

## May Worship Pages

For May, you're invited to use the ELW Responsive Prayer for at home worship along with the readings and reflections for each Sunday and the prayer list in *The Friend*. Peace, Pastor Liz

### **ELW Responsive Prayer**

#### ***Gathering***

Holy God, holy and mighty, holy and immortal,  
have mercy on us.

#### ***The Lord's Prayer***

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.  
For the kingdom, the power,  
and the glory are yours,  
now and forever. Amen.

#### ***The Apostles' Creed***

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 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.

### ***Morning Prayer***

O Lord, I cry to you for help.  
In the morning my prayer comes before you.  
Let my mouth be full of your praise  
and your glory all the day long.  
Every day will I bless you,  
and praise your name forever and ever.  
Awesome things will you show us in your righteousness, O God of our salvation,  
O hope of all the ends of the earth and of the seas that are far away.  
Bless the Lord, O my soul,  
and all that is within me, bless God's holy name.  
You redeem my life from the grave,  
and crown me with mercy and steadfast love.

Lord, hear my prayer,  
and let my cry come before you.

(add additional prayers for the Church, world, and those in need)

Lord, hear my prayer,  
and let my cry come before you.

### ***Reading and Reflection for the Day***

Let us pray.

*The prayer of the day may be said.*

We give thanks to you, heavenly Father, through Jesus Christ your dear Son,  
that you have protected us through the night from all harm and danger. We ask  
that you would also protect us today from sin and all evil, so that our life and  
actions may please you. Into your hands we commend ourselves: our bodies, our  
souls, and all that is ours. Let your holy angels be with us, so that the wicked foe  
may have no power over us.  
Amen.

Almighty God bless us, defend us from all evil, and bring us to everlasting life.  
Amen.

## **May 2**

### **Prayer of the Day**

O God, you give us your Son as the vine apart from whom we cannot live. Nourish our life in his resurrection, that we may bear the fruit of love and know the fullness of your joy, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.  
Amen.

### **Second Reading: 1 John 4:7-21**

<sup>7</sup>Beloved, let us love one another, because love is from God; everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. <sup>8</sup>Whoever does not love does not know God, for God is love. <sup>9</sup>God's love was revealed among us in this way: God sent his only Son into the world so that we might live through him. <sup>10</sup>In this is love, not that we loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the atoning sacrifice for our sins. <sup>11</sup>Beloved, since God loved us so much, we also ought to love one another. <sup>12</sup>No one has ever seen God; if we love one another, God lives in us, and God's love is perfected in us.

<sup>13</sup>By this we know that we abide in God and God in us, because God has given us of God's own Spirit. <sup>14</sup>And we have seen and do testify that the Father has sent his Son as the Savior of the world. <sup>15</sup>God abides in those who confess that Jesus is the Son of God, and they abide in God. <sup>16</sup>So we have known and believe the love that God has for us.

God is love, and those who abide in love abide in God, and God abides in them. <sup>17</sup>Love has been perfected among us in this: that we may have boldness on the day of judgment, because as God is, so are we in this world. <sup>18</sup>There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear; for fear has to do with punishment, and whoever fears has not reached perfection in love. <sup>19</sup>We love because God first loved us. <sup>20</sup>Those who say, "I love God," and hate their siblings, are liars; for those who do not love a sibling whom they have seen, cannot love God whom they have not seen. <sup>21</sup>The commandment we have from God is this: those who love God must love their siblings also.

### **Reflection**

This is one of my favorite texts to use at a wedding. Weddings are one of those times that we throw around the word "love" and surround it with sentimentality, exclusivity, and consumerism. This text grabs hold of "love" and puts it back where it belongs: an action available to each one of us because God first gifted it to us. First John reclaims "love" and distributes it widely like wedding rice. It's not something only a select few, like the lucky bride and groom, get to enjoy. God shows all of us love by entering into creation. Jesus shows all of us

love by living and dying for us. The Spirit teaches us to love by living within us, reminding us of God's love for us and giving us the power to love others. It's in our broad love for others that God's love is known. As Jesus died for all people, we are called to love all people. That doesn't mean romance or even that we always like everyone else. Love means to act towards all others as Jesus acted: with compassion, forgiveness, and in *their* best interests rather than ours. We love by working towards a society in which every person is valued and able to live with dignity and well-being. If there are any people we somehow think are less deserving than others, we haven't yet learned fully of God's expansive love.

