

52 GREAT PRAYERS

One might ask, “What is a *great* prayer.” It is my perspective that a pray offered with a sincere and believing heart is “great.” It is not about refined, lofty words or perfect grammar. Prayer is part of the relationship God establishes with us. It is a conversation, where we lift up to God our praise, our thanks, our intercessions, our confessions and anything that weighs on us. In this conversation we also listen...we listen for God’s word for us in our lives and in the life of the world. We pray because we have been invited by God to do so.

In 1535, Martin Luther’s barber and friend, Peter Beskendorf, asked him some questions about prayer. Luther responded with a letter – *How One Should Pray, for Master Peter the Barber*. Luther began, “I will tell you as best I can what I do personally when I pray. May our dear Lord grant to you and to everybody to do it better than I! Amen” Later in the letter Luther states, “It is of such continual prayer that Christ says in Luke 11, ‘Pray without ceasing,’ because one must unceasingly guard against sin and wrongdoing, something one cannot do unless one fears God and keeps his commandment in mind, as Psalm 1 says, ‘Blessed is he who meditates upon his law day and night.’” For Luther prayer was a continuing faith activity in life.

During the 2012-2013 Program and Ministry year at Immanuel, we will focus on prayer. These past twelve months *Singing the Songs of Faith: 52 Great Hymn Stanzas* was offered for our meditation and reflection. The year before we were memorizing Scripture verses with *52 Great Bible Verses*. I encourage you to memorize the prayer designated for each week. Take it into your mind and heart. Lift it up to God. Let it ‘perk’ within you and move you to a deeper faith and trust in the one who loves us and gave his son for us. See where it takes you. And, listen for God.

During the weeks of Lent, you will see 'The Lord's Prayer with Luther's explanations. In the coming Lenten season, it will be a special emphasis in our worship life as well as in other ways.

I want to express a special thanks to my brothers and sisters in Christ (both clergy and lay) who contributed to this effort. The prayers they lift up for us and the thoughts they share are diverse and amazing statements of faith – food for our prayer life, nourishment for our faith journey. You may notice there are some duplicate prayers. I hope you find the differing thoughts and perspectives enlightening.

Paul E. Shoop
August 2012

September 9, 2012

PRAYER OF THE WEEK: Hey God, just checking-in. It's been a while and life's been hectic. No excuses, but I really haven't needed anything. I'll let you know when I do.

Oops, my grandson just came in after Sunday Church School and wants to talk. He says his teacher shared that Jesus is with us all the time and that an abundant life is not based on what we "Want", but on what we "Need". And, she says what we need is "Jesus' Easter Hope" in order to make it through each day on earth when we don't always get what we want. Wow! I never thought of it that way.

Thanks [God] for sending my grandson today because I was all wrong and selfish. But out-of-the-mouths-of-babes comes the truth. How wonderful and exciting. Amen

In John 10:10b Jesus says: "...I came that you might have life and have it more abundantly." How good it is to know that there is much more than this present moment and that Jesus makes a difference in our daily lives even when we don't realize it at the time. How special is that? Thanks be to God!

The Rev. James L. Dugan
Retired
Webster, NY

September 16, 2012

PRAYER OF THE WEEK: *Amen Amen*

When I was a child I was told “*Amen*” is the way we end our prayers. “In church that’s when you know the Pastor is done praying. The Pastor says, ‘*Amen*’” So...in worship when we prayed, I always waited expectantly for the “*Amen*” As I grew older, I playfully tried to guess when the ‘*Amen*’ would come. Sometimes I even got it right. Other times I was disappointed as the prayers went on and on – and, I was waiting for the *Amen*!

In Confirmation Class, Luther’s explanation to the conclusion of the Lord’s Prayer gave me a new perspective. *Amen What does this mean? That I should be certain that these petitions are acceptable to our Father in heaven and heard; for He Himself has commanded us so to pray, and has promised that He will hear us. Amen, Amen; that is, Yea, yea, it shall be so.*

For theological reasons, I do not place a ‘period’ after an “*Amen*” I make a statement in doing this – that our prayers go on and on. And, an aspect of prayer is we wait expectantly and listen for God. It is something that never ends.

The Rev. Dr. Paul E. Shoop
Immanuel Evangelical Lutheran Church
Webster, NY

September 23, 2012

PRAYER OF THE WEEK: “Taking the 5 loaves and 2 fish, [Jesus] looked up to heaven, and blessed and broke the loaves...”

As Jesus is about to feed a massive crowd, Luke 9:16 tells us Jesus blesses the food. I like this prayer for a number of reasons; but chiefly because it anticipates one of the phrases of the prayer Jesus will teach the disciples later in this Gospel. We call it the Lord’s Prayer. The specific phrase is, “Give us this day our daily bread.” As Luke tells the story the crowds followed Jesus to a deserted place. As evening descends, the disciples approach Jesus with a very practical concern: it’s time to send these hungry people to the nearby villages to get food. Jesus will supplement the spiritual food he’s already fed them in his teaching with food for the body. When Jesus suggests the disciples feed the crowd, they balk because they only have 5 loaves, 2 fish. But there is a surprise after Jesus prays and the disciples distribute the food. All are fed; there are astonishing leftovers. Jesus’ providential care gives us reason to pray repeatedly for our daily food. Even if our refrigerators and pantries are well stocked; we pray that we appreciate each day’s sustenance. We remember that for much of the world’s population nutrition is still a day-to-day life-and-death struggle. My wife and I saw that in Madagascar where adults and children rise before dawn to begin the daily tasks necessary to ensure a meal later that day (from pounding just-harvested rice, going to the village well, gathering fuel to heat water, etc.). In Madagascar even villages can be “deserted places” where food is in very short supply and where believers give deep thanks for the daily bread they eat each day (which is often rice). Jesus’ grace over the bread and fish in a deserted place reminds me that we need to be thankful for every meal and that Jesus still seeks to use disciples like you and me to both provide and help distribute food to those who are hungry today. Thankful believers support local food pantries and the ELCA World Hunger Appeal confident that Jesus still receives, lifts to God and blesses the provisions and monetary gifts we offer, and multiplies it so multitudes are kept alive today. May it be so; Amen

The Rev. Charles “Rusty” May
Messiah Lutheran Church
North Fort Meyers, FL

September 30, 2013

PRAYER OF THE WEEK:

Lord, make me an instrument of Your peace.

