

2008 Edition



NEW CREATION PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH (USA), O'FALLON, IL

"So if anyone is in  
Christ, there is a New  
Creation..."  
– 2 Corinthians 5:17

## DAILY SOUL TENDING PRIMER

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## INTRODUCTION

There is within each one of us the drive to pray. As John Calvin, the founder of our particular Christian tradition, said, "Genuine and earnest prayer proceeds first from a sense of our need, and next, from faith in the promises of God." For the Christian, then, prayer is a means of grace as well as a result of it. Prayer is not merely an expression of established faith; it is also the food that nourishes faith, giving it strength and energy. By the moving of the Holy Spirit, prayer brings us to new life in the fullness of Jesus Christ. Praying, then, is not a burden under which we labor, but the release of energy for joyful living.

In his First Letter to the Thessalonians (5:17), Paul admonishes his Christian friends to pray constantly. This is the calling of every Christian. But in practical terms, even regular daily prayer seems nearly impossible to many and difficult to most. So it is tempting for many Christians today to consider any full schedule of daily prayer more a luxury than a necessity. Those who would like to pray throughout the day are frustrated by an inability to "find the time" and may envy those whose life is ordered in such a way as to have prayer time "built in," such as those in religious communities (be they catholic, protestant, or orthodox). On the other hand, some Christians are confronted by the great paradox of prayer. Prayer, which is a gift given to us by God, is perceived as work, a religious chore, even a burdensome duty. So they put it off or even try to avoid it, and then wonder why they have so much trouble praying. Thus the reason why there have always been prayer resources, dating back into the Jewish tradition.

The traditional concept of a Primer is that it is an aid for people in their daily prayers, as well as to teach children how to read. The origin of the Primer as a manual of devotion lies in the Prayer of the Hours chanted in early medieval monasteries. Eventually the monastic liturgical prayer was adapted for lay use and known as the 'Primer' (first prayers), becoming a veritable little office book. In the sixteenth century in Scotland, under the direction of John Knox, a student of John Calvin, the Primer was reformed and superseded by the *Book of Common Order* which was in itself a distillation of the original monastic office of prayer. It is from this resource the Presbyterians in the USA developed their *Book of Common Worship*.

This Primer is a response to this double frustration. For it is possible to experience a profound prayer life even in the busiest of schedules. It is, perhaps, the busyness of schedules that makes us see more clearly our need for prayer in our lives. For when we experience prayer as a joyous gift from God, we can begin to grasp for ourselves the life-giving power of daily communion with God. Only by venturing forth in prayer can we discover new vistas of life in the presence of God. This *Daily Soul Tending Primer* is an attempt to reflect the above tradition albeit in the Celtic idiom, and is intended to be a resource of prayer inspired by that tradition. It is to be used as a companion to the Bible, encouraging the use of the Bible itself as the ideal Book of Prayer.

# WORSHIP and PERSONAL DISCIPLESHIP as PRESBYTERIANS<sup>1</sup>

## I. Personal Worship, Discipleship, and the Community of Faith

Christians respond to God both in communal worship and service and in personal acts of worship and discipleship. The life of the Christian flows from the worship of the church, where identity as a believer is confirmed and where one is commissioned to a life of discipleship and of personal response to God. The believer's life of response and discipleship flows into the church's life of worship and service.

Through worship people attend to the presence of God in their life. From a Christian's life in the world comes the need for worship; in worship one sees the world in light of God's grace; from worship come vision and power for living in the world. The Word of God proclaimed and received in worship calls each believer to faithful discipleship in the world. From such service the disciple turns to give thanks, to confess, to intercede, and to hear Christ's call anew. The rhythm of the life of the believer moves from worship to ministry, from ministry to worship.

The life of a Christian is empowered by grace, is expressed in obedience, and is shaped by discipline. God has given as means of grace the elements of worship to be used by households and by individuals as well as by congregations.

## 2. The Discipline of Daily Personal Worship

Daily personal worship is a discipline for attending to God and accepting God's grace. The daily challenge of discipleship requires the daily nurture of worship. Daily personal worship may occur in a gathered community of faith, in households and families, or in private.

Scripture, prayer, self-offering, and commitments to service are elements of daily personal worship. Baptism and the Lord's Supper are by their nature communal, but preparing for and remembering these Sacraments are important in daily personal worship. An aspect of the discipline of daily personal worship is finding the times and places where one can focus on God's presence, hear God's Word, and respond to God's grace in prayer, self-offering, and commitment to service.