## **May 9**

### **Prayer of the Day**

O God, you have prepared for those who love you joys beyond understanding. Pour into our hearts such love for you that, loving you above all things, we may obtain your promises, which exceed all we can desire; through Jesus Christ, your Son and our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

**Amen.**

### **Gospel: John 15:9-17**

*On the night of his arrest, Jesus delivers a final testimony to his disciples to help them in the days ahead. Here, he repeats the most important of all his commands, that they love one another.*

[Jesus said:] <sup>9</sup>“As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you; abide in my love. <sup>10</sup>If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love. <sup>11</sup>I have said these things to you so that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be complete.

<sup>12</sup>“This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. <sup>13</sup>No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends. <sup>14</sup>You are my friends if you do what I command you. <sup>15</sup>I do not call you servants any longer, because the servant does not know what the master is doing; but I have called you friends, because I have made known to you everything that I have heard from my Father. <sup>16</sup>You did not choose me but I chose you. And I appointed you to go and bear fruit, fruit that will last, so that the Father will give you whatever you ask him in my name. <sup>17</sup>I am giving you these commands so that you may love one another.”

### **Reflection**

When's the last time you were house-hunting? We bought our first house about four years ago. All the factors to consider were overwhelming! There

weren't just the things I expected like cost and number of bedrooms, but also the question of neighborhood, noise, transportation, and schools. I'd be choosing to move in to not only a building, but a community.

In the Bible, we read the word "abide." This is more than a quick stay, more than a brief coffee in a cafe or overnight in a new city. This is moving in, getting to know the neighbors, planting bare root trees and sticking around to enjoy their fruit. When you abide, you get to know the rhythms of a place and you become a part of that place.

The place God invites us into is God's love. When we live in God's incredible love for us, it becomes a part of who we are, and we create space in which others can live in God's love. We extend the boundaries of God's love to encompass new neighbors. All are welcomed in to God's neighborhood.

## **May 16**

### **Prayer of the Day**

Gracious and glorious God, you have chosen us as your own, and by the powerful name of Christ you protect us from evil. By your Spirit transform us and your beloved world, that we may find our joy in your Son, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

**Amen.**

### **Psalm 1**

- <sup>1</sup>Happy are they who have not walked in the counsel of the wicked,  
nor lingered in the way of sinners, nor sat in the seats of the scornful!
- <sup>2</sup>Their delight is in the law of the LORD,  
and they meditate on God's teaching day and night.
- <sup>3</sup>They are like trees planted by streams of water, bearing fruit in due season,  
with leaves that do not wither;  
everything they do shall prosper.
- <sup>4</sup>It is not so with the wicked;  
they are like chaff which the wind blows away.
- <sup>5</sup>Therefore the wicked shall not stand upright when judgment comes,  
nor the sinner in the council of the righteous.
- <sup>6</sup>For the LORD knows the way of the righteous,  
but the way of the wicked shall be destroyed.

### **Reflection**

I attended a wellness conference during the pandemic that was designed to help leaders tend to their own wellness and that of their parishioners. One part

that stood out to me was the advice to watch your diet, but not of food. Watch your consumption of media. What are the messages in your newspapers, magazines, books? What kind of world does your favorite news station or TV program portray? All those voices help you know and understand the world. But, do they have it right?

Psalms 1 acknowledges that there are many different voices in our world. They tell us what the world is like, how to interpret it, and how to interact within it. "Happy are they... (whose) delight is in the law of the Lord." When the primary story in our life is the story of scripture, then the primary message through which we interpret everything in our life is God's love. When we are so grounded in God's great story, then we use that story to make sense of our world. The gospel is that God loves the whole world and that God is working to heal all that is broken. When that gospel is the lens through which we see, we have hope and compassion.

## **May 23**

### **Prayer of the Day**

Mighty God, you breathe life into our bones, and your Spirit brings truth to the world. Send us this Spirit, transform us by your truth, and give us language to proclaim your gospel, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

**Amen.**

### **Ezekiel 37:1-14**

*The Hebrew word rendered as ruach means "spirit," "wind," or "breath." This reading plays on the different meanings of the word. Just as the dry bones in Ezekiel's vision are given new life, flesh, and breath (or spirit), so God will give the exiles God's own spirit and will bring them home to the land of Israel.*

<sup>1</sup>The hand of the LORD came upon me, and he brought me out by the spirit of the LORD and set me down in the middle of a valley; it was full of bones. <sup>2</sup>He led me all around them; there were very many lying in the valley, and they were very dry. <sup>3</sup>He said to me, "Mortal, can these bones live?" I answered, "O Lord GOD, you know." <sup>4</sup>Then he said to me, "Prophecy to these bones, and say to them: O dry bones, hear the word of the LORD. <sup>5</sup>Thus says the Lord GOD to these bones: I will cause breath to enter you, and you shall live. <sup>6</sup>I will lay sinews on you, and will cause flesh to come upon you, and cover you with skin, and put breath in you, and you shall live; and you shall know that I am the LORD."

