we, who benefit from your grace, do not emulate you and your ways. We are quick to condemn, exaggerate critique and act mercilessly. We confess the ways we demean and dehumanize others. We pray for your forgiveness. Amen.

Assurance of pardon (Isaiah 43:1)

Do not fear, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are mine. In the name of Jesus Christ, we are forgiven. Amen.

Prayer for illumination

Spirit of the Living God, fall afresh on us. Open us to your life-giving Word. Quiet the voices within us that do not align with your will. Focus our minds on the message you intend for us so we may faithfully discern your way. Amen.

Scripture readings





Sermon

Affirmation of faith (from A Brief Statement of Faith)

**We trust in God the Holy Spirit,
everywhere the giver and renewer of life.**

**The Spirit justifies us by grace through faith,
sets us free to accept ourselves
and to love God and neighbor,
and binds us together with all believers
in the one body of Christ, the Church.**

**The same Spirit who inspired the prophets and apostles
rules our faith and life in Christ through Scripture,
engages us through the Word proclaimed,
claims us in the waters of baptism,
feeds us with the bread of life and the cup of salvation,
and calls women and men to all ministries of the Church.**

**In a broken and fearful world
the Spirit gives us courage
to pray without ceasing,
to witness among all peoples to Christ as Lord and Savior,
to unmask idolatries in Church and culture,
to hear the voices of peoples long silenced,
and to work with others for justice, freedom, and peace.**

Call for the offering

God's abundance cannot be matched. Still, we are inspired to be generous by a generous God. We are inspired to give by the greatest of givers. In gratitude to God, let us present our tithes and offerings.

Prayer of dedication

Gracious God, the gifts we offer reflect only a portion of all that you have given us. Take these offerings, we pray, and multiply them for your use. May our offerings be a blessing to those most in need, to those most vulnerable. May our offerings, given in a spirit of generosity, abate the desire to hoard, and spread the desire to share. Amen.

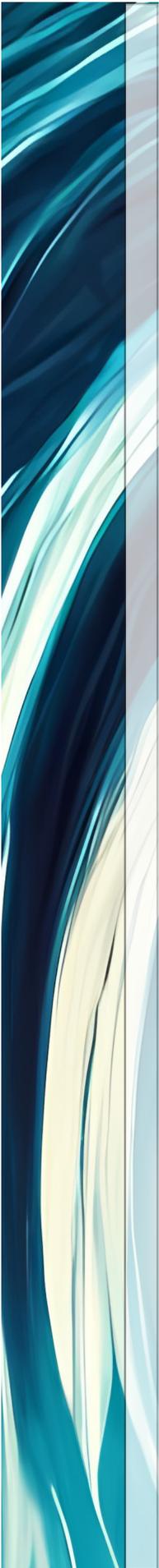
Prayers of the people and the Lord's Prayer

Eternal God, we gather with you in worship, listen to your Word read and proclaimed, and discern your will for our lives. Incline your ear to us as we raise our prayers, petitions, joys and concerns. Hear us as we pray.

Lord, in your mercy.
Hear our prayer.

God our Rock, we are questioning what we once assumed to be sturdy and stable. Our economy feels fragile, our democracy vulnerable, our country angrily divided. Things are changing too fast, and our options feel limited. We don't know what to do to make things better. Life is overwhelming, and we, your people, need your help.





Lord, in your mercy.

Hear our prayer.

Creator God, the natural world groans for relief as temperatures rise, wildfires rage and natural disasters regularly and tragically endanger lives. We pray for those without the resources to rebuild after disaster strikes. We pray for the sick whose lungs are vulnerable to polluted air. We pray for the evacuated, the refugee, the desperate and the destitute. We pray for your earth to be renewed.

Lord, in your mercy.

Hear our prayer.

Prince of Peace, save us from ourselves, our violence and warring madness. Defeat dictators hell bent on hoarding power. Protect the innocent from injustice. Strengthen the honorable. Bless us all with the moral courage to follow Christ's way of love. Restore peace to Ukraine. Protect the persecuted of Manipur, India. Clear a path of peace for Israel and Palestine. Stabilize the situation in Niger, Africa. Hear the cries of your people.

Lord, in your mercy.

Hear our prayer.

Merciful God, we are not without help or hope. Acts of compassion inspire in the face of all that is hard and harsh. Communities are collaborating to meet needs in new and exciting ways. People long silenced are finding their voice. We are newly aware of what we can accomplish when we work together for the flourishing of your kingdom. Holy God, the greatest threats are those that lead us to lock ourselves down, close our minds and hearts, build barriers to divide and protect. May your Spirit encourage our faith as we stand open-hearted, praying and believing in your endless mercy.

Lord, in your mercy.

Hear our prayer.

Now, as the Body of Christ and your covenant community, we pray the prayer Jesus taught us, saying, **"Our Father..."**

Charge and benediction (1 Peter 2:5)

We are the Body of Christ, his hands, his feet, his heart, his lungs; Bearing witness in this world to God's mercy and love.

May the nourishment of God's Word, the accountability of Christian community, and the guidance of God's Holy Spirit fortify us for faithfulness. Amen.

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Liturgy written by Teri McDowell Ott and provided for free distribution.

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