Prayers of Intercession

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

Reminded of God's gracious and abundant love, we offer our prayers, confident that God hears us.

A brief silence.

Center your church in humility as we strive to follow in your way. Help us listen to the cries of those who have been unfairly hurt by the church and dare to name difficult truths. Show all your love. Hear us, O God.
Your mercy is great.

You call us to care for your creation. Lead us into your promise of a better world through sustainable practices and respect for your handiwork. Hear us, O God.
Your mercy is great.

Inspire all in positions of authority to act honorably. Remind them of their call to use their authority for the sake of the common good. Give them the gift of humility. Hear us, O God.
Your mercy is great.

Comfort those who come before you in fear and trembling. Calm troubled hearts with your forgiveness. Help all those in need (*especially*). Grant us your salvation. Hear us, O God.
Your mercy is great.

Change this congregation's heart when we say no to your call. Open us to courageous learning and service in our community, especially in new or challenging places. Hear us, O God.
Your mercy is great.

Here other intercessions may be offered.

Your steadfast love holds all the saints who have finished their work and are at rest. As we grieve, remind us of your mercy so we may also give thanks. Hear us, O God.
Your mercy is great.

Grant the prayers we have offered, what we have forgotten to ask, and whatever else you see that we need. We ask this in Jesus' name.
Amen.

Preparing for Next Week

Monday Psalm 28. **Tuesday** (Michael and All Angels) Revelation 12:7-12. **Wednesday** (commemoration of Jerome, translator, teacher, died 420) Judges 16:23-31. **Thursday** Psalm 80:7-15. **Friday** Philippians 2:14-18; 3:1-4a. **Saturday** Jeremiah 6:1-10. **Nineteenth Sunday after Pentecost** (commemoration of Francis of Assisi, renewer of the church, died 1226; Theodor Fliedner, renewer of society, died 1864) Isaiah 5:1-7; Psalm 80:7-15; Philippians 3:4b-14; Matthew 21:33-46.

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Celebrate

Sunday, September 27, 2026
18th Sunday after Pentecost

Jesus' parable about two sons who don't do what they say reveals surprises in the reign of God. In the reading from Ezekiel the people claim the ways of the Lord are unfair, while God offers repentance and new life. Paul urges us to look to Christ as a model of humility, putting the interests of others above our own. Nourished by the broken bread and shared cup, we offer our lives for the sake of our needy world.

Prayer of the Day

God of love, giver of life, you know our frailties and failings. Give us your grace to overcome them, keep us from those things that harm us, and guide us in the way of salvation, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. **Amen.**

First Reading — Ezekiel 18:1-4, 25-32

Ezekiel challenges those who think they cannot change because of what their parents were and did, or who think they cannot reverse their own previous behavior. God insistently invites people to turn and live.

The word of the LORD came to me:
2What do you mean by repeating this
proverb concerning the land of Israel,
"The parents have eaten sour grapes,
and the children's teeth are set on
edge"? 3As I live, says the Lord GOD, this
proverb shall no more be used by you
in Israel. 4Know that all lives are mine;
the life of the parent as well as the life
of the child is mine: it is only the person
who sins who shall die.
25Yet you say, "The way of the Lord is
unfair." Hear now, O house of Israel: Is
my way unfair? Is it not your ways that
are unfair? 26When the righteous turn
away from their righteousness and commit iniquity, they shall die for it; for the
iniquity that they have committed, they
shall die. 27Again, when the wicked turn
away from the wickedness they have
committed and do what is lawful and
right, they shall save their life. 28Because
they considered and turned away from
all the transgressions that they had
committed, they shall surely live; they
shall not die. 29Yet the house of Israel
says, "The way of the Lord is unfair."
O house of Israel, are my ways unfair? Is
it not your ways that are unfair?
30Therefore I will judge you, O house
of Israel, all of you according to your
ways, says the Lord GOD. Repent and
turn from all your transgressions; otherwise iniquity will be your ruin. 31Cast
away from you all the transgressions
that you have committed against me,
and get yourselves a new heart and a
new spirit! Why will you die, O house
of Israel? 32For I have no pleasure in the
death of anyone, says the Lord GOD.
Turn, then, and live.