<sup>7</sup>So I prophesied as I had been commanded; and as I prophesied, suddenly there was a noise, a rattling, and the bones came together, bone to its bone. <sup>8</sup>I looked, and there were sinews on them, and flesh had come upon them, and skin

had covered them; but there was no breath in them. <sup>9</sup>Then he said to me, “Prophesy to the breath, prophesy, mortal, and say to the breath: Thus says the Lord GOD: Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon these slain, that they may live.” <sup>10</sup>I prophesied as he commanded me, and the breath came into them, and they lived, and stood on their feet, a vast multitude.

<sup>11</sup>Then he said to me, “Mortal, these bones are the whole house of Israel. They say, ‘Our bones are dried up, and our hope is lost; we are cut off completely.’ <sup>12</sup>Therefore prophesy, and say to them, Thus says the Lord GOD: I am going to open your graves, and bring you up from your graves, O my people; and I will bring you back to the land of Israel. <sup>13</sup>And you shall know that I am the LORD, when I open your graves, and bring you up from your graves, O my people. <sup>14</sup>I will put my spirit within you, and you shall live, and I will place you on your own soil; then you shall know that I, the LORD, have spoken and will act, says the LORD.”

## Reflection

This summer, for family movie night, we watched *The Princess Bride*. Towards the end of the movie, there’s this rather hilarious exchange between Miracle Max and Inigo Montoya over his friend Westley’s body: “It just so happens that your friend here is only MOSTLY dead. There’s a big difference between mostly dead and all dead. Mostly dead is slightly alive.” Miracle Max is able to revive Westley because, well, he’s only *mostly* dead.

Unlike the fairy tale, the book of Ezekiel places us in a valley of bones: amid the *very* dead. The bones are very dry, all life has left them. Once God has established just how removed from life these bones are, God speaks through Ezekiel to restore life to them. What was utterly dead, through the Word of God, became alive.

This is a metaphor for the life God gives after all hope is past. The people of God are in the midst of great suffering and have given up. Yet God promises them healing and new life. They are invited to live in hope and trust in God.

We witness God’s power to bring life out of death in Jesus’ resurrection. Jesus died and was sealed in a tomb. All evidence was that he was dead and that was the end. But that was not the end! God raised Jesus from the dead, another sign for us that God is the one who gives life, especially to the *all* dead. We experience new life when God puts us on a new path and we are able to start over in God’s grace. We wait in hope during times of suffering and grief, trusting that God will one day make all things new. God has the power to restore life; you have been united with Christ in his resurrection.

## **May 30**

### **Prayer of the Day**

Almighty Creator and ever-living God: we worship your glory, eternal Three-in-One, and we praise your power, majestic One-in-Three. Keep us steadfast in this faith, defend us in all adversity, and bring us at last into your presence, where you live in endless joy and love, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

**Amen.**

### **Romans 8:12-17**

*In describing the new life of faith, Paul refers to all three persons of the Trinity: the Spirit leads us to recognize that we are children of God the Father and joint heirs with Christ the Son.*

<sup>12</sup>Siblings, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh—<sup>13</sup>for if you live according to the flesh, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live. <sup>14</sup>For all who are led by the Spirit of God are children of God. <sup>15</sup>For you did not receive a spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received a spirit of adoption. When we cry, “Abba! Father!” <sup>16</sup>it is that very Spirit bearing witness with our spirit that we are children of God, <sup>17</sup>and if children, then heirs, heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ—if, in fact, we suffer with him so that we may also be glorified with him.

### **Reflection**

Paul uses the language of adoption to signify that we are chosen and brought into a new forever family. God has found us and claimed us as God’s own. The relationship Paul describes is one in which we feel completely secure. There is no fear that God will abandon us. There’s no need to be careful in our speech or actions, as if something we could say or do would make God reconsider God’s choice. No, God has claimed us and brought us into God’s family to be a part of this new community forever. In God’s family, there is no reason to fear. We inherit life, just as Jesus received life from the Father. Our inclusion into God’s family changes the way we live today. We don’t have to be afraid of rejection from other people, or even of death. We know God’s hold on us is stronger than any rejection we face now. We know that God’s love is stronger than death. We’re not driven by fear of those things, so we’re freed to live with courage. We can love those who may not love us in return because we have complete love from God. We can work for peace and well-being in our community, trusting that even if we don’t see it accomplished, God will one day finish the work. Rest and rejoice, you are God’s children.