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## Prayers of Intercession

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

Called together to follow Jesus, we pray for the church, the world, and all in need.

A brief silence.

Make your church one in purpose, proclaiming the message of the cross. Help us to work together across differences. Energize ecumenical partnerships, including the World Council of Churches and Lutheran World Federation (*other ecumenical ministries in which the congregation takes part may be named*). Merciful God, **receive our prayer.**

We rejoice at the bounty of your creation. Fill the land and sea with your abundance. Bless harvests in the southern hemisphere and fallow fields in the northern hemisphere. Equip farmers to till and keep the earth sustainably. Merciful God, **receive our prayer.**

In Christ your reign comes near and calls all to repentance. Break the rod of the oppressor in every nation. Dispel the shadow of death in places of war and persecution. Grant us leaders

## Preparing for Next Week

**Monday** Psalm 27:7-14. **Tuesday** Philipians 2:12-18. **Wednesday** (Conversion of Paul; week of Prayer for Christian Unity ends) Galatians 1:11-24. **Thursday** (commemoration of Timothy, Titus, and Silas, missionaries) Psalm 15. **Friday** (commemoration of Lydia, Dorcas, and Phoebe, witnesses to the faith) 1 Timothy 5:17-24. **Saturday** (commemoration of Thomas Aquinas, teacher, died 1274) Micah 3:1-4. **Fourth Sunday after Epiphany** Micah 6:1-8; Psalm 15; 1 Corinthians 1:18-31; Matthew 5:1-12.

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who lift the yokes that burden those in need. Merciful God, **receive our prayer.**

Be a stronghold for those in trouble and a rock for all who are afraid. Rouse communities to care for neighbors who need shelter, are facing maltreatment, or are isolated and lonely. (*Especially we pray for . . .*) Merciful God, **receive our prayer.**

Sustain the ministries of this congregation and all churches in this community (*neighboring congregations may be named*). Nurture each congregation's unique witness to your presence; foster mutual respect; inspire our cooperation in loving our neighbors. Merciful God, **receive our prayer.**

Here other intercessions may be offered.

We praise you for the faithful who have gone ahead of us, both famous and unknown. Help us to leave our nets and follow, and bring us with them to the fullness of your promise of eternal life. Merciful God, **receive our prayer.**

We bring to you our needs and hopes, O God, trusting your wisdom and power revealed in Christ crucified. **Amen.**

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# Celebrate

Third Sunday after Epiphany

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*Jesus begins his public ministry by calling fishers to leave their nets and follow him. In Jesus the kingdom of God has come near. We who have walked in darkness have seen a great light. We see this light most profoundly in the cross—as God suffers with us and all who are oppressed by sickness, sin, or evil. Light dauns for us as we gather around the word, the font, and the holy table. We are then sent to share the good news that others may be “caught” in the net of God’s grace and mercy.*

## Prayer of the Day

Lord God, your lovingkindness always goes before us and follows after us. Summon us into your light, and direct our steps in the ways of goodness that come through the cross of your Son, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. **Amen.**

## First Reading

Isaiah 9:1-4

*The northern tribes of Zebulun and Naphtali experienced the gloom of defeat by Assyrian military forces, but they are assured that their condition will be reversed when God makes a light-filled appearance. The joy they will experience will resemble celebrations of great harvests, because God will deliver them from everything that diminishes or oppresses them.*

There will be no gloom for those who were in anguish. In the former time [the LORD] brought into contempt the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, but in the latter time he will make glorious the way of the sea, the land beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the nations.

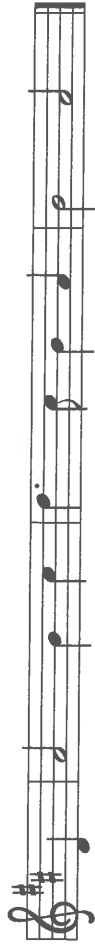
<sup>2</sup>The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who lived in a land of deep darkness—  
on them light has shined.