## 3. Scripture in Personal Worship

Scripture is the record of God's self-revelation through which the Holy Spirit speaks to bear witness to Jesus Christ and to give authoritative direction for the life of faith. Personal worship centers upon Scripture as one reads and listens for God's Spirit to speak.

a. One may read Scripture for the guidance, support, comfort, encouragement, and challenge which the Word of God presents.

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<sup>1</sup> From the Presbyterian Church (USA) *Book of Order, Directory For Worship*, Chapter 5.

b. One may study the Scriptures to understand them in their literary forms and in their historical and cultural contexts in order to hear the Word of God more clearly and to obey more faithfully.

c. One may meditate upon the Word,

- (1) committing passages of Scripture to memory,
- (2) recalling and reflecting upon the revelation of God,
- (3) analyzing and comparing biblical themes, images, and forms,
- (4) finding touchpoints and exploring relationships between Scripture and life,
- (5) entering imaginatively into the world and events portrayed in the Bible to participate in what God does and promises there,
- (6) wrestling with the challenges and demands of the gospel,
- (7) offering one's self afresh for life in response to God.

It is often helpful to keep a record of one's insights and personal responses to reading, studying, and meditating upon the Word, or to share them with others. Writing paraphrases, summaries, and brief reflections, making creative responses, and keeping journals are all disciplines which assist in responding to the Word of God in Scripture. It is especially important in personal worship to read widely in Scripture. Using lectionaries and various translations and paraphrases is helpful in seeking to hear the full message of God's Word.

#### **4. Prayer in Personal Worship**

Prayer is a conscious opening of the self to God, who initiates communion and communication with us. Prayer is receiving and responding, speaking and listening, waiting and acting in the presence of God. In prayer we respond to God in adoration, in thanksgiving, in confession, in supplication, in intercession, and in self-dedication.

Prayer in personal worship may be expressed in various ways. One may engage in conscious conversation with God, putting into words one's joys and concerns, fears and hopes, needs and longings in life. One may wait upon God in attentive and expectant silence. One may meditate upon God's gifts, God's actions, God's Word, and God's character. One may contemplate God, moving beyond words and thoughts to communion of one's spirit with the Spirit of God. One may draw near to God in solitude. One may pray in tongues as a personal and private discipline. One may take on an individual discipline of enacted prayer through dance, physical exercise, music, or other expressive activity as a response to grace. One may enact prayer as a public witness through keeping a vigil, through deeds of social responsibility or protest, or through symbolic acts of disciplined service. One may take on the discipline of holding before God the people, transactions, and events of daily life in the world. One may enter into prayer covenants or engage in the regular discipline of shared prayer.

The Christian is called to a life of constant prayer, of "prayer without ceasing." (Rom. 12:12; 1 Thess. 5:17). In exercising the discipline of prayer in personal worship one may find help for shaping the form and content of one's prayers

- a. in Scripture, especially the Lord's Prayer and other prayers, the psalms and other biblical songs;

- b. in hymns, spirituals, and other songs;
- c. in service books, prayer books, and worship aids;
- d. in the heritages of prayer and devotion expressed in literature and visual arts.

Such resources may also help one see the occasions and subjects of prayer, as may the daily news and church program interpretation materials and guides to personal worship.

## **5. Other Disciplines in Personal Worship and Discipleship**

- a. God has given means of grace beyond Scripture, Sacraments, and prayer.
- b. Christians have received the Lord's Day to be kept holy to the Lord. It is the beginning of the believer's week and gives shape to the life of discipleship. Disciplined observance of this day includes preparation of one's self for
  - (1) participation in public worship,
  - (2) engagement in ministries of witness, service, and compassion,
  - (3) activities that contribute to spiritual re-creation and rest from daily occupation.

In observing this discipline, Christians whose work takes place on Sunday should set aside another day of the week for these observances.

The seasons of the Christian year provide a rhythm and content for personal worship and discipleship. Special seasons, occasions, and transitions in one's own life also inform personal worship and discipleship.

Christians observe special times and seasons for the disciplines of fasting, keeping vigil, and other forms of enacted prayer. It is also appropriate to observe these disciplines at any time, especially in preparation for specific acts of discipleship or as acts of penitence, reconciliation, peacemaking, social protest, and compassion.

Giving has always been a mark of Christian commitment and discipleship. The ways in which a believer uses God's gifts of material goods, personal abilities, and time should reflect a faithful response to God's self-giving in Jesus Christ and Christ's call to minister to and share with others in the world. Tithing is a primary expression of the Christian discipline of stewardship.

