

Directions and Explanations for Evening Prayer

Traditionally, daily prayer happens in the context of family worship. If it is practical and possible, consider letting any school-aged children take a turn leading morning prayer. However, there is no shame in praying alone if necessary or preferred. What is bolded is prayed in unison, and non-bolded text is prayed by whoever is leading.

As in the morning, evening prayer begins with an **Opening Sentence** taken from the Psalms.

Next, pray a **psalm**, or part of a psalm if it's very long. Though not the only way, it makes sense to start at the first psalm and work your way through to the last, and start over.

Then comes the hard work of evening prayer, **self-examination**. Before we confess our sins to God, we need to have some idea of what they are. This should be done carefully but not obsessively - do not get anxious about what you might be forgetting or leaving out. Call what sins you can to mind before your loving God. If the prayer is being done in a group, this part should be done silently. After enough time has passed, the leader may begin the unison **Prayer of Confession**. One is written into the order for your convenience, but these prayers are plentiful and not difficult to find. It is also fine to write your own or, if you are praying alone, to pray extemporaneously.

After the time of confession is over, the leader uses the **Assurance of Pardon** to remind the group of the faithfulness of God, using the words printed or something similar.

Next, we say a **Prayer for Illumination**. This is prayed to acknowledge that by our own power we are not smart or wise or righteous enough to hear God's voice in the words of the scripture. So we pray that God would help us to read the scriptures fruitfully, that the Holy Spirit would make us receptive to what God is saying to us *tonight*.

Having prepared ourselves by asking God to help us, we turn to the **Scripture Reading**. When possible, read an entire chapter, but let the reading of God's Word be a blessing, not a burden. You might consider reading from a different testament than what you read for morning prayer in order to be more exposed to the breadth of Scripture.

Finally, **pray** for yourself and others before ending the day by praising God once more in the words of the **Magnificat** (Luke 1:46-45.)

Evening prayer ends with a **Benediction**.

An Order of Evening Prayer For Families and Individuals

Call: By day the Lord commands his steadfast love;

Response: **And at night his song is with me, a prayer to the God of my life.**

(Psalm 42:8)

Unison Psalm

Time for Silent Self-Examination

Prayer of Confession

I, a poor sinner, acknowledge before you, my God and Creator, that I have sinned against you, outwardly, and with inward blindness, unbelief, doubts, despair, impatience, pride, covetousness, envy, hatred, malice, and other sinful affections, as you, my Lord and God, know well, and of which I cannot deeply enough deplore. But I repent of these things and am sorry for them, and ask you for mercy, for the sake of your beloved Son Jesus Christ. Amen.

Assurance of Pardon

The Lord is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in love. He will not always accuse, nor will he harbor his anger forever; he does not treat us as our sins deserve or repay us according to our iniquities. For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his love for those who fear him; as far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us.

Thanks be to God.

Prayer for Illumination

Scripture Reading

Prayer

(In this prayer, it is appropriate to:

- Praise God for his nature, especially those aspects particularly on display in your life or which are being celebrated in the church calendar;
- Praise God for the blessings of the day;
- Pray for your needs and for the needs of others - especially remembering those who asked for your prayers over the course of the day, and those on the church's prayer list;
- Pray for your needs tonight: for good sleep, protection from temptations to sin, nightmares, sickness, etc.)

Magnificat

My soul glorifies the Lord

**and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior,
for he has been mindful
of the humble state of his servant.**

**From now on all generations will call me blessed,
for the Mighty One has done great things for me—
holy is his name.**

**His mercy extends to those who fear him,
from generation to generation.**

**He has performed mighty deeds with his arm;
he has scattered those who are proud in their inmost thoughts.**

**He has brought down rulers from their thrones
but has lifted up the humble.**

**He has filled the hungry with good things
but has sent the rich away empty.**

**He has helped his servant Israel,
in remembrance of his mercy,
as he spoke to our ancestors,
to Abraham and to his offspring forever.**

Benediction