<sup>3</sup>You have multiplied the nation, you have increased its joy; they rejoice before you as with joy at the harvest, as people exult when dividing plunder.

<sup>4</sup>For the yoke of their burden, and the bar across their shoulders, the rod of their oppressor, you have broken as on the day of Midian.

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The LORD is my light and my sal - va - tion.

The LORD is my light and my salvation;  
whom then I shall I fear?

The LORD is the stronghold of my life;  
of whom shall I be afraid?

**4**One thing I ask of the LORD; one I thing I seek;  
that I may dwell in the house

of the LORD all the days of my life  
to gaze upon the beauty of the LORD  
and to seek God I in the temple.

**5**For in the day of trouble God will I give me shelter,  
hide me in the hidden places of the sanctuary,  
and raise me high up- I on a rock.

**6**Even now my head is lifted up above  
my enemies I who surround me.

Therefore I will offer sacrifice in the sanctuary,  
sacrifices of rejoicing;

**I will sing and make music I to the LORD. R**

**7**Hear my voice, O LORD, I when I call;  
have mercy on me and I answer me.

**8**My heart speaks your message— I “Seek my face.”

**Your face, O LORD, I will seek.**

**9**Hide not your face from me, turn not away  
from your ser- I vant in anger.

Cast me not away—you have been my helper;  
forsake me not, O God of I my salvation. **R**

## Second Reading

1 Corinthians 1:10-18

*Paul calls on the Corinthians to end their dissensions and share the unified outlook of the gospel. Discord arises when we forget that we belong not to human leaders or institutions but to Christ. Indeed, the unifying word of the cross of Christ is the center of the gospel and the power of God's salvation.*

Now I appeal to you, brothers and sisters, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you be in agreement and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be united in the same mind and the same purpose. <sup>11</sup>For it has been reported to me by Chloe's people that there are quarrels among you, my brothers and sisters. <sup>12</sup>What I mean is that each of you says, "I belong to Paul," or "I belong to Apollos," or "I belong to Cephas," or "I belong to Christ." <sup>13</sup>Has Christ been divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul? <sup>14</sup>I

## Gospel

*Jesus begins his public ministry shortly after John the Baptist is imprisoned by Herod. He proclaims the nearness of God's reign and calls four fishermen to be his first disciples.*

Now when Jesus heard that John had been arrested, he withdrew to Galilee. <sup>13</sup>He left Nazareth and made his home in Capernaum by the sea, in the territory of Zebulun and Naphtali, <sup>14</sup>so that what had been spoken through the prophet Isaiah might be fulfilled:

<sup>15</sup>"Land of Zebulun, land of

Naphtali,

on the road by the sea, across

the Jordan, Galilee of the

Gentiles—

<sup>16</sup>the people who sat in darkness

have seen a great light,

and for those who sat in the region

and shadow of death

light has dawned."

<sup>17</sup>From that time Jesus began to proclaim, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near."

thank God that I baptized none of you except Crispus and Gaius, <sup>15</sup>so that no one can say that you were baptized in my name. <sup>16</sup>(I did baptize also the household of Stephanas; beyond that, I do not know whether I baptized anyone else.) <sup>17</sup>For Christ did not send me to baptize but to proclaim the gospel, and not with eloquent wisdom, so that the cross of Christ might not be emptied of its power.

<sup>18</sup>For the message about the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.

Matthew 4:12-23

<sup>18</sup>As he walked by the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea—for they were fishermen. <sup>19</sup>And he said to them, "Follow me, and I will make you fish for people." <sup>20</sup>Immediately they left their nets and followed him. <sup>21</sup>As he went from there, he saw two other brothers, James son of Zebedee and his brother John, in the boat with their father Zebedee, mending their nets, and he called them. <sup>22</sup>Immediately they left the boat and their father, and followed him.

<sup>23</sup>Jesus went throughout Galilee, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the good news of the kingdom and curing every disease and every sickness among the people.