Those who follow the discipline of Christian stewardship will find themselves called to lives of simplicity, generosity, honesty, hospitality, compassion, receptivity, and concern for the earth and God's creatures.

## **6. Christian Vocation**

God calls a people

- a. to believe in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior;
- b. to follow Jesus Christ in obedient discipleship;
- c. to use the gifts and abilities God has given, honoring and serving God

- (1) in personal life,
- (2) in household and families,
- (3) in daily occupations,
- (4) in community, nation, and the world.

A person responds to God's call to faith in Jesus Christ through Baptism and through life and worship in the community of faith. Persons respond to God's call to discipleship through the ministries of God's people in and for the world. Persons respond to God's call to honor and serve God in every aspect of human life

- a. in their work and in their play,
- b. in their thought and in their action,
- c. in their private and in their public relationships.

God hallows daily life, and daily life provides opportunity for holy living. As Christians honor and serve God in daily life, they worship God. For Christians, work and worship cannot be separated.

## **7. Worship in Families and Households**

When Christians live together in a family or in a household they should observe times of worship together. When it is possible to worship together daily, households may engage in

- a. table prayer, which may be accompanied by the use of Scripture and song;
- b. morning and evening prayer;
- c. Bible reading, study, reflection, and memorization;
- d. singing psalms, hymns, spirituals, and other songs;
- e. expressions of giving and sharing.

Given the complexity of schedules and the separations incurred in daily occupations, it is especially important to cultivate the discipline of regular household worship. When members of a household are not able to come together for worship, they may nevertheless observe a common time of personal worship with common readings and prayer concerns.

The parent(s) or the one(s) exercising parental responsibility should teach their children about Christian worship by example, by providing for household worship, and by discussion and instruction. Children join in household worship

- a. praying and singing,
- b. listening to and telling Bible stories,
- c. reading and memorizing,
- d. leading and sharing,
- e. enacting and responding.

Children should be taught appropriate elements of worship used regularly in the Service for the Lord's Day. Household worship should reflect those occasions of special recognition and celebration which occur in the life of the church and in the lives of those in the household. Birthdays, baptismal days, and other anniversaries are all appropriate occasions for special

observance. It is also important in household worship to anticipate and remember the Lord's Day and the celebration of the Sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper. Seasons of the Christian year provide direction and content for household worship, with the seasons of Advent and Lent and the celebration of Christmas and Easter being particularly appropriate to observe in worship in households. Worship in this setting will also recognize the cycle of seasons in nature and the rhythm of community, national, and world life, as well as those events and needs which remind believers of their call to live as disciples of Jesus Christ in the world.

## THE DAILY CONVERSION

*We start the day by remembering our baptism (see reaffirmation of baptismal vows).*

Through my baptism I have entered the covenant God has established with the People of God. In that covenant God gives us new life; we are guarded from evil and nurtured by the love of God and God's people. I embrace that covenant, and choose whom I will serve, by turning from evil and turning to Jesus Christ. I trust in the gracious mercy of God, and turn from the ways of sin and renounce evil and its power in the world. I turn to Jesus Christ and accept him as my Lord and Savior, trusting in his grace and love. I will be Christ's faithful disciples, obeying his Word and showing his love, with God's help. I will devote myself to the teachings of Christ and the Apostles, the fellowship of Christians, to the breaking of bread and the prayers of the faithful.

Through remembering my baptism in Christ Jesus, I once again receive my inheritance. With God's help and the example and encouragement of all the saints in Christ, I profess I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth. I believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried; he descended to the dead. On the third day he rose again; he ascended into heaven, he is seated at the right hand of the Father, and he will come again to judge the living and the dead. I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.

*Dating back to the time of the ancient church fathers, disciples have made the sign of the cross (✠) as an enacted prayer of thanksgiving and reaffirmation of death and new life in Christ through the grace of his cross. This method of enacted prayer is an approved under the Presbyterian Constitution's Directory for Worship (W-2.1005). With your right hand, thumb, index and middle figure together, touching our forehead to navel, left shoulder to right shoulder, saying:*

In the name of the Father, (✠) and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, Amen.

## MORNING PRAYER

Lord, open my lips and my mouth shall proclaim your praise.

