



GOD WITH US

*"...And they will call him Immanuel"
(which means 'God with us')."*

—Matthew 1:23

Introduction to the 40-Day Prayer Guide

In forty days Synod 2024 will begin, and it looks like this will be another challenging year for us as we meet together. As we look ahead to Synod 2024, let's join with others across North America in prayer. The theme for these prayers is "Immanuel: God with Us."

These prayers are presented to help guide us in remembering the truth of God's promise of his presence in all of life's situations. In this time of uncertainty in the CRC, being reminded of the truth that God is with us—in our fear, in peace, in our anxiety, in trust, in community, in joy, in doubt, in our mission, in the unknown, in all of life—should be foundational for us.

These prayers are written by CRC members, missionaries, pastors, and staff. They are written by young and old. They are written in many languages, with English translations for all, reflecting the beautiful diversity of the CRC.

The authors of these prayers hope that you find them to offer a gracious, generous, loving, and longing perspective, that we may be reminded that we belong to God and that he is always with us.

—Jon Hoekema

SUNDAY, MAY 5, 2024 - DAY 1

God With Us

Suggested Bible Reading: Psalm 139:7-12

Where can I go from your Spirit?

Where can I flee from your presence?

If I go up to the heavens, you are there;

if I make my bed in the depths, you are there.

If I rise on the wings of the dawn,

if I settle on the far side of the sea,

even there your hand will guide me,

your right hand will hold me fast.

If I say, "Surely the darkness will hide me

and the light become night around me,"

even the darkness will not be dark to you;

the night will shine like the day,

for darkness is as light to you.

Prayer

By Jon Hoekema, CRC prayer shepherd and pastor of Horizon Community Church, Downers Grove, Illinois

Lord Jesus, Immanuel—God with us,

We praise and thank you that you are with us. We praise you that you did not leave us to ourselves, that you did not leave us to our sin, but that "the Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us" (John 1:14).

We thank you that wherever we go, you are there. Thank you that nothing can ever separate us from the love of God.

Forgive us when we want to flee from your Spirit, when we hide from your presence and try to run away from you. Forgive us when we would rather be in the dark than be in the light. Give us a longing and desire to be with you.

We pray as we enter these forty days before our synod gathering, the realization that you are always with us, that you will never leave us or forsake us, may give us rest. May the truth that God is with us give us the assurance that we are not alone but belong to him.

Help us to trust that your hand will guide us, even when we don't see it;
to trust that your right hand will hold us fast, even when we falter;
and that your presence will bring us light, even when we find ourselves in the darkness.
Amen.

Questions for Reflection and/or Conversation

- The psalmist wrestled with fear that the darkness would hide him and that the light would become night around him. Do you ever wrestle with that fear?
- What are some ways in which you've experienced God's light entering dark spaces?



GOD WITH US

*"...And they will call him Emmanuel"
(which means 'God with us')."*

—Matthew 1:23

MONDAY, MAY 6, 2024 - DAY 2

God With Us

Suggested Bible Reading: John 14:16-17

"I will ask the Father, and he will give you another advocate to help you and be with you forever— the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you."

Prayer

Spanish

Por Samantha Sebastia, miembro de la Iglesia Carismah en Katy, Texas. Ella dice: "El año pasado, tuve el privilegio de servir como representante de jóvenes adultos para el sínodo, y es a través de esta experiencia que me siento honrada de tener la oportunidad de contribuir al Sínodo 2024 a través de la oración."

Querido Padre Celestial, Al embarcarnos en los 40 Días de Oración para el Sínodo de este año, venimos ante ti buscando tu guía y sabiduría. En Juan 14:16-17, prometes enviar otro defensor, el Espíritu de verdad, para estar con nosotros para siempre. Oramos fervientemente por la presencia de tu Espíritu Santo para dirigir y guiar las decisiones tomadas durante el Sínodo 2024. Que tu Espíritu habite entre nosotros, iluminando nuestras mentes y corazones con tu discernimiento. Concédenos, Señor, la humildad para escuchar atentamente a tu Espíritu, incluso cuando desafían nuestra manera de pensar. Que nuestras discusiones estén marcadas por la gracia, el amor y la unidad, mientras buscamos discernir tu voluntad para nuestra iglesia y comunidad. Levantamos ante ti a todos aquellos que se verán afectados por las decisiones tomadas durante el Sínodo 2024. Que encuentren consuelo y seguridad al saber que tu Espíritu está obrando en y a través de nosotros. En todo lo que hagamos, que tu nombre sea glorificado mientras entregamos

nuestras voluntades a la tuya, confiando en tu soberanía y bondad. En el nombre de Jesús, oramos. Amén.

English

By Samantha Sebastia, a member of Carismah Church in Katy, Texas. She says, “Last year I had the privilege of serving as a young adult representative for synod, and it is through this experience that I feel honored to have the opportunity to contribute to Synod 2024 through prayer.”

Dear Heavenly Father,

As we embark on the 40 Days of Prayer for this year’s synod, we come before you seeking your guidance and wisdom. In John 14:16-17 you promise to send an advocate, the Spirit of truth, to be with us forever. We pray fervently for the presence of your Holy Spirit to lead and guide the decisions made during Synod 2024. May your Spirit dwell among us, illuminating our minds and hearts with your insights and discernment. Grant us, Lord, the humility to listen attentively to your Spirit, even when our preconceptions and preferences are challenged. May our discussions be marked by grace, love, and unity as we seek to discern your will for our church and community. We lift up to you all who will be affected by the decisions made during Synod 2024. May they find comfort and assurance in knowing that your Spirit is at work in and through us, shaping all of us as siblings in Christ. In all things, may your name be glorified as we surrender our wills to yours, trusting in your sovereignty and goodness. In Jesus’ name we pray.