Psalm

Psalm 25:1-9; refrain, Ps. 25:6

To | you, O LORD,
I lift | up my soul.
[2]**My God, I put my trust in you; let me not be | put to shame,**
nor let my enemies triumph | over me.
[3]Let none who look to you be | put to shame;
rather let those be put to shame | who are treacherous.
[4]**Show me your | ways, O LORD,**
and teach | me your paths. ℟
[5]Lead me in your | truth and teach me,
for you are the God of my salvation;
in you have I trusted all | the day long.
[6]**Remember, O LORD, your compas- | sion and love,**
for they are from | everlasting.
[7]Remember not the sins of my youth and | my transgressions;
remember me according to your steadfast love
and for the sake of your good- | ness, O LORD.
[8]**You are gracious and up- | right, O LORD;**
therefore you teach sinners | in your way.
[9]You lead the low- | ly in justice
and teach the low- | ly your way. ℟

Second Reading

Philippians 2:1-13

As part of a call for harmony rather than self-seeking, Paul uses a very early Christian hymn that extols the selflessness of Christ in his obedient death on the cross. Christ's selfless perspective is to be the essential perspective we share as the foundation for Christian accord.

If, then, there is any comfort in Christ,
any consolation from love, any partnership in the Spirit, any tender affection
and sympathy, [2]make my joy complete:
be of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. [3]Do nothing from selfish ambition or empty conceit, but in humility regard others as better than yourselves.
[4]Let each of you look not to your own interests but to the interests of others.
[5]Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus,
[6]who, though he existed in the form of God,
did not regard equality with God as something to be grasped,
[7]but emptied himself,
taking the form of a slave,
assuming human likeness.
And being found in appearance as a human,
[8]he humbled himself
and became obedient to the point of death—
even death on a cross.

[9]Therefore God exalted him even more highly
and gave him the name that is above every other name,
[10]so that at the name given to Jesus every knee should bend,
in heaven and on earth and under the earth,
[11]and every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord,
to the glory of God the Father.

[12]Therefore, my beloved, just as you have always obeyed me, not only in my presence but much more now in my absence, work on your own salvation with fear and trembling, [13]for it is God who is at work in you, enabling you both to will and to work for his good pleasure.

Gospel

Matthew 21:23-32

After driving the moneychangers out of the temple (21:12), Jesus begins teaching there. His authority is questioned by the religious leaders, who are supposed to be in charge of the temple.

When [Jesus] entered the temple, the chief priests and the elders of the people came to him as he was teaching and said, "By what authority are you doing these things, and who gave you this authority?" [24]Jesus said to them, "I will also ask you one question; if you tell me the answer, then I will also tell you by what authority I do these things.
[25]Did the baptism of John come from heaven, or was it of human origin?" And they argued with one another, "If we say, 'From heaven,' he will say to us, 'Why, then, did you not believe him?'
[26]But if we say, 'Of human origin,' we are afraid of the crowd, for all regard John as a prophet." [27]So they answered Jesus, "We do not know." And he said to them, "Neither will I tell you by what authority I am doing these things.
[28]"What do you think? A man had two sons; he went to the first and said, 'Son, go and work in the vineyard today.' [29]He answered, 'I will not,' but later he changed his mind and went.
[30]The father went to the second and said the same, and he answered, 'I go, sir,' but he did not go. [31]Which of the two did the will of his father?" They said, "The first." Jesus said to them, "Truly I tell you, the tax collectors and the prostitutes are going into the kingdom of God ahead of you. [32]For John came to you in the way of righteousness, and you did not believe him, but the tax collectors and the prostitutes believed him, and even after you saw it you did not change your minds and believe him."