**Opening Psalm** 95; 100; 67; 24 (select one)

**Scripture Reading** (Old Testament)

**Reflection** (*Lectio Divina*)

**Song of Zechariah** (Tune: Kingsfold / CMD)

1. Blest be the God of Israel,  
The ever-living Lord.  
You come in power to save Your own,  
Your people Israel.  
For Israel You now raise up  
Salvation's tower on high  
In David's house, who reigned as king  
And servant of the Lord.
2. Through holy prophets did You speak  
Your word in days of old,  
That You would save us from our foes  
And all who bear us ill.  
On Sinai You gave to us  
Your covenant of love;  
So with us now You keep Your word  
In love that knows no end.
3. Of old You gave Your solemn oath  
To father Abraham:  
Whose seed a mighty race should be  
And blest forevermore.  
You vowed to set Your people free  
From fear of every foe,  
That we might serve You all our days  
In goodness, love, and peace.
4. O tiny child, Your name shall be  
The prophet of the Lord;  
The way of God You will prepare  
To make God's coming known.  
You shall proclaim to Israel  
Salvation's dawning day,  
When God shall wipe away all sins

With mercy and with love.

5. The rising sun shall shine on us  
To bring the light of day  
To all who sit in darkest night  
And shadow of the grave.  
Our footsteps God shall safely guide  
To walk the ways of peace,  
Whose name forevermore be blest,  
Who lives and loves and saves.

### **Prayers of Thanksgiving, Intercession & Lord's Prayer**

In the name of the Father, (✠) and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, Amen.

## **EVENING PRAYER**

God, come to my assistance. Lord, make haste to help me.

**Scripture Reading** (Epistle)

**Reflection** (Lectio Divina)

**Song of Mary** (Tune: Morning Song / CM)

1. My soul gives glory to my God,  
My heart pours out its praise.  
God lifted up my lowliness  
In many marvelous ways.
2. My God has done great things for me:  
Yes, holy is this Name.  
All people will declare me blessed,  
And blessings they shall claim.
3. From age to age to all who fear,  
Such mercy love imparts,  
Dispensing justice far and near,  
Dismissing selfish hearts.
4. Love casts the mighty from their thrones,  
Promotes the insecure,  
Leaves hungry spirits satisfied;  
The rich seem suddenly poor.
5. Praise God, whose loving covenant  
Supports those in distress,

Remembering past promises  
With present faithfulness.

### **Prayers of Thanksgiving, Intercession & Lord's Prayer**

In the name of the Father, (✠) and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, Amen.

## **NIGHT PRAYER**

Our help is in the name of the Lord, who made heaven and earth.

### **Prayer of Confession**

Almighty God, Maker of all things, have mercy on us.  
Jesus Christ, Redeemer of the world, have mercy on us.  
Holy Spirit, Giver of life, have mercy on us.

*Take some time for self-examination and how you have shared the Gospel of Christ with others today. Reflect on when you felt the presence of God the most today. Reflect on when you felt God's presence the least. The following prayer is offered for mediation, and may be offered as a prayer on behalf of all humanity.*

I confess to God Almighty,  
before the whole communion of saints,  
in heaven and on earth,  
that I have sinned by my own fault,  
in thought, word, and deed;  
wherefore I pray God Almighty to have mercy on me,  
forgive me all my sins,  
and bring me to everlasting life.  
May Almighty God have mercy on us all,  
pardon and deliver us from all your sins  
and give us time to amend our lives.  
Amen.

### **Scripture Reading** (Gospel)

### **Reflection** (*Lectio Divina*)

### **Prayers** (See Ps. 31:5; 17:8, 15)

Into your hands, O Lord, I commend my spirit; for you have redeemed me, O Lord, O God of truth. Keep us, O Lord, as the apple of your eye; hide us under the shadow of your wings. In righteousness I shall see you; when I awake your presence shall give me joy.

*And*

Keep watch, dear Lord, with those who work or watch or weep this night, and give your angels charge over those who sleep. Tend the sick, Lord Christ; give rest to the weary,

bless the dying, soothe the suffering, pity the afflicted, shield the joyous; and all for your love's sake. Amen.

*Or*

Visit this place, O Lord, and drive from it all snares of the enemy; let your holy angels dwell with us to preserve us in peace; and let your blessing be upon us always, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

*Or*

Lord, fill this night with your radiance. May we sleep in peace and rise in joy to welcome the light of a new day in your name. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

### **Lord's Prayer**

**Song of Simeon** (Tune: Land of Rest / CM)

1. Lord, bid Your servant go in peace,  
Your word is now fulfilled.  
These eyes have seen salvation's dawn,  
This child so long foretold.
2. This is the Savior of the world,  
The Gentiles' promised light,  
God's glory dwelling in our midst,  
The joy of Israel.

In the name of the Father, (✠) and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, Amen.

