

Written prayers

The Sanctuary's gathering and envisioning prayers

Gathering prayer declaring a faith-filled perspective as we pray

Lord Jesus,
before we even read the headlines today
and seek your heart to inform ours
as we intercede with you for those in need,
we choose to remember and declare again
the life-giving truth we believe and see
all other things through:

This is your world
and you are still sovereign over it.
You have not lost control,
walked out or given up.
We are all your children
and you have not lost interest in,
or compassion for, any one of us in seven billion.

You came to save us because you love us
and your sacrifice defeated death once and for all.
You promised to never leave or forsake your disciples
and you have kept that promise
to every one of your followers ever since.
And you sent your Spirit to finish your work –
and he is here with us – now.

You are still completely loving
and always perfectly just.
You are for us not against us
and you are actively involved
in the realities of nations
and the lives of each individual
you have created.

You are wholly good
and there is no shadow of darkness in you.
You are permanently consistent and constant
and your heart, motives,

decisions and actions
can always be trusted and relied upon
with total certainty.

Lord Jesus,
Before we even read the headlines today,
and seek your heart to inform ours
as we intercede with you for those in need,
we remember and cling to these truths
with faith in the One we come to
who has all things and people in his unfailing hands.

Gathering prayer expressing thanks for a new day and new mercies, inspired by Psalm 96

We will sing to the Lord a new song;
and call out to the whole earth to join us.
For his mercies are new every morning
and even our old songs become fresh again
as his Spirit moves through them
and writes layer after layer of truth-validating story
from our lives behind their words and lines.

We will sing to the Lord and praise his name;
we will proclaim his salvation day after day.
For although his redemption was done once and for all,
still he keeps transforming our hearts and situations
as his Spirit moves through them
and creates testimony after testimony of truth-validating story
in our lives as we experience him at work.

We will declare his glory among the nations,
and celebrate his marvellous deeds among all peoples.
For he keeps confiding his heart in ours
and we have seen him do what he has said he will
as his Spirit moves among us
and brings breakthrough after breakthrough of truth-validating story
through our prayers as we agree with him.

Yes Lord, your mercies are new every morning – so we will sing.
Yes Lord, your mercies are new every morning – we will declare it.
Yes Lord, your mercies are new every morning – we love living in your presence.
Yes Lord, your mercies are new every morning – we give you praise for yesterday and wait with certain hope and
expectation for what you will do today.

Gathering prayer expressing total dependence, inspired by Psalm 90

Oh Lord, our Lord
from everlasting to everlasting
You have been, are and always will be -
God.

You alone have been and are our dwelling place,
for history rests within eternity,
and our world is held together
entirely by the power of your loving hand.

Where else would we go?
Where else would we want to be
but here in your presence?
Oh Lord, our Lord, we run to you.

So on this very morning within our total history,
flood our hearts with the unfailing love of eternity
so we might constantly keep singing for joy
at who you are and all you have done.

We need you every hour of the day today
so in your mercy and goodness
rest your favour Lord God upon us
and please, yes, please, establish the work of our hands.

Gathering prayer surrendering the day to Jesus, our Master

**All: Lord Jesus, come and be our Master again –
truly, fully, completely; lead us to total surrender.
We need to recognise you as you truly are
and to remember to relate to you with a bowed posture again.
Lord Jesus, what are you saying today?
Where have we made ourselves master
in pursuit of less responsibility – or too much?
And where have we forgotten how much you love your other children
in pursuit of always receiving or always giving?
Lord Jesus, come and be our Master again –
teach us how to follow and obey with joyful abandon
to your safe authority, power, provision and plan:
no more, no less... we give ourselves completely to you –
the perfect Master, Lord and Leader.**

Gathering prayer based on Psalm 138

All: We will praise you O Lord with all of our hearts.
We will kneel before you in your Sanctuary
and sing your praise unashamedly.
We will choose to worship you over the gods of our age
because of your unfailing love and faithfulness.

When we call, you answer us -
You've done it before and you'll do it today and every day
as we come before you in heartfelt prayer
for our world; our nation; our communities and ourselves.
So we come with confidence to intercede today.
For though you are high and lifted up,
You look with kindness on the humble
and watch them attentively and lovingly.

And even though our service of you may cost us dearly, or lead us into opposition
You preserve our lives – and our hearts in your truth.
We know you will vindicate us if we continue to stand for you and those you love -
the lost, the poor and the broken – who we ourselves would always be, outside of you.

Your love endures forever and you will never abandon us,
because we are the precious works of your hands.
So fill us again with your Spirit's love and power today
that we might pray and act for your kingdom's rule,
in your strength and for your glory.
Amen.

Gathering prayer inspired by God's generosity

Leader: Generous God
You came to seek and save the lost;
You brought good news to the poor;
proclaimed freedom to captives;
bound up the broken-hearted;
and healed the sick.

Generous God
You're still seeking and saving the lost;
You're bringing good news to the poor;
proclaiming freedom to captives;

binding up the broken-hearted
and healing the sick.