Where there is hatred, let me sow love;

Where there is injury, pardon;

Where there is doubt, faith;

Where there is despair, hope;

Where there is darkness, light; and

Where there is sadness, joy.

**O Divine Master, grant that I may not so much
seek to be consoled, as to console;**

To be understood, as to understand;

To be loved, as to love.

For it is in giving that we receive –

It is in pardoning that we are pardoned;

And it is in dying that we are born to eternal life.

This prayer is attributed to St. Francis of Assisi.

Born in 1182 to the family of a wealthy merchant, Francis gave up his inheritance to serve poor people. He formed the Order of Friars Minor (called Franciscans), who took on poverty and the task of preaching “using words if necessary.” Francis had a spirit of gratitude for all of God’s creation (*sundaysandseasons.com*). He died in 1226 at the age of 44.

Francis of Assisi, renewer of the church, is observed on October 4.

The Rev. Dr. Paul E. Shoop
Immanuel Evangelical Lutheran Church
Webster, NY

October 7, 2012

PRAYER OF THE WEEK: Holy One, I've tried to go it alone a handful of times so far. My thoughts were mostly about my meting my own needs. I was the proper center of my attention. It wasn't because I was too busy. No, my own smarts were enough to navigate this world. I didn't pray, nor attend worship. Instead of looking for grace in the world, I was counting the slights, observing the boundaries and meeting the expectations. I felt flat, and two-dimensional, like a machine, soulless. I didn't want your mercy, your mystery, your higher calling. As if my plan would be better than yours.

Is there anywhere you are not, Living God? I'm like Jonah. I can pretend to turn down your voice, but not for long. I'm just hiding behind career and intellect. There is nowhere your love is not.

Like a child who gets lost in his adventure, it's time to come home. To you. Once again.

In you I have my ground, my life, my eyes, my shelter. Rescue me, hold me, shape me, send me. We can't find our true selves without finding you. Take me back.

Prayer is an exercise in which it's all about honesty. Honesty about what hurts what is not authentic, what is missing. Only through absolute honesty can we grow in spiritual maturity. As Jesus said, "*The truth will set you free.*"
John 8:32

The Rev. Arden Strasser
E.L.C.A. Missionary
Zambia

October 14, 2012

PRAYER OF THE WEEK: Guide us waking, O Lord, and guard us sleeping; that awake we may watch with Christ, and asleep we may rest in peace. – *Book of Common Prayer*, Service of Compline

While attending college in Seattle, I was introduced to the peaceful ritual of Compline at St. Mark's Episcopal Cathedral. In the order of daily offices, the service of Compline is observed just before bedtime. Traditionally, this prayer is sung and is the final prayer of the day. This prayer brings with it the images of Sabbath – that is, the cycle of work and rest we require and that is modeled for us by God in the story of Creation. One or two Sundays a month I would attend this service, sung entirely a cappella by a monastic choir, preparing my heart and mind for the week ahead. Offering both focus and reassurance, I find this prayer leaves me feeling comforted at the end of hectic days and ready to seek God in preparation for the coming day.

The Rev. Stephanie Johnson
Holy Cross Lutheran Church
Herndon, VA

October 21, 2012

PRAYER OF THE WEEK:

**O Lord, support us all the day long,
until the shadows lengthen,
and the evening comes,
and the busy world is hushed,
and the fever of life is over,
and our work is done.
Then in your mercy,
grant us a safe lodging and a holy rest,
and peace at the last.
Amen** Cardinal Neuman

When my mother died quite suddenly in 2006, we met shortly thereafter with the funeral director to plan the arrangements. Some of the pieces of the puzzle were in already place, others not. One of those not in place was the selection of the prayer card and what was to be written on them. My father chose the Twenty-Third Psalm for the back of the card and in reading through options, I came across this great prayer I had forgotten by Cardinal Neuman. It spoke to me immediately and seemed most appropriate at that time and in that place. God had been a constant presence in my mom's life all along the way and in the end offered her a safe lodging and holy rest and peace at the last as she inherited the promises made at her baptism some 82 years prior. The prayer has been a favorite of mine since as it speaks to our continued journeys in this life until that day when we inherit eternal life. It also graces the front of the prayer cards from my dad's funeral a little over a year later and as it sits on my desk reminds me of the hope that is ours as well as the love that filled my life from both of them.

The Rev. John Macholz
Atonement Lutheran Church
Brighton, NY
Dean, Genesee-Finger Lakes Conference

October 28, 2012

PRAYER OF THE WEEK: We give thanks to you, heavenly Father, through Jesus Christ your dear Son, that you have this day so graciously protected us. We beg you to forgive us all our sins and the wrong which we have done. By your great mercy defend us from all the perils and dangers of this night. Into your hands we commend our bodies and souls and all that is ours. Let your holy angels have charge over us, that the wicked one have no power over us. *Luther's Evening Prayer – LBW p. 166*

Luther's prayers are among the most poignant and powerful for me. I didn't really discover this one until I was a parish pastor. My habit had been to begin my day with prayer. I learned that rhythm from my mother and so developed a habit of morning devotional reading and journaling early in my ministry. But I felt called to extend my prayer life more fully into the whole of my day. Nighttime was the hardest for me. I sought some way to close out the day, but I usually found myself too tired or distracted to pray in the evening.

Pastors from the Southwestern Conference were invited to join with some pastors from Western Pennsylvania on a retreat. Someone suggested this prayer. I set about memorizing it, one sentence at a time, and now, some 30 years later, when my head hits my pillow – the words come every night, almost without thinking, "*We give thanks to you, heavenly Father...*" In times of distress, when I wake in the middle of the night, or if something is on my mind, these words refocus my mind and heart on God's grace and invite me to rest.

The Rev. Marie Jerge
Bishop of the Upstate New York Synod
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

November 4, 2012

PRAYER OF THE WEEK: O God, to all who have hunger, give bread. To all who have bread, give the hunger for justice. Amen (*Latin American Bread Prayer*)

I had the opportunity to participate in a *Bread for the World* event that culminated with lobbying on Capitol Hill on behalf of the poor and hungry citizens of this country. While it was something I never would have imagined doing, I found it to be an incredibly empowering experience. Here I was, filled with the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, using the gift of my voice to care for “the least of these.” I subsequently wrote my Master’s thesis on hunger advocacy not as an option, but an essential ministry of the church. As I explored biblical texts and various theological resources regarding hunger and advocacy, this prayer echoed in my head, to the point where it actually became my thesis title: “Hungering for Justice: The Call to Conversion to Hunger Advocacy.” May those of us who have so much always pray for the desire to serve the poor!