### **Prayers for Each Weekday**

#### MONDAY

We praise you, God our creator, for your handiwork in shaping and sustaining your wondrous creation. Especially we thank you for the miracle of life and the wonder of living . . . particular blessings coming to us in this day . . . the resources of the earth . . . gifts of creative vision and skillful craft . . . the treasure stored in every human life. . . . We dare to pray for others, God our Savior, claiming your love in Jesus Christ for the whole world, committing ourselves to care for those around us in his name. Especially we pray for those who work for the benefit of others . . . those who cannot work today . . . those who teach and those who learn . . . people who are poor . . . the church in Europe. . . . Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us. Save us from the time of trial and deliver us from evil... (Silent prayer) God of all wisdom, our hearts yearn for the warmth of your love, and our minds search for the light of your Word. Increase our longing for Christ our Savior, and strengthen us to grow in love, that at the dawn of his coming we may rejoice in his presence and welcome the light of his truth. This we ask in the name of Jesus Christ. For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours now and forever. Amen.

## TUESDAY

Eternal God, we rejoice this morning in the gift of life, which we have received by your grace, and the new life you give in Jesus Christ. Especially we thank you for the love of our families . . . the affection of our friends . . . strength and abilities to serve your purpose today . . . this community in which we live . . . opportunities to give as we have received. . . . God of grace, we offer our prayers for the needs of others and commit ourselves to serve them even as we have been served in Jesus Christ. Especially we pray for those closest to us, families, friends, neighbors . . . refugees and homeless men, women and children . . . the outcast and persecuted . . . those from whom we are estranged . . . the church in Africa. . . . Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us. Save us from the time of trial and deliver us from evil... (Silent prayer) O Christ, splendor of the glory of God, and perfect image of the Eternal One who begot you, we praise you for the infinite love which sent you among us; we confess you as the light and life of the world; and we adore you as our Lord and our God, now and forever. For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours now and forever. Amen.

## WEDNESDAY

God of all mercies, we praise you that you have brought us to this new day, brightening our lives with the dawn of promise and hope in Jesus Christ. Especially we thank you for the warmth of sunlight, the wetness of rain and snow, and all that nourishes the earth . . . the presence and power of your Spirit . . . the support and encouragement we receive from others . . . those who provide for public safety and well-being . . . the mission of the church around the world. . . . Merciful God, strengthen us in prayer that we may lift up the brokenness of this world for your healing, and share in the saving love of Jesus Christ. Especially we pray for those in positions of authority over others . . . the lonely and forgotten . . . children without families or homes . . . agents of caring and relief . . . the church in Asia and the Middle East. . . . Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us. Save us from the time of trial and deliver us from evil... (Silent prayer) Holy God, the mystery of your eternal Word took flesh among us when Mary, without reserve, entrusted her life to you. Strengthen us by the example of her humility, that we may always be ready to do your will and welcome Christ into our lives, who lives and reigns forever and ever. For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours now and forever. Amen.

## THURSDAY

Loving God, as the rising sun chases away the night, so you have scattered the power of death in the rising of Jesus Christ, and you bring us all blessings in him. Especially we thank you for the community of faith in our church . . . those with whom we work or share common concerns . . . the diversity of your children . . . indications of your love at work in the world . . . those who work for reconciliation. . . . Mighty God, with the dawn of your love you reveal your victory over all that would destroy or harm, and you brighten the lives of all who need you. Especially we pray for families suffering separation . . . people different from ourselves . . . those isolated by sickness or sorrow . . . the victims of violence or warfare . . . the church in the Pacific region. . . . Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who

sin against us. Save us from the time of trial and deliver us from evil... (Silent prayer) God of the prophets, you sent your messenger into the wilderness of Jordan to prepare human hearts for the coming of your Son. Help us to prepare for Christ's coming, and to hear the good news and repent, that we may be ready to welcome the Lord, our Savior, Jesus Christ. For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours now and forever. Amen.

#### FRIDAY

Eternal God, we praise you for your mighty love given in Christ's sacrifice on the cross, and the new life we have received by his resurrection. Especially we thank you for the presence of Christ in our weakness and suffering . . . the ministry of Word and Sacrament . . . all who work to help and heal . . . sacrifices made for our benefit . . . opportunities for our generous giving. . . . God of grace, let our concern for others reflect Christ's self-giving love, not only in our prayers, but also in our practice. especially we pray for those subjected to tyranny and oppression . . . wounded and injured people . . . those who face death . . . those who may be our enemies . . . the church in Latin America. . . . Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us. Save us from the time of trial and deliver us from evil... (Silent prayer) O God, you loved the world so much that you gave your only Son for us. Increase and strengthen our faith and fix it firmly on the mystery of your Word made flesh, that we may triumph over all evil through Christ who reigns now and forever. For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours now and forever. Amen.