All: **Generous God, pour out your Spirit through us -
that today we might follow and partner with you
as you seek and save the lost.
We want to give as freely as we have received.
may we be good news to the poor;
speak up for freedom for captives;
comfort the broken-hearted
and see the sick healed.
In your precious name and through your love and power,
use us today Lord Jesus.
Amen.**

Gathering prayer inspired by the Shema (Deuteronomy 6:4-5)

Leader: Hear O people, the Lord our God is one God.
All: **The Lord our God is one God. We will seek to love him and his children with all our hearts, with all
our souls and with all our strength.**
Leader: We declare O Lord, you are one God. Three in a perfect relationship of love - yet one.
All: **You O Lord are one God. Help us seek to love you and others with all our hearts, with all our souls
and with all our strength, through the power of Christ and the constant presence of your Spirit.
Amen.**

Gathering prayer celebrating the coming together of many stories

Leader: Lord Jesus we come together to praise you with one voice,
weaving our lives together in unity and diversity as a representation of your body.
We are all different but we have the same maker;
we have unique stories but the same author
who writes again and again on our hearts his miracle testimonies
of transformed lives, answered prayers and changed perspectives
Each of us has countless stories to tell of his goodness.
And today we choose to bring them together for his precious names' sake.
And as a testimony to ourselves, each other and the world of his kingdom's rule.

All: **We gather together to share our stories,
to build our fellowship
to spur each other on to grow in faith
– individually and as a community –
and to persevere more in prayer for the things on his heart.**

**We seek Jesus' righting of every wrong and his re-writing of every troubled story
until it reflects his best plan
and the truth that he is alive and moving today.
This is the God we gather to worship.
This is the God we unite to praise.
Able; Almighty; Active; Kind.
Amen.**

Prayer of thanksgiving and gathering

Faithful God,
we give you thanks and praise
for every story of faith found,
every testimony of healing given,
every experience of hope strengthened,
and every revelation of your love received
gathered here today.

Generous God,
make us generous with our praise.
We want to be eager tellers of your stories,
proclaiming your transforming work in our lives
to each other, and to those who are new to your love.
May you find us faithful in sharing our testimonies
and expectant and watchful for what you will do next.

Gathering prayer of testimony to inspire faith and intercession

We first wrote this prayer for the dedication of the Sanctuary's centre, but have since adapted it for everyday use. We use it frequently at the Sanctuary as we gather different people to pray and worship together; it serves as a helpful reminder of our motivation and confidence to pray being founded in our own experience of God being our sanctuary.

From different places and churches
we gather in one spirit -
we stand for one cross; one resurrection
and one source of life to receive and give -
the beautiful, sacrificial love of Jesus Christ.

Because you have proved yourself to be *our* sanctuary –
our safe-hiding place; our transforming champion
and our ever present help in trouble.
And now that we know you are Love

– that you are truly *this* good -
we cannot help but pray and live and act and give
until everyone knows who you are and seeks to love like you do.
And our world moves closer to your kingdom's justice rule
for the sake of the poor, the lost and the broken
who we count it a privilege to walk beside.

Gathering prayer asking for humility as we intercede for the poor

This gathering liturgy is based on a prayer that was offered spontaneously by one of our pray-ers before we started to use our prayer stations on economic justice at the start of Fairtrade fortnight in 2013. We have found it helpful to focus our hearts and minds as we gather to intercede on multiple occasions subsequently:

**Lord, we ask for humility as we come to you today
For we are rich - and we are quick to grow tired of 'the poor'.
We don't know what it feels like to go to bed at night hungry - persistently.
We don't know how it feels to sleep under canvas - every night.
We don't know what it feels like to be a refugee; to be persecuted; or to be voiceless.**

**Keep our hearts soft we pray.
Open our eyes to those who are homeless in our town today;
Show us who we might be able to assist practically or financially among those who cross our paths locally;
And help us as we look beyond to those who are distant to us,
Remembering they are never nameless or faceless
And seeking to find ways to live out your love
By interceding for them to you, and speaking up about them in our world.**

**Help us as we act to transform unjust systems
And as we continue to pray for the softening of the hearts of those who create them,
Or who are happy to benefit from them - like ourselves.
We give you permission to meet us today and to change us
As your Spirit of truth and love leads us in humility to this holy ground we tread -
The reality of the lives some of our brothers and sisters are forced to live.
Lead us and help us we pray -
In your precious and beautiful name Lord Jesus,
Amen.**

Gathering prayer of resolution (inspired by Joshua 24:14-16, Luke 10:26-28 and Amos 5)

This prayer was first written as part of our selection of prayers for economic justice for the global prayer, but we have found it is also helpful as we gather and so are including it here also:

Leader: Choose today whom you will serve
All: **We choose to serve the Lord**

Leader: Choose today whom you will worship

All: We choose to worship the Lord

Leader: Choose today whose laws you will follow

All: We choose to obey the Lord

Leader: Today we choose to serve you Lord – with all our hearts, souls, minds, and strength.
We choose to follow your law – and worship you in the way we know you require.
We choose to love our neighbours – even as we love ourselves.
We choose to reject the empty religion you despise that prays with beautiful words but continues to pursue self-promotion at the expense of the poor and the weak.
We choose to turn our backs on the gods of our land and our time – materialism and self-sufficiency.
God of the humble heart, the poor, and the broken – it is you, and our neighbours, we choose to serve.

