



# Incarnation Lutheran Church

## Lord, Teach Us to Pray | The Prayer Toolbox | Lent 2019

As a faith community, Incarnation values prayer. Our Mission, Vision, and Values statement says this about prayer:

*We pray, together and individually, to be in relationship with God, express gratitude, ask for forgiveness and seek God's heart and will to form our lives as followers of Jesus Christ. We are engaged in faith practices to be present to God and God's activity in our world.*

Easier said than done! Some of us struggle because we're just not sure what to do or we've tried one or two things that didn't really work for us and that left us feeling discouraged or disconnected from God. Others of us have experienced seasons of life where our connection to God in prayer felt strong and vital, but have also had seasons where we were in a rut and our prayer life felt flat.

Enter the Prayer Toolbox. During midweek Lenten worship, we will use Jesus' teaching in the Lord's Prayer as inspiration to explore different ways of connecting with God in prayer. Each week we will introduce a new prayer practice for you to try at home and worshipers will receive a prayer tool—an object to help remember that prayer practice. The goal is to expand our understanding of what prayer looks like, it's not just one thing, and give us skills to connect with God in fresh ways.

The hope is that each week during Lent, you will incorporate that week's prayer practice into your daily life as an individual or with your family.

### **Week of March 6 (Ash Wednesday)**

*Petition: Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name | Preaching Text: Psalm 18:1-6 | Prayer Practice: Praying through the Word | Prayer Tool: Lettered Tile*

Jesus starts the Lord's Prayer by declaring that the name of our heavenly Father is holy. Jesus starts by celebrating who God is. We can use our own words to celebrate God's character—the qualities that describe God and how God is for us. We also go into the Word of God in the Bible to discover a fuller picture of who God is. The Word gives us language to celebrate who God is and what God is up to in the world and in our lives.

Each day this week, choose a Bible passage to read. Try reading it out loud—to slow you down and help take in the words. Then answer the following questions:

- What words or details stood out to you as you read?
- What does this passage say about who God is?
- What does this passage say about what God values?

The prayer tool this week is the lettered tile. It reminds us of God's Word. Hold it in your hand or, if you're praying in a group, place it in the center of the circle and offer a prayer of thanks to God,

celebrating God's character and the ways God cares for us. Speak simply and from your heart. Your words don't have to be fancy.

You can choose whatever Bible passages you'd like. Below are some ideas:

Psalm 18:1-6	Colossians 3:12-17	Genesis 1:1-2:4
John 1:1-18	Galatians 5:22-26	Luke 11:1-13
Isaiah 43:1-7	Matthew 6:25-34	Psalm 139:1-18

## **Week of March 13**

*Petition: Your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as in heaven. | Preaching Text: Psalm 147:1-6 | Prayer Practice: The Examen | Prayer Tool: Nail*

What does it look like for God's will to be done on earth as in heaven? In his ministry, Jesus invites us to be part of building God's kingdom of love, mercy and justice on earth, now. We can only do that because God's Holy Spirit works in and through us. The prayer tool this week is the nail. Nails are essential for building. When we desire for God to use us in building his kingdom, we need to listen for God's guidance. One way of listening is by praying The Examen.

The Examen is a technique of prayerful reflection on the events of the day in order to detect God's presence and discern God's direction for us. The Examen is an ancient practice in the Church that can help us see God's hand at work in and through our lives. You can learn more about The Examen by Googling "The Examen Upper Room".

This week try a simplified version of The Examen by praying twice a day. In the morning, our prayer is for God's Spirit to help us pay attention: Show me today how I/we can help build up your Kingdom in me/us, around me/us and beyond me/us.

The evening is for reflection. Ask yourself: Which of my words and actions today helped to build others up? Which words and actions tore others down?

Write your responses down each day to help you notice any patterns. Offer a prayer of thanks for the moments of building up and ask God for forgiveness for the moments that tore others down.

## **Week of March 20**

*Petition: Give us today our daily bread. | Preaching Text: Psalm 23 | Prayer Practice: Gratitude | Prayer Tool: Bow (as for a gift)*

With this prayer petition, Jesus encourages us to remember that all that we have are gifts from God. The bow in the Prayer Toolbox helps us remember these gifts. As Martin Luther reminds us in the explanation of this petition in the Small Catechism, "Daily bread includes everything needed for this life, such as food and clothing, home and property, work and income, a devoted family, an orderly community, good government, favorable weather, peace and health, a good name, and true friends and neighbors.