#### SATURDAY

Great and wonderful God, we praise and thank you for the gift of renewal in Jesus Christ. Especially we thank you for opportunities for rest and recreation . . . the regenerating gifts of the Holy Spirit . . . activities shared by young and old . . . fun and laughter . . . every service that proclaims your love. . . . You make all things new, O God, and we offer our prayers for the renewal of the world and the healing of its wounds. Especially we pray for those who have no leisure . . . people enslaved by addictions . . . those who entertain and enlighten . . . those confronted with temptation . . . the church in North America. . . . Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us. Save us from the time of trial and deliver us from evil... (Silent prayer) All-powerful and unseen God, the coming of your light into the world has brightened weary hearts with peace. Teach us to proclaim the birth of your Son Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, forever and ever. For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours now and forever. Amen.

#### SUNDAY

Mighty God of mercy, we thank you for the resurrection dawn bringing the glory of our risen Lord who makes every day new. Especially we thank you for the beauty of your creation . . . the new creation in Christ and all gifts of healing and forgiveness . . . the sustaining love of family and friends . . . the fellowship of faith in your church. . . . Merciful God of might, renew this weary world, heal the hurts of all your children, and bring about your peace for all in Christ Jesus, the living Lord. Especially we pray for those who govern nations of the world . . . the people in countries ravaged by strife or warfare . . . all who work for peace and international harmony . . . all who strive to save the earth from destruction . . . the church of Jesus Christ in

every land. . . . Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us. Save us from the time of trial and deliver us from evil... (Silent prayer) Eternal Light, you have shown us your glory in Christ, the Word made flesh. Your light is strong, your love is near. Draw us beyond the limits which this world imposes, to the life where the Spirit makes all life complete, through Jesus Christ our Lord. For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours now and forever. Amen.

## STATEMENTS of FAITH for MEDITATION

### **Nicene Creed (Creed of Holy Communion)**

We believe in one God, the Father, the Almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all that is, seen and unseen. We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, eternally begotten of the Father, God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, of one Being with the Father; through him all things were made. For us and for our salvation he came down from heaven, was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary and became truly human. For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate; he suffered death and was buried. On the third day he rose again in accordance with the Scriptures; he ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead, and his kingdom will have no end. We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son, who with the Father and the Son is worshiped and glorified, who has spoken through the prophets. We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic church. We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins. We look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come. Amen.

## A Brief Statement of Faith, Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)

In life and in death we belong to God.

Through the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ,  
the love of God,  
and the communion of the Holy Spirit,  
we trust in the one triune God, the Holy One of Israel,  
whom alone we worship and serve.

We trust in Jesus Christ,  
fully human, fully God.

Jesus proclaimed the reign of God:  
preaching good news to the poor  
and release to the captives,  
teaching by word and deed  
and blessing the children,  
healing the sick  
and binding up the brokenhearted,  
eating with outcasts,  
forgiving sinners,  
and calling all to repent and believe the gospel.

Unjustly condemned for blasphemy and sedition,  
Jesus was crucified,  
suffering the depths of human pain  
and giving his life for the sins of the world.

God raised this Jesus from the dead,  
vindicating his sinless life,  
breaking the power of sin and evil,  
delivering us from death to life eternal.

We trust in God,  
whom Jesus called Abba, Father.

In sovereign love God created the world good  
and makes everyone equally in God's image  
male and female, of every race and people,  
to live as one community.

But we rebel against God; we hide from our Creator.  
Ignoring God's commandments,  
we violate the image of God in others and ourselves,  
accept lies as truth,  
exploit neighbor and nature,  
and threaten death to the planet entrusted to our care.  
We deserve God's condemnation.

Yet God acts with justice and mercy to redeem creation.

In everlasting love,  
the God of Abraham and Sarah chose a covenant people  
to bless all families of the earth.

Hearing their cry,

God delivered the children of Israel  
from the house of bondage.  
Loving us still,  
God makes us heirs with Christ of the covenant.  
Like a mother who will not forsake her nursing child,  
like a father who runs to welcome the prodigal home,  
God is faithful still.

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.

In gratitude to God, empowered by the Spirit,  
we strive to serve Christ in our daily tasks  
and to live holy and joyful lives,  
even as we watch for God's new heaven and new earth,  
praying, "Come, Lord Jesus!"