The Rev. Johanna Johnson
St. Martin Lutheran Church
Bethlehem Lutheran Church
Webster, NY

November 11, 2012

PRAYER OF THE WEEK: We offer with joy and thanksgiving what you have first given us, our selves, our time and our possessions, signs of your gracious love. (Lutheran Book of Worship offering prayer)

I'm a stewardship guy! That is not something you hear often in our world today! My faith and experience tells me that I have confidence that God will do what God has promised to do. God has given us everything we need and so with joy and thanksgiving we can be boldly share out of God's abundance entrusted to us. We can do marvelous things together because of what God has done.

When our children were growing up we made a point of helping them to differentiate between needs and wants, even as we try to do ourselves.. All that we need God has provided. All that we may want is a different matter. There is no such state as "having enough," because there is always something else out there to want that might make me happier still (for a price).

This prayer, reminds us that God is the source of what we have. And if we believe that, truly believe it, our stewardship challenge is not what we should give back to God, but rather what should we keep for ourselves. God wants us to be generous in both ways!

J. Lawrence House, AIM
Senior Philanthropic Adviser
Office of Philanthropy
The Lutheran Theological Seminary at Philadelphia

November 18, 2012

PRAYER OF THE WEEK:

**Bless us O Lord
And these thy gifts
Which we are about to receive from thy bounty
Through Christ our Lord, Amen**

Grace before a meal; it was a common part of life for many of us growing up. However in today's busy world—where we often don't share meals as a family, and sometimes don't even sit down to eat—grace has frequently become a memory of past times rather than a daily practice. Take a moment for grace at mealtime, whether gathered as a family or by yourself. A quiet moment thanking God for our bounty before we eat is an excellent habit to remind us of the source of that bounty. In all things, give thanks to God!

Kathy Bannon
Immanuel Evangelical Lutheran Church
Webster, NY

November 25, 2012

PRAYER OF THE WEEK: O God, you have called your servants to ventures of which we cannot see the ending, by paths as yet untrodden, through perils unknown. Give us faith to go out with good courage, not knowing where we go, but only that your hand is leading us and your love supporting us; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen

This prayer has taken on great meaning for me at various points in life. When facing graduation, ordination, marriage, childbirth, new calls to ministry; the prayer spoke to me of God's guiding and loving hand in the midst of life's newness and challenge. Today, my wife, Jane and I face a daughter getting married and graduating with a PhD. with no assurance of a teaching position. We face the challenge of ministry in an increasingly secular culture. We face the prospect of aging ourselves and the loss of loved ones who have died and gone to be with God. We see an economy which may make it a challenge to retire securely. These are our "ventures of which we cannot see the ending" and we are traveling "paths as yet untrodden". But the good news is that we move forward into the future trusting the faithfulness of God who has walked with us in the past; continues to accompany us today and will not abandon us in the future. To me this prayer echoes my favorite passage of scripture from Romans chapter 8, "that nothing in all creation can separate us from the love of God in Jesus Christ our Lord." My hope would be that this prayer may speak to the faith longing of your heart.

The Rev. Ric Elliott
The Lutheran Church of the Holy Spirit
Emmaus, PA

December 2, 2012

PRAYER OF THE WEEK: Merciful God, we do not presume to come to your table trusting in our own righteousness, but in your abundant mercy. Grant us, therefore, gracious Lord, so to eat and drink the body and blood of your dear Son, Jesus Christ, that we may live in him and he in us, now and forever. Amen

This is the Prayer of Preparation from *Holy Communion in Special Circumstances (Evangelical Lutheran Worship)*. As we begin a new church year and the season of Advent, it is appropriate to reflect upon and realize the source of our trust is God's "abundant mercy." As we receive the bread and wine, the body and blood of Christ, we are strengthened to serve God and God's people not on our merit but depending solely upon God's grace.

The Rev. Dr. Paul E. Shoop
Immanuel Evangelical Lutheran Church
Webster, NY

December 9, 2012

PRAYER OF THE WEEK: God of compassion, whose Son became poor for our sake: Help us to see the face of Christ in those who are poor, and in serving them to serve you. Give us generous hearts so that those living in poverty may have adequate food, clothing, and shelter. By your Spirit move us to affirm the dignity of all people and to work for just laws that protect the most vulnerable in society, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen (ELW)

On December 6 the Christian Church marks a day for Nicholas, Bishop of Myra (in present-day Turkey). Bishop Nicolas was known for his care of and giving to the poor. Anonymous gift giving is associated with him. Nicholas is the person upon whom the legend of Santa Claus developed. As excitement (or exasperation) builds as we move through Advent and on to Christmas, take the time in prayer and in actions to remember the poor and those whose lives are lacking in some way. May our prayers become actions!

The Rev. Dr. Paul E. Shoop
Immanuel Evangelical Lutheran Church
Webster, NY

December 16, 2012

PRAYER OF THE WEEK: Father in heaven, hear my prayer: Keep me in thy loving care. Be my guide in all I do, Bless all those who love me, too. Amen

This is the prayer we taught our children to say at bedtime. I do not remember where we got it, from what book, poster, cross-stitch sampler or what. Variations of it can be found everywhere. We liked it because “Now I lay me down to sleep” from our youth seemed so scary when we really thought about it.

Wherever we found it, and whoever actually wrote it may remain a mystery, but the feelings this prayer evokes is no mystery. It brings me back to my children as they were – young, eager, earnest. I can smell the faint scent of soap from their baths, the soft feel of the stuffed animals and blankets necessary for slumber. In the darkness, I could feel how innocent and vulnerable they were, but the prayer reminded me that I was not alone in watching over them and teaching them right from wrong. They had a Father in heaven, too.

I miss those nights but I find myself still repeating this prayer at night. I now realize it is not just a prayer for children. In its simplicity, it says so much. I fall asleep comforted.