This week our prayer practice is gratitude. Each day, using a different category, name three things for which you are grateful. Be specific including why you are thankful. Start a list for the week and write down your responses each day. Offer that thanks to God in prayer

Choose from these categories or make up your own: People (family and friends), Work/School, Community or Government, Creation, Health/Our Bodies, Essentials for Living, the Wider World, Yourself (Your character and abilities).

## **Week of March 27**

*Petition: Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us. | Preaching Text: Psalm 51: 1-17 | Prayer Practice: Confession & Forgiveness | Prayer Tool: Vial of Ashes*

By including this petition, Jesus holds before us the reminder that practicing forgiveness—giving and receiving—is an essential part of our relationship with God and with each other. The prayer tool this week is the vial of ashes, which symbolizes that left to our own devices, we often choose the way of death—we choose what harms and destroys in our relationships instead of choosing what gives life. Naming our sinfulness, our need for forgiveness and our hunger for God’s grace—that no matter what love God has for each of us—speaks the truth that we need to hear for ourselves and creates a space for honest connection with God and each other.

This week is about offering ourselves to God with complete honesty. The prayer practice is simple, but powerful. It is a way of acknowledging that we radically fall short of God’s calling and crying out for help.

Each morning when you wake up (or whatever time makes sense for your life), offer this prayer: Lord, Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner.

Create a system to help you remember. You might write it on a piece of paper and post it where you will see it or put a daily alarm in your phone. Offer this prayer whenever and as often as you like as a way of connecting to the One who is the source of all grace.

## **Week of April 3**

*Petition: Save us from the time of trial, and deliver us from evil. | Preaching Text: Psalm 13 | Prayer Practice: Lament | Prayer Tool: Holding Cross*

Following Jesus is no guarantee that life will go smoothly. We all face times that are difficult, or things happen to us that cause pain. We see this in our individual lives and in the wider world. Sometimes these circumstances cause us to doubt God or wonder why God isn’t doing something about it.

Lament is an ancient practice of pouring our hearts out—including our pain and disappointment and discouragement—to God with honesty and vulnerability. In the lament tradition, people hold God accountable to God’s promises. “Where are you God? Why are you letting this happen? How long,

“O Lord, how long?” The beauty of lament is that this deep honesty is paired with an expression of trust that God will act in love and mercy, that God has not abandoned us.

This week, practice lament. Each day name before God all the things that are bigger than us and beyond our control. Name the hurts and what breaks your heart in your own life and in the larger community and world. Name the things that are beyond our human power to fix. Name the deepest desires of your heart for healing yourself and the world. Then, express your confidence that God is present, that God cares and that God heals.

The prayer tool this week is a Holding Cross. Hold it in the palm of your hand and wrap your fingers around it as you pray. The Holding Cross reminds us that Jesus went to the cross to defeat all the powers of sin, death and evil and that God continues to work to make all things new.

## **Week of April 10**

*Petition: For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours, now and forever. Amen. | Preaching Text: Psalm 8 | Prayer Practice: Praying for the World | Prayer Tool: Globe*

This final petition acknowledges that everything is God’s—the earth and all that is in it, the heavens, true power and true glory—as so we entrust it all to our heavenly Father.

This week, consider the world in which we live and especially God’s creation, of which we are a part. God calls us to be good stewards and caretakers of the created world in which we live. Each day as you hold the globe that reminds us of the earth, offer your prayers for the wellbeing of creation and seek guidance for your role in caring for God’s creation.

*You can find audio recordings of the Lenten sermon series online at [incarnationmn.org/lentenprayertoolbox/](http://incarnationmn.org/lentenprayertoolbox/) after they have been recorded in the Wednesday worship services.*

*This Prayer Toolbox resource is a part of the Prayer Initiative and made possible by the generosity and talents of the Woodworkers, who created the tool boxes and Holding Crosses, and an anonymous individual’s Thrivent Action Team donation.*



*Filled by God’s grace, we feed the hungry in heart, body, mind and spirit.*