With believers in every time and place,  
we rejoice that nothing in life or in death  
can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.  
Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit. Amen.

## LECTIO DIVINA

Background: *Lectio Divina* (Holy Reading) is a spiritual practice that has its roots with the early church Eastern monastic movement, and was utilized by many of the “desert fathers and mothers” as a faithful way to seek God’s will. The Benedictines later refined the method. The English reformer Richard Baxter (1615-1691) believed it was a very Reformed method of prayer and meditation because it used Scripture as its basis and encouraged every Calvinist minister to employ it as a form of spiritual guidance for groups and individuals.

### **The Process:**

**Lectio - reading/listening:** THE ART of *lectio divina* begins with cultivating the ability to listen deeply, to hear "with the ear of our hearts" as St. Benedict encourages us in the Prologue to the Rule. When we read the Scriptures we should try to imitate the prophet Elijah. We should allow ourselves to become women and men who are able to listen for the still, small voice of God (*I Kings 19:12*); the "faint murmuring sound" which is God's word for us, God's voice touching our hearts. This gentle listening is an "atunement" to the presence of God in that special part of God's creation which is the Scriptures.

THE CRY of the prophets to ancient Israel was the joy-filled command to "Listen!" "Sh'ma Israel: Hear, O Israel!" In *lectio divina* we, too, heed that command and turn to the Scriptures, knowing that we must "hear" - listen - to the voice of God, which often speaks very softly. In order to hear someone speaking softly we must learn to be silent. We must learn to love silence. If we are constantly speaking or if we are surrounded with noise, we cannot hear gentle sounds. The practice of *lectio divina*, therefore, requires that we first quiet down in order to hear God's word to us. This is the first step of *lectio divina*, appropriately called *lectio* - reading.

THE READING or listening which is the first step in *lectio divina* is very different from the speed reading which modern Christians apply to newspapers, books and even to the Bible. *Lectio* is reverential listening; listening both in a spirit of silence and of awe. We are listening for the still, small voice of God that will speak to us personally - not loudly, but intimately. In *lectio* we read slowly, attentively, gently listening to hear a word or phrase that is God's word for us this day.

**Meditatio – meditation:** ONCE WE have found a word or a passage in the Scriptures which speaks to us in a personal way, we must take it in and "ruminate" on it. The image of the ruminant animal quietly chewing its cud was used in antiquity as a symbol of the Christian pondering the Word of God. Christians have always seen a scriptural invitation to *lectio divina* in the example of the Virgin Mary "pondering in her heart" what she saw and heard of Christ (Luke 2:19). For us today these images are a reminder that we must take in the word - that is, memorize it - and while gently repeating it to ourselves, allow it to interact with our thoughts, our hopes, our memories, our desires. This is the second step or stage in *lectio divina* - *meditatio*. Through *meditatio* we allow God's word to become His word for us, a word that touches us and affects us at our deepest levels.

**Oratio – prayer:** THE THIRD step in *lectio divina* is *oratio* - prayer: prayer understood both as dialogue with God, that is, as loving conversation with the One who has invited us into His embrace; and as consecration, prayer as the priestly offering to God of parts of ourselves that we have not previously believed God wants. In this consecration-prayer we allow the word that we have taken in and on which we are pondering to touch and change our deepest selves. Just as a priest consecrates the elements of bread and wine at the Eucharist, God invites us in *lectio divina* to hold up our most difficult and pain-filled experiences to Him, and to gently recite over them the healing word or phrase He has given us in our *lectio* and *meditatio*. In this oratio, this consecration-prayer, we allow our real selves to be touched and changed by the word of God.

***Contemplatio – contemplation:*** FINALLY, WE simply rest in the presence of the One who has used His word as a means of inviting us to accept His transforming embrace. No one who has ever been in love needs to be reminded that there are moments in loving relationships when words are unnecessary. It is the same in our relationship with God. Wordless, quiet rest in the presence of the One Who loves us has a name in the Christian tradition - *contemplatio*, contemplation. Once again we practice silence, letting go of our own words; this time simply enjoying the experience of being in the presence of God.

***Lectio on Life: Applying Lectio Divina to my personal Salvation History***

*Purpose:* to apply a method of prayerful reflection to a life/work incident (instead of to a scripture passage)

**Listening for the Gentle Touch of Christ the Word (*The Literal Sense*)**

1. Each person quiets the body and mind: relax, sit comfortably but alert, close eyes, attune to breathing...
2. Each person gently reviews events, situations, sights, encounters that have happened since the beginning of the retreat/or during the last month at work.