Carlos Pena
Vice-President
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

December 23, 2012

PRAYER OF THE WEEK: Make us worthy, Lord, to serve our fellow men throughout the world, who live and die in poverty and hunger. Give them today, through our hands, their daily bread and through our understanding love, give peace and joy. Amen

This prayer is attributed to Mother Teresa (1910-1997). It is at the beginning of an address she made in 1985 as the United Nations observed its 40th anniversary. She began, *"We have gathered together to thank God for the 40 years of the beautiful work that the United Nations have put in for the good of the people, and as we begin the year of peace, let us say the prayer, you have all got one, we say the prayer together for peace. For works of love are works of peace. We say it together so that we may obtain peace and God can give us peace, by uniting us together."*

She concluded, *"I have picked up from the streets hungry people, and by giving them food to eat, by giving them a bed to sleep, I have removed the suffering, but for the lonely, the shut-ins, the unwanted, it's not so easy. And so there you and I must come forward, and share the joy of loving, but we cannot give what we don't have. That's why we need to pray. And prayer will give us a clean heart, and a clean heart will allow us to see God in each other. And if we see God in each other, we will be able to live in peace and if we live in peace, we will be able to share the joy of loving with each other and God will be with us."*

I do not know of a better prayer to be said or lived during this week or throughout the year.

The Rev. Dr. Paul E. Shoop
Immanuel Evangelical Lutheran Church
Webster, NY

December 30, 2012

PRAYER OF THE WEEK: Now I lay me down to sleep, I pray the Lord my soul to keep. If I should die before I wake, I pray the Lord my soul to take. Amen

This was the first prayer I remember saying – even before table grace – and I prayed it with my mother every night before I went to sleep. It was her bedtime prayer when she was young and my children also prayed it before they fell asleep. It is not a profound prayer but there is still something comforting in knowing that I am in God's care waking or sleeping.

Marguerite Manning
Immanuel Evangelical Lutheran Church
Webster, NY

January 6, 2013

PRAYER OF THE WEEK:

**Creator of the stars of night,
Who shaped the worlds in love
And sweetly sang to us the great alleluia,
Accept now our hearty and faltering hymns of wonder
And join us to the morning stars
And all the galaxy of saints,
Through Jesus Christ, the risen Morningstar.
Amen**

Susan Palo Cherwien is one of my favorite poets. In this prayer she brings our faith back to our Creator who formed us in nothing but the greatest love. In this vein, our Lord deserves nothing but the finest praises, but Cherwien recognizes that we cannot fully understand God's glory. However we still need to offer our finest praises. God knows our limits as humans but still loves us like His own children. In addition to our **"hearty and faltering hymns of wonder"** we can also offer our Lord our "hearty and faltering" prayers of thanksgiving. Do not forget the blessings your Lord has given you and thank your Lord in the best way you know how.

Jeremy Shoop
Director of Music
Holy Cross Lutheran Church
Herndon, VA

January 13, 2013

PRAYER OF THE WEEK:

**Watch, O Lord, with those who wake,
or watch, or weep tonight,
and give your angels charge over
those who sleep.**

Tend your sick ones, O Lord Christ.

Rest your weary ones.

Bless your dying ones.

Soothe your suffering ones.

Pity your afflicted ones.

Shield your joyous ones.

And for all your love's sake. Amen

Evening prayer, St. Augustine (354-430)

I had the great pleasure of knowing Pastor Paul Klett, during the time he was an assisting pastor at Immanuel. He led a Bible Study, though I don't remember which book we covered. His ability to relate his journeys as a military chaplain gave a worldly feel to the readings of the Bible. I have always felt more connected to the world, along with the needs and blessings of the world, after being a part of his Bible Study.

He ended the Bible Study with the same prayer each time. As I left Bible Study I always had a warm and protected feeling. I loved the prayer he used but did not have the exact wording until I went looking for the prayer to include here. He always used the evening prayer by St. Augustine. I am very happy to have the opportunity to share it with you here along with the memories of time spent with Pastor Paul Klett.

Edward Huehn, Deacon
Immanuel Evangelical Lutheran Church
Webster, NY

January 20, 2013

PRAYER OF THE WEEK: I thank you, my heavenly Father, through Jesus Christ, your dear Son, that you have kept me this night from all harm and danger; and I pray that you would keep me this day also from sin and every evil, that all my doings and life may please you. For into your hands I commend myself, my body and soul and all things. Let your holy angel be with me, that the evil foe may have no power over me. Amen

The prayer that has had a lot of significance for me the past few years is the morning prayer from Martin Luther's *Small Catechism*. It was the text that was used for a morning song at the Lutheran Summer Music Academy where I interned for two years. Every day, for the duration of the month-long academy, the entire student body would gather for morning worship and sing this text as it was intended (for young persons) when it was first published in 1529. Our own Senior Choir at Immanuel has also sung this prayer as a part of our own morning worship.

Russell Draeger
Organist/Director of Music
Immanuel Evangelical Lutheran Church
Webster, NY

January 27, 2013

PRAYER OF THE WEEK: O God, you have called your servants to ventures of which we cannot see the ending, by paths as yet untrodden, through perils unknown. Give us faith to go out with good courage, not knowing where we go, but only that your hand is leading us and your love supporting us; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen (*ELW*, p. 317)

One of the reasons I chose this prayer is that it brings back memories because it was always prayed by my father-in-law when he served as bishop. It came to be a prayer that I used in times of transition in my ministry and life. For me, it reflects the transitory nature of life, the steadfastness of faith and the enduring promise of God's grace in the resurrected Christ. We can embrace life's complexities and uncertainties with a living, daring confidence in God's grace because Christ has gone ahead of us into the world. Jesus meets us in the most unexpected places and leaves us with the power of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is at work in our lives and through the life and ministry of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

The Rev. Mark S. Hanson
Presiding Bishop
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

February 3, 2013

PRAYER OF THE WEEK: Dear Lord, thank you for all of your blessings. For blessing my family and loved ones with good health. Thank you for protecting us, keeping us safe, and guiding us. Please continue to bless us. Please forgive us our sins, etc. Please bless all of your living creatures, especially those who are going through hard times. Please bless us with world peace. Amen

Here is one of the prayers that I enjoy saying daily. It is a meaningful prayer for me. God Bless You.

Gary Cannon
Immanuel Evangelical Lutheran Church
Webster, NY

February 10, 2013

PRAYER OF THE WEEK: *Remember, merciful Jesus, that I am the cause of your journey.* – from the text of the Latin hymn *Dies Irae*

This haunting phrase from the Latin Requiem Mass appears in the midst of the terribly harsh hymn *Dies Irae*—“Day of Wrath.” It is a plea for mercy as one stands before Christ, the Judge. It has been set to music by many of the greatest composers—sometimes with great drama, sometimes with gentle gratitude. Of course we don’t need to remind Jesus of anything; but as is often the case in our praying, our words serve to help *us* to remember and know the love and mercy of God. It is in that way like the wonderful hymn of Johann Heermann: “For me, kind Jesus, was thine incarnation, thy mortal sorrow, and thy life’s oblation.” (*LBW* #123) When I pray this simple prayer, I am affirming what the *Small Catechism* says: “All this he has done so that I may be his own!” His birth, his life, his death, his resurrection—all for me! What wondrous love!