Amen.

Questions for Reflection and/or Conversation

- In what ways have you seen God’s Spirit of truth at work, challenging and correcting some of our false understandings?
- Jesus reminds us that the Spirit of truth lives *with* and *in* the body of Christ. How might God be calling you to trust his Spirit’s presence and work in the body?



GOD WITH US

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(which means 'God with us')."*

—Matthew 1:23

TUESDAY, MAY 7, 2024 - DAY 3

God With Us: In Fear

Suggested Bible Reading: Isaiah 41:10

"So do not fear, for I am with you;
do not be dismayed, for I am your God.
I will strengthen you and help you;
I will uphold you with my righteous right hand."

Prayer

By Tim Rietkerk, who leads chaplaincy ministry in the CRCNA. He lives in San Diego, California, and has served over 30 years as a chaplain in the U.S. Army, Veterans Affairs Healthcare, and hospice.

Lord,

It seems to us that we are living in a time of chaos. We look at your creation and wonder about the things we have done inadvertently and deliberately to fail in our responsibility, given by you, to be good stewards.

In our communities we often fail to see our neighbors who might look different to us as fellow imagebearers of the divine. We are quick in temper and judgment as we seek righteous certainty. We often avert our eyes and close our ears to persons in distress.

Even with our fellow brothers and sisters in Christ we find ourselves in disagreements and treat each other in ways that contradict your desire for us to be united and to be in service to each other as a living witness to your grace and forgiveness.

All of this leads to fears and anxieties, and in the chaos we cry out to you. Help us to trust in you and to listen to the Spirit. May we hear your promise and live in a way that shows we trust you when you say to us, “But you, Israel, my servant, Jacob, whom I have chosen, you descendants of Abraham my friend, I took you from the ends of the earth, from its farthest corners I called you. I said, ‘You are my servant’; I have chosen you and have not rejected you. So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand” (Isaiah 41:8-10).

Lord, hear our prayer.

Questions for Reflection and/or Conversation

- Where in your own life are you experiencing chaos and fear? Spend a few moments in honest reflection before God.
- Reflect on the God-active verbs in the passage above. God promises to strengthen, to help, to uphold. Choose one of these and spend time praying, asking God to help you remember his promises in your life today.

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WEDNESDAY, MAY 8, 2024 - DAY 4

God With Us: In Fear

Suggested Bible Reading: Isaiah 43:1-3

恐れるな。わたしはあなたを贖う（イザヤ書43章1-3前半）

But now thus says the LORD, he who created you, O Jacob, he who formed you, O Israel: "Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are mine. When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you; when you walk through fire you shall not be burned, and the flame shall not consume you. For I am the LORD your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior" (ESV).

ヤコブよ、あなたを創造された主は / イスラエルよ、あなたを造られた主は /
今、こう言われる。恐れるな、わたしはあなたを贖う。あなたはわたしのもの。
わたしはあなたの名を呼ぶ。水の中を通るときも、わたしはあなたと共にいる。
大河の中を通っても、あなたは押し流されない。火の中を歩いて、焼かれず /
炎はあなたに燃えつかない。わたしは主、あなたの神 / イスラエルの聖なる神、
あなたの救い主。(新共同訳)

Prayer

By Lawrence K. Spalink, Resonate Global Mission senior missionary to Japan

Japanese

天地万物を造り、今も支配し導いておられる全能の主なる神様、どんな時にもご自分の民を見守り、助けて、救ってくださる主でおられることを感謝いたします。恐ろしい火災があり、大地震があり、すべてを流し、滅ぼしてしまう巨大な津波が起こってきます。でも、そのような時にもあなたは、「恐れるな。わたしは共にいる。」聖なる救い主としてご自身を表してください。インマヌエルが常に私たちの救いの岩です。世世の主の民も経験したように、弱くて困り果て

た時があっても、私たちをお守りください。あなたの平安を与え、あなたの示す道を歩ませてくださいますように。私たちも弱さがあります。私たちがどうなってしまうのかの不安に覆われることがあり、大きな苦しみを余儀なくされていることがおられます。遠いところにいるものもいれば、私たちのすぐ近くの隣人もいます。私たちの愛している教会についても煩わしい思いがあります。あなたのみことばに忠実にしたがいながら、愛の一致を保ち、世の人々に私たちがあなたの弟子であることを立証できるだろうかと心配します。いずれの場合もどうか主よ、私たちの不安を取り去り、あなたの御霊によって私たちを導き、困っている方々に手を差し伸べて、あなたに寄り頼むことに伴う安心へと導きさせてください。主イエス・キリストのみ名によってお祈りいたします。アーメン。

English

Lord God Almighty, Creator of all things, who rules over and guides them today too, we thank you that even now you reveal yourself as the Lord who watches over, helps, and delivers your people. We may experience terrible fires, powerful earthquakes, and gigantic tsunami waves that can easily destroy everything! But even when these may occur, you say to us, "Do not be afraid; I am with you!" You reveal yourself as our Holy Savior. You are Immanuel, our Rock of salvation. Though we are weak and may be at the end of our rope, watch over us as you have done for your people of all ages. Grant us your peace, and please cause us to walk in the ways you direct us.

We do have many weaknesses. At times, feelings of anxiety may overwhelm us, and we may wonder what will become of us. There are folks who are facing great suffering with no way