

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

As we prepare for Emmanuel, God-with-us, let us pray for all people and places that long for God's presence.

A brief silence.

God our uniter, increase communication and cooperation in our relationships with those of other traditions and religions. Root your church in the radical message of your incarnation, and enable us to pursue your justice in the world. Lord, in your mercy, **receive our prayer.**

God our creator, we praise you for the beauty that surrounds us. Awaken in us a renewed sense of care for the wild-life in our communities (*local preserves, parks, or sanctuaries may be named*). Form us into faithful stewards of what you have made. Lord, in your mercy, **receive our prayer.**

God our sovereign, Mary proclaims a new way of life that lifts up the lowly and fills the hungry with good things. Nurture in local governments and municipalities a desire to care for all who are overlooked and ignored. Lord, in your mercy, **receive our prayer.**

Preparing for Next Week

Monday Psalm 113. **Tuesday** (Nativity of Our Lord, Christmas Eve) Luke 2:1-14 [15-20]. **Wednesday** (Nativity of Our Lord, Christmas Day) John 1:1-14. **Thursday** (Stephen, Deacon and Martyr) Matthew 23:34-39. **Friday** (John, Apostle and Evangelist) John 21:20-25. **Saturday** (The Holy Innocents, Martyrs) Matthew 2:13-18. **First Sunday of Christmas** 1 Samuel 2:18-20, 26; Psalm 148; Colossians 3:12-17; Luke 2:41-52.

God our beacon, as the northern hemisphere begins its slow turn toward more daylight, remind us that even in the deepest nights, you are there. Comfort the lonely and bereaved. Hold closely the frightened, anxious, depressed, and ill (*especially*). Lord, in your mercy, **receive our prayer.**

God our guide, shepherd the leadership of this congregation. Bless the council and staff in discerning future ministry and open their hearts to the voices of the community. Lord, in your mercy, **receive our prayer.**

Here other intercessions may be offered.

God our life, you remember the promises you have made to your people. In gratitude for those who have died (*especially*), we praise you for your faithfulness throughout history. Lord, in your mercy, **receive our prayer.**

Savior of the nations, come, and receive these prayers and the pleas of our hearts, in the name of Jesus Christ. **Amen.**



Celebrate

Fourth Sunday of Advent
December 22, 2024

Cradle and cross are inextricably connected on the fourth Sunday of Advent. Between a lovely tribute to the little town of Bethlehem and Mary's magnificent song of praise, the letter to the Hebrews reminds us in no uncertain terms that Christ's advent is for "the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all." It is the kind of tension in which the church always lives as when in holy communion—with high delight—"we proclaim the Lord's death."

Prayer of the Day

Stir up your power, Lord Christ, and come. With your abundant grace and might, free us from the sin that binds us, that we may receive you in joy and serve you always, for you live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen.**

First Reading

Micah 5:2-5a

The prophet Micah, having pronounced judgment upon Judah, speaks of a future shepherd-king who, like David, will come from the small town of Bethlehem. (Ephrathah refers to the area around Bethlehem.) This king will restore Israel and bring peace. New Testament writers understood this passage to be referring to Jesus.

But you, O Bethlehem of Ephrathah,
who are one of the little clans of
Judah,
from you shall come forth for me
one who is to rule in Israel,
whose origin is from of old,
from ancient days.
³Therefore he shall give them up
until the time
when she who is in labor has
brought forth;

then the rest of his kindred shall
return
to the people of Israel.
⁴And he shall stand and feed his flock
in the strength of the LORD,
in the majesty of the name of the
LORD his God.
And they shall live secure, for now he
shall be great
to the ends of the earth;
^{5a}and he shall be the one of peace.