The Rev. Richard O. Johnson
Peace Lutheran Church
Grass Valley, CA

Ash Wednesday, February 13, 2013

PRAYER OF THE WEEK: **Our Father in heaven. Hallowed be your name**

What does this mean? Here God encourages us to believe that he is truly our Father and we are his children. We therefore are to pray to him with complete confidence just as children speak to their loving father.

Martin Luther's **Small Catechism**, *The Introduction*

What does this mean? God's name certainly is holy in itself, but we ask in this prayer that we may keep it holy.

When does this happen? God's name is hallowed whenever his word is taught in its truth and purity and we as children of God live in harmony with it. Help us to do this heavenly Father! But anyone who teaches or lives contrary to the Word of God dishonors God's name among us. Keep us from doing this, heavenly Father.

Martin Luther's **Small Catechism**, *The First Petition*

February 17, 2013

PRAYER OF THE WEEK: **Your kingdom come**

What does this mean? God's kingdom comes indeed without our praying for it, but we ask in this prayer that it may come also to us.

When does this happen? God's kingdom comes when our heavenly Father gives us his Holy Spirit, so that by his grace we believe his holy Word and live a godly life on earth now and in heaven forever.

Martin Luther's **Small Catechism**, *The Second Petition*

February 24, 2013

PRAYER OF THE WEEK: **Your will be done, on earth as in heaven.**

What does this mean? The good and gracious will of God is surely done without our prayer, but we ask in this prayer that it may be done also among us.

When does this happen? God's will is done when he hinders and defeats every evil scheme and purpose of the devil, the world, and our sinful self, which would prevent us from keeping his name holy and would oppose the coming of his kingdom. And, his will is done when he strengthens our faith and keeps us firm in his Word as long as we live. This is his gracious and good will.

Martin Luther's **Small Catechism**, *The Third Petition*

March 3, 2013

PRAYER OF THE WEEK: **Give us today our daily bread.**

What does this mean? God gives daily bread, even without our prayer, to all people, though sinful, but we ask in this prayer that he will help us to realize this and to receive our daily bread with thanks.

What is meant by "daily bread"? 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.

Martin Luther's **Small Catechism**, *The Fourth Petition*

March 10, 2013

PRAYER OF THE WEEK: **Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us.**

What does this mean? We ask in this prayer that our Father in heaven would not hold our sins against us and because of them refuse to hear our prayer. And we pray that he would give us everything by grace, for we sin everyday and deserve nothing but punishment. So we on our part will heartily forgive and gladly do good to those who sin against us.

Martin Luther's **Small Catechism**, *The Fifth Petition*

March 17, 2013

PRAYER OF THE WEEK: **Save us from the time of trial.**

What does this mean? God tempts no one to sin, but we ask in this prayer that God would watch over us and keep us so that the devil, the world, and our sinful self may not deceive us and draw us into false belief despair, and other great and shameful sins. And we pray that even though we are so tempted we may still win the final victory.

Martin Luther's **Small Catechism**, *The Sixth Petition*

March 24, 2013

PRAYER OF THE WEEK: **And deliver us from evil.**

What does this mean? We ask in this inclusive prayer that our heavenly Father would save us from every evil to body and soul and at our last hour would mercifully take us from the troubles of this world to himself in heaven.

Martin Luther's **Small Catechism**, *The Seventh Petition*

March 31, 2013

PRAYER OF THE WEEK: Lord, God, you have called your servants to ventures of which we cannot see the ending, by paths as yet untrodden, through perils unknown. Give us faith to go out with good courage, not knowing where we go, but only that your hand is leading us and your love supporting us; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen

This prayer from the Vesper service has been one of my favorites, a calm and deep comfort in times of not seeing clearly, of not knowing. It has served in personal devotions, in public worship, in hospital rooms, and with people and families at the time of death. It speaks to me of God's gentle, yet firm presence in all circumstances, places, and times, especially the times of foggy discerning, of which I have had many.

When asked to share in this prayer venture, I allowed myself to wonder and search for the prayer's history. I was surprised by how relatively new the prayer is. The prayer does not appear in the Vespers service of the Common Service Book of my birth, nor in the like service of the Service Book and Hymnal of my growing up. In both these services the final collect is the great traditional Prayer for Peace, which goes back to the 5th century, when Rome was being threatened and eventually destroyed by other powers, peoples, nations, armies.

The 'ventures' prayer first appears in our Lutheran worship in the Lutheran Book of Worship Vespers service, as an alternative or companion prayer to the great Peace prayer. It continues in a similar place in Evangelical Lutheran Worship. As I searched books on my shelf, commentaries on liturgies, histories, there was nothing about this 'ventures' prayer. I remained in the dark. Where did it come from? I needed some light. I emailed a friend and colleague, Professor Mark Oldenburg at the Gettysburg Seminary. He knows a thing or two about worship and liturgy. An hour later, I had his reply.

The prayer was written by Eric Milner-White (1884-1963), who was ordained a priest in the Church of England in 1909. He served as a chaplain during World War I, resigning his commission in January 1918 to accept the position as Dean of King's College, Cambridge. Perhaps his most lasting work at King's was the creation of the Service of Nine (Christmas) Lessons and

March 31, 2013 (*con't*)

Carols, which was eventually first broadcast by the BBC in 1928. This service is still annually broadcast around the world on Christmas Eve from King's College. In 1941, Milner-White was appointed Dean of York, a position he held until his death

I could not date the venture prayer exactly, but sources suggest it was early in his time as Dean of King's College. That makes some sense, as he was coming out of the terrible war and being appointed to his new post at King's College.

“Ventures of which we cannot see the ending”, indeed! According to word origins, to venture is to “risk the loss of (something)”. What do we risk losing as we respond to God's call?

Vespers (from the Latin *vespera* – ‘evening’) is a contemplative service to recount the mercies of the day, give thanks with a grateful heart, and to ask divine protection for the coming night. A large candle is usually lighted and brought into the service as the opening dialogue is sung: “Jesus Christ is the Light of the World; the light no darkness can overcome.”