**Gently Ruminating, Reflecting (*Meditatio - Meditation*)**

3. Each person allows the self to focus on one such offering.
  - a) Recollect the setting, sensory details, sequence of events, etc.
  - b) Notice where the greatest energy seemed to be evoked. Was there a turning point or shift?
  - c) In what ways did God seem to be present? To what extent was I aware then? Now?

**Prayerful Consecration, Blessing (*Oratio - Prayer*)**

4. Use a word or phrase from the Scriptures to inwardly consecrate - to offer up to God in prayer - the incident and interior reflections. Allow God to accept and bless them as your gift.

**Accepting Christ's Embrace; Silent Presence to the Lord (*Contemplatio - Contemplation*)**

5. Remain in silence for some period.

**Sharing our *Lectio* Experience with Each Other (*Operatio - Action; works*)**

6. Under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, look and listen for those God is leading you to in order to share your experience and help the other person in their journey of faith.

## A GARDNAER'S PRAYER (see Luke 10:2)

God of mercy, you have called us to fullness of life through Christ Jesus. Deep within us you speak the word that invites us to continue the mission of Jesus, to make your love known throughout the world. Send your Spirit, loving God, to stir up our courage to carry on that mission.

Lord, you said "The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; therefore ask the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest." We, the laborers in your vineyard pray to you to send us more co-workers. You have given us all we need, and it is enough. But, as you know, the harvest is great. To fulfill the mission and purpose you have given us in this part of your vast vineyard, we need more help.

God of the harvest, raise up women and men who will commit their lives to serving your people and participate in your mission through New Creation Presbyterian Church. Send to our particular Christian community people whose hearts are filled with compassion and who will join us in our vowed commitment to be an enrichment to our community through vibrant Christ-centered lives, one life at a time. Bless us also with friends and associates who will share our mission. May we rejoice in their call and support them through the witness of our lives and the hospitality of our hearts.

Help us to remember the apostolic witness of our deceased sisters and brothers and their trust in your providence. May we have the courage to be as bold as they were in sharing our living faith. Send us new co-workers in the Gospel so we may continue what you began through the Jerusalem community who gathered after Christ's ascension - a community who was a New Creation in Him. This we ask in the name of Jesus and for the sake of all your people and all of creation. Amen."

## THE SPIRIT SENDS US FORTH to SERVE

The Spirit sends us forth to serve;  
We go in Jesus' name  
To bring glad tidings to the poor,  
God's favor to proclaim.

We go to comfort those who mourn  
And set the burdened free;  
Where hope is dim to share a dream  
And help the blind to see.

We go to be the hands of Christ,  
To scatter joy like seed  
And, all our days, to cherish life,  
To do the loving deed.

Then let us go to serve in peace,  
The Gospel to proclaim.  
God's spirit has empowered us;  
We go in Jesus' name.

*Words: Delores Dufner, OSB (1993, Pub by OCP Pub); Music/Tune: Land of Rest (CM)*

## WHO is NEW CREATION?

**Our Guiding Scripture:** 2 Corinthians 5

**Our Core Values:** Faith in the triune God; Biblical Authority in all matters of faith and life; Love as God loves; Commitment to following the Way of Jesus.

**Our Core Practices:** Prayer, Worship, Study, Community, Giving, and Ministry.

**Our God-given Purpose:** To enrich our community through vibrant, Christ-centered relationships – one life at a time.

**Our God-given Mission:** Glorify God through authentic worship; Create and sustain relationships through which people come to know and follow Jesus; Prepare followers for discipleship and leadership; Connect to our community by sharing our time, talent and treasure.

**Expectations of NCPC Co-Workers (members):** Live out baptismal vows; Accept God's call to be responsibly involved in the ministry of the Church and the mission of God in the world in accordance with one's spiritual gifts. Commitment includes: Proclaiming the Gospel; Participating in the common life and worship of NCPC; Devotion to the core practices; Demonstrating a new quality of life; Responding to God's activity in the world through serving others out of love; Living responsibly in all relationships, exhibiting the love of God; Working in the world for peace, justice, freedom and human fulfillment.

**Expectations of NCPC as a Christian Community:** To adhere to and organize according to Scripture, values and practices, purpose and mission so we may present the claims of Jesus Christ, leading persons to become new creations in God's love. NCPC is called to be Christ's faithful evangelist and undertake our mission in the world, even at the risk of losing our organizational life. We trust in God alone as the author and giver of life and will share the gospel with all God leads us to, and do what needs to be done in the world that points beyond ourselves to a new reality in Christ.