Leader: Choose today whom you will love

All: We choose to love the Lord, and the neighbours he has given us

Leader: Choose today who rules your decisions

All: We choose to have no god before you Lord – come and reign in our hearts, our minds, and over our resources

Leader: Choose today how you will live

All: We choose to live generously – giving all we have to God and our neighbour – for the sake of him who gave himself for us.

Envisioning prayer, inspired by God's graciousness

Gracious, gracious God,
how can we thank you?
You lavish your love and generosity on us,
giving favour we don't deserve
simply because of who you are.
For you are LOVE
and you are good *all the time*
and whatever we've done,
whoever we think we are – or aren't –
you created us, delight in us
and constantly seek to father us
into the best and complete reflection
of your design for each one of our God-in-ourselves.

Gracious, gracious God,
how can we be like you?
Show us how to lavish love and generosity on others,
giving favour where we stand to gain nothing back
save the knowledge that we have recognised
the God-in-themselves worth of all your children.

Lord, slow us down
and help us take down all our walls
of defence, shame or self-justification
so your limitless love can overwhelm us and enable us
to give freely as we keep receiving from you.

Use our voices,
use our words,
use our consumer power,
use our finances
use our intercessions
use our songs,
use our choices,
use our time
Use it all Lord
to release a tidal wave of love, mercy, justice –
and above all –
GRACE
to the poor, the producer and the powerless.

And Lord may others be swept up in this deluge of grace too,
receiving and giving, receiving and giving
till every barrier to your graciousness falls and crumbles
and we love our neighbour as we love ourselves,
and we love ourselves as you love us and our neighbours.

By your grace Lord Jesus,
let it be so,
for this is your kingdom come
and we are thirsty for it!

Sending prayer of blessing for the day's work ahead inspired by Psalm 90:17

Compassionate Father, Lord and friend,
thank you for sharing your heart with us
and inviting us to agree with your prayers
and join in your work.
As we continue on into today and beyond
– praying and acting with you and for you –
may your favour rest on us,
your presence remain tangible to us
and the work of our hands be established
through the blessing of yours
as they hold us – and all things – in perfect sovereignty.

Sending prayer for seasons of rest or conclusion

We wrote this prayer on Friday 2 August, 2012 – when our centre broke for the summer for the first time at the end of its first year. Sometimes it's hard to leave the Sanctuary's space, community and rhythm... but of course they are all just reflections and glimpses of the one who never leaves or forsakes us. That's why we love this prayer! We re-discovered it in August 2015 when a newer Christian was going away for three weeks and was genuinely struggling with the prospect of being out of fellowship with us and others during this time. It was a joy to put these words in her hands.

Father, more than anything today, we thank you for the fact that your presence goes before us, behind us and around us – you surround us and hem us in.

Your sanctuary is a moveable love
which shelters, shepherds and steers us.

Your outstretched, over-stretched wing is not static –
it covers us wherever we go.

And so, as we retreat into rest and refreshment, we know your presence goes before us, behind us and around us all – you surround us and hem us in.

Keep us aware of your love beyond these walls,
sheltered, shepherded and steered by your word.

And may we find restoration in the shadow of your wing –
as you cover us wherever we go.

Reflective meditation prayerfully exploring the desire to live – and give – from grace

What's so amazing about grace?

The world says push, strive, grasp
or I'll sink, a failure, pointless and worthless.

So I work hard, trying to keep my head above the water,
gathering as much stuff around me as I can to stay afloat –
but it just drags me down, deeper and deeper...

What's so amazing about grace?

Maybe the world's got it wrong...

What if I let go of this stuff
that just clings and suffocates?

What if I stop pushing, striving, grasping?

Am I worth anything without it, without success?

I'm not sure...

What's so amazing about grace?

Can it be the answer?

Is it possible that I have value from just being me,
from the pure and simple fact that he created me?

What if I really am wholly and deeply loved
aside from what I do or whether I deserve it?

Can this amazing grace really be true?

I let go, I untie the strings,
I free myself of the suffocating debris.
I stop pushing, striving, grasping
and I lean back, risking falling,
daring to drown in the hope that instead
I'll rise above the waters.

And that's what's so amazing about grace...
It's in the letting go, that I have all I need,
it's in the resting, that I gain,
and in the choosing to trust,
that I'm raised to new life.

And as I embrace this,
I find I am free.
Free to love,
free to hope,
free to reach out,
free to share beautiful, life-transforming mercy with those in need,
free to weep with those who weep and rejoice with those who rejoice,
free to know that goodness, justice and righteousness will win,
free to believe the Kingdom of the amazing Grace-giver is coming
and already here.

I am loved. Each one of us is loved.
Together then, we can all live out this love
in the strength and power
of the One whose name is Love.

Yes, that's what's so amazing about grace.