Such Light in a darkening part of the day is functional, practical – and symbolic. The prayer sees (and gives thanks for) ‘light’ in the darkness, or at least in times of being able to see less well. Even in such times, the Light is present and cannot be overcome by the darkness.

Does this prayer give you comfort and guidance in times when you are less certain? Does it enable you to relax in times of discerning your next steps and directions? Does it provide you strength to walk the path ahead of you? Does it lead you to consider the path not taken or less trodden?

What path and what attendant perils will you face accompanied by the leading of God's hand and the support of God's love?

The Rev. Rick Bair
Saint Luke Lutheran Church & Lutheran Campus Ministry
Ithaca, NY

April 7, 2013

PRAYER OF THE WEEK:

Be still and know that I am God.
Be still and know that I am.
Be still and know that I...
Be still and know.
Be still and...
Be still.
Be.
Be.
Be still.
Be still and...
Be still and know.
Be still and know that I...
Be still and know that I am.
Be still and know that I am God.

This meditative prayer (based on Psalm 46:10) was taught at an Administrative Associates workshop at Atonement Lutheran Church. Cindy Hager from the Buffalo Synod office organized the event for all Administrative Associates in the Genesee Finger Lakes Conference. We were told to focus on the words and clear our minds. I admit I have a very hard time clearing my mind and did not think I would be able to do it even for a short prayer. Imagine my surprise when not only was I able to clear my mind but I also felt a great peace settle over me! I continue to use this prayer frequently. What I love most is God places the words in front of me when I am not expecting it – His reminder to me that I need to pray and know that He is God.

Barb Rafferty
Administrative Associate
Immanuel Evangelical Lutheran Church
Webster, NY

April 14, 2013

PRAYER OF THE WEEK: **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** *Book of Common Prayer, Service of Compline*

What I find most comforting in this prayer is how near and present Christ is to us in it. We ask not only that God would protect and care for those who are in need, but we ask that God would be beside them.

This is not a prayer to an absent God, but to an active and attentive God. Praying this prayer we, the pray-ers, are also changed and reminded of God's nearness to us. We sleep peacefully, comforted by a God who does not only watch us, but watches over us; and does not only care for us, but cares with us. Amen

The Rev. Stephanie Johnson
Holy Cross Lutheran Church
Herndon, VA

April 21, 2013

PRAYER OF THE WEEK: Here I am, Lord! I thank you and praise you, for all your wonderful blessings! I will delight in everything you have given me. I put my trust in you. You are always at my side, and today I will have everything I need. Forgive me for the times I have disappointed you. Guide me and teach me. Fill me with your power, so that in everything I do I will be a delight to you! AMEN!!!

This prayer is from the 2012 Confirmation Project of one of Immanuel's youth. Sarah's project was to develop a worship service that was "upbeat" and reflective of her faith journey. The hymns were very contemporary. The prayers and scriptures spoke of depending on God and doing God's will in life.

Sarah Killip
Immanuel Evangelical Lutheran Church
Webster, NY

April 28, 2013

PRAYER OF THE WEEK: I lift up my eyes to the hills— from where will my help come? My help comes from the Lord, who made heaven and earth. He will not let your foot be moved; he who keeps you will not slumber. Psalm 121:1-3

The psalmist in these words seeks wisdom from on high in asking from where will help he/she needs on the journey come. But just as quickly as the words are uttered a proclamation of assurance resonates because God, who created both the earth and heaven, is in control. Indeed your desired safety for this hour is yours as the Most High will not rest in care of you.

So where do you need the guidance and protection of the Lord? In what situations do we lose focus the Savior of the world being present with us? Truly the Lord keeps watch over you and me.

The Rev. Michael Ware
Webster Baptist Church
Webster, NY

May 5, 2013

PRAYER OF THE WEEK:

**Another day has passed away
Never to return**

**Another night of God's peace
Descends upon the earth**

**But you remain just what you were
O Lord so full of grace**

**And our nights, and our days
You determine through your plan**

**Into your care I entrust my soul
As the light from us departs**

**But joyously I will praise you
When the day does dawn anew**

Amen

This prayer is from the Swedish movie "A Song for Martin"

Jon Anderson
Immanuel Evangelical Lutheran Church
Webster, NY

May 12, 2013

PRAYER OF THE WEEK: **Immediately the father of the child cried out, “I believe; help my unbelief!”** (Mark 6:24)

A young boy has a spirit that causes him to seize, convulse. The disciples are unable to cast it out. The father seeks help from Jesus. Then, the prayer above is the father’s response to Jesus’ words “*All things can be done for the one who believes.*”

How many times has this prayer been on my lips! I believe. I have no doubt. But, I do doubt. I am thankful for the times God takes me into his care even when I doubt. It depends solely upon God’s consistent faithfulness especially in the midst of my uncertainty and wondering.

The Rev. Dr. Paul E. Shoop
Immanuel Evangelical Lutheran Church
Webster, NY

May 19, 2013

PRAYER OF THE WEEK: “Lord, teach me to seek you, reveal yourself to me when I seek you. For I cannot seek you unless you first teach me, nor find you unless you first reveal yourself to me. Let me seek you in longing and long for you in seeking. Let me find you in love, and love you in finding.” – St. Ambrose

I love this prayer because it names my utter dependence upon God. All is God’s gift; all is God’s grace – my seeking for God, my longing for God, my loving and finding God, and certainly my trusting God. I also love this prayer because it comes from St. Ambrose whom I spent two years reading and writing about as a doctoral student, and how I have come to love and look to as a pastor, teacher, and, dare I say, patron saint. We Lutherans are wary of saints, lest anyone think we need to pray through them to Christ. We don’t. Yet, there is grace in claiming a saint to inspire and guide our faith, and praying her or his prayers as our own.

The Rev. Craig A. Satterlee, Ph.D.
Professor of Homiletics, Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago
Dean, ACTS Doctor of Ministry in Preaching
Program President, North American Academy of Liturgy

May 26, 2013

PRAYER OF THE WEEK:

**God grant me the serenity
to accept the things I cannot change;
courage to change the things I can;
and wisdom to know the difference.
Living one day at a time;
Enjoying one moment at a time;
Accepting hardships as the pathway to peace;
Taking, as He did, this sinful world
as it is, not as I would have it;
Trusting that He will make all things right
if I surrender to His Will;
That I may be reasonably happy in this life
and supremely happy with Him
Forever in the next.
Amen**

Written by Reinhold Niebuhr (1892-1971), this prayer is commonly called *The Serenity Prayer*. It is used by Alcoholics Anonymous and other twelve-step programs.

The first four lines are the most known and recited. However, reading on gives an even deeper dimension to understand life and trust in God.

Elisabeth Sifton, Niebuhr's daughter, writes in *The Serenity Prayer, Faith and Politics in Times of Peace and War*. "The Serenity Prayer addresses the inconsolable pain, loss and guilt that war inflicts on the communities that wage it; it goes to the heart of the possibilities and impossibilities of collective action for collective betterment – that is to say, to the heart of the possibilities for peace."

The Rev. Dr. Paul E. Shoop
Immanuel Evangelical Lutheran Church
Webster, NY

June 2, 2013

PRAYER OF THE WEEK: Almighty God, draw our hearts to you, guide our minds, fill our imaginations, control our wills, so that we may be wholly yours. Use us as you will, always to your glory and the welfare of your people; through our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Luther's explanation of the 3rd article of the creed makes it clear that we don't choose God; God chooses us – and delights in doing so! This prayer asks God to do what God is eager to do anyway, and energetic at doing constantly. It asks that God be the focus of every fiber of our being. And that single-mindedness is not simplistic and not slavery. We were created to find our rest and our true home in God. We are most truly ourselves when we center ourselves on God.

In part because, if we center ourselves on God, we are drawn into God's mission. We don't simply adore God. To adore God means to work for the welfare of God's people – to put every talent, every resource, every part of our hearts, minds, imaginations and wills into the love God has for the world. To be a willing, valued, fully alive instrument of God – what an honor and what a delight!

The Rev. Mark Oldenburg
Professor
Lutheran Theological Seminary at Gettysburg

June 9, 2013

PRAYER OF THE WEEK:

**Do not fear what may happen tomorrow
The same loving Father who cares for you today
will care for you tomorrow and everyday.
Either He will shield you from suffering
or He will give you unfailing strength to bear it.
Be at peace then and put aside all anxious thoughts and imaginings. – St Francis deSales**

Many years ago a very wise lady in my congregation cross-stitched and framed this prayer for me. I have it sitting on my office desk and it is the first thing I see when I come to work each day. It is so easy to become fearful and anxious over so many things these days. And yet we have a mighty, awesome, ever-present God who encourages us to not be afraid because God is with us behind us, before us, alongside us, and even within us. This prayer is a daily reminder of whose care I am in and how greatly I am loved. My job, as God's child, is to trust and obey God and to allow the fear to subside. And then the "peace of God that passes all understanding will guard my heart and my mind in Christ Jesus."

The Rev. David Gerhardt
Pastor, Trinity Emmanuel Lutheran Church
Gates, NY

June 16, 2013

PRAYER OF THE WEEK: *I thank my God every time I remember you, constantly praying with joy in every one of my prayers for all of you, because of your sharing in the gospel from the first day until now. I am confident of this, that the one who began a good work among you will bring it to completion by the day of Jesus Christ.* Philippians 1:3-6

Philippians 1:3-6 is the opening greeting/prayer in Saint Paul's letter to the Christian congregation at Philippi. This is a congregation Paul established – his first outside of Asia. Paul is thankful for the support given by this congregation for his ministry. One would not know from reading this prayer of gratitude that Paul was in prison at this time. Paul's confidence in Christ reassures him that he is God's care no matter where he is.

For whom do you give God thanks? How do other Christians support you as you fulfill your baptismal calling to serve God and others in this world? What is the prayer of thankfulness you offer?

The Rev. Dr. Paul E. Shoop
Immanuel Evangelical Lutheran Church
Webster, NY

June 23, 2013

PRAYER OF THE WEEK: Almighty God, we acknowledge our dependence upon Thee, and we beg Thy blessings upon us, our parents, our teachers and our country. Amen

This prayer was published in the 1950's in the New York State Board of Regents' "Statement on Moral and Spiritual Training in the Schools." It eventually became known as the Regents' Prayer. The U.S. Supreme Court in 1962 (*Engel v. Vitale*) determined it was unconstitutional for states to compose an official school prayer and encourage its use in public schools.

Prayer for governing officials and those in authority is part of a Christian's prayer life. In 1 Timothy 2:1-3 we read, "*First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for everyone, for kings and all who are in high positions, so that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and dignity. This is right and is acceptable in the sight of God our Savior.*" We regularly pray for those who lead our communities, state and country as well as other leaders throughout the world.

The Rev. Dr. Paul E. Shoop
Immanuel Evangelical Lutheran Church
Webster, NY

June 30, 2013

PRAYER OF THE WEEK: The Jesus Prayer – *Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy upon me.*

Within the liturgies from around the world, this prayer may be prayed three times. Sometimes it can be prayed nine times. In the Liturgy of St. John of Chrysostom, it is prayed forty times.

The Jesus Prayer consists of two sections:

- Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God
- Have mercy upon me.

To pray for mercy is to pray for the loving kindness of God. It is a cry to God that his heart would be open to us in our time of need.

This is a very humble prayer. It does not make great claims upon God. It is a prayer that is satisfied with the smallest token of God's grace.

The Rev. Dr. Ralph W. Dunkin
Bishop of the West Virginia-Western Maryland Synod
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

July 7, 2013

PRAYER OF THE WEEK: [Jesus prayed,] **“...that they may all be one. As you, Father, are in me and I am in you, may they also be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me.”** (John 17:21)

This verse is a portion of what is commonly called Jesus’ High Priestly Prayer. Jesus offered this prayer before his betrayal, trial and crucifixion. As we gather and then go out to serve during this season of Pentecost, let us remember and strive to live the prayer that Jesus prayed – “that they (that is, us!) may all be one.”

The Rev. Dr. Paul E. Shoop
Immanuel Evangelical Lutheran Church
Webster, NY

July 14, 2013

PRAYER OF THE WEEK: Almighty God, you made this holy night shine with the brightness of the true Light. Grant that here on earth we may walk in the light of Jesus' presence and in the last day wake to the rightness of his glory; through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen (ELW, Christmas Eve Prayer of the Day)

Yes, I know it is mid-summer and this prayer is Christmas. But, humor me for a moment. The Candles are lit, held high. The quietness fills the sanctuary as the last verse of *Silent Night* concludes. Then, as I have done in Christmas Eve worship for years, I speak this prayer. It never ceases to amaze me – the feeling of being in the presence of a holy moment. There is in that moment a hope that shines – that we might truly walk each day in the light of Jesus' presence. It is not the gifts we give. It is not the gifts we are given. It is the gift which God gives to us – the birth, the presence, the hope of the one who is the Light of the World. And, this is a year-round gift from God.

The Rev. Dr. Paul E. Shoop
Immanuel Evangelical Lutheran Church
Webster, NY

July 21, 2013

PRAYER OF THE WEEK: **I can do all things through him who strengthens me.** *Philippians 4:13*

In this dynamic verse from St. Paul's letter to the church at Philippi, he expresses tremendous confidence in Christ that Christ has been his mainstay through thick and thin especially now that he is imprisoned.

When I was eight years old my dad passed away leaving my mom a widow with my sister and me to raise. Dad did not have any insurance and mom was thrust into the work place. Shortly after that my grandmother had a leg amputated and she became wheelchair bound. Two years later my granddad passed away and gram moved in with us in our three bedroom flat for a year and then she passed away. Mom lost her whole support base over a five year period. Yet inspite of all this personal turmoil, mom never lost her faith and I would see her praying —she never gave up! God strengthened her.

This verse has always inspired me in my life. It sums up a core belief in my faith. God indeed does provide the strength to wade through life's trying times. This is a powerful, enduring strength, a solid strength, not a fleeting strength that amassing wealth often provides.

Who do you turn to for strength?

Dave Reville, Deacon
Immanuel Evangelical Lutheran Church
Webster, NY

July 28, 2013

PRAYER OF THE WEEK:

**Come with us, O blessed Jesus,
with us evermore to be.
And, in leaving now thine altar,
let us never more leave thee!
Let thy bright celestial chorus
never cease the heav'nly strain;
but in us, thy loving children,
come, bring peace, good will to men.**
(LBW 219)

In one of his sermons, Augustine, bishop of Hippo, said, “He who sings, prays twice.” Many of our hymns are prayers set to music. The text of this hymn by John H. Hopkins, Jr., (1820-1891) appears in the *Lutheran Book of Worship* set to a tune (Jesu, Joy of Man’s Desiring) by Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750).

On July 28, the church observes a commemoration of Bach, Heinrich Schutz and George Frederick Handel. Three musicians who contributed, and still contribute, to the worship life of God’s people. Bach was a prolific writer of sacred and secular works – over 300 cantatas along with works for organ and instrumental pieces. He has been called the “fifth evangelist” for the way he proclaimed the gospel in music. His contributions to Christian worship are numerous.

We pray in this hymn for the close presence of Jesus in our lives and God’s work through us to bring peace in our world. As we pray, let us also give thanks to God for people who help us to sing and pray twice.

The Rev. Dr. Paul E. Shoop
Immanuel Evangelical Lutheran Church
Webster, NY

August 4, 2013

PRAYER OF THE WEEK: Gracious God, you teach us through scripture that we are to pray unceasingly. No matter what we are doing and how busy we are there is always time to nourish ourselves in your word. Help us to hold your message in our daily lives and be in constant prayer with you, our creator and shepherd. Amen

1st Thessalonians 5:17 tells us to “pray unceasingly.” I enjoy the prayer above because it reminds us always to take time for God. Take time for God by reading scripture, and take time for God with prayer. By remembering to do this we will always see the blessings before us provided by God.

Jeremy Shoop
Director of Music
Holy Cross Lutheran Church
Herndon, VA

August 11, 2013

PRAYER OF THE WEEK:

**Dear Lord and Father of mankind,
forgive our feverish ways;
re-clothe us in our rightful mind,
In purer lives thy service find,
In deeper reverence, praise.** (*LBW 506*)

Text: John G. Whittier (1807-1892)

John Whittier was a lifelong Quaker whose faith shaped his life and much of his writing. He was appalled at the frenzied revivalism of his day. He asks God to “Forgive our feverish ways.” He respects quiet qualities of religious devotion – purer lives; deeper reverence; and, “simple trust.” These are qualities Whittier valued in his Quaker faith.

Where do you find these quiet qualities in your prayer life?

The Rev. Dr. Paul E. Shoop
Immanuel Evangelical Lutheran Church
Webster, NY

August 18, 2013

PRAYER OF THE WEEK: Now to him who by the power at work within us is able to accomplish abundantly far more than all we can ask or imagine, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen (Ephesians 3:20-21)

When was the last time you prayed simply to glorify God? When was the last time you prayed without asking God for something for yourself or someone else? Prayers of adoration exalt and praise God for who God is and God's faithfulness to God's promises. Give God the glory in your prayers!

The Rev. Dr. Paul E. Shoop
Immanuel Evangelical Lutheran Church
Webster, NY

August 25, 2013

PRAYER OF THE WEEK: O Lord, support us all the day long of this troubled life, until the shadows lengthen and the evening comes and the busy world is hushed, the fever of life is over, and our work is done. Then, in your mercy, grant us a safe lodging and a hold rest, and peace at the last, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen

This prayer is from the *Evangelical Lutheran Worship* Funeral Service. It is easy enough to miss. When it is said, we are at the grave. The casket is in front of us. Many thoughts flow through our minds. And, if the emotions have not already claimed us, they are welling up within us. But, read the prayer again. It describes life – everyday life. It is our prayer. The rush; the turmoil; the hectic. It also captures where our life is grounded – God’s love in Jesus Christ and the promise of rest in Jesus. For me this is not just a prayer to read at a cemetery. It is also a prayer of comfort and reassurance every day. Read it again!

The Rev. Dr. Paul E. Shoop
Immanuel Evangelical Lutheran Church
Webster, NY

September 1, 2013

PRAYER OF THE WEEK **Grant, O Lord Jesus, that the ears which have heard the voice of your songs may be closed to the voice of dispute; that the eyes which have seen your great love may also behold your blessed hope; that the tongues which have sung your praise may speak the truth in love; that the feet which have walked in your courts may walk in the region of light; and that the bodies which have received your living body may be restored in newness of life. Glory to you for your inexpressible gift; for you live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen** *(ELW)*

This prayer is one of my favorites because it reminds us of our part in relationship with God. While the grace of God comes freely and without stipulations we must do our part to allow God closer to our hearts. We must use our ears to hear God's song, eyes to see God's love, tongues to praise God, feet to walk in God's courts, and bodies to commune with God.

Jeremy Shoop
Director of Music
Holy Cross Lutheran Church
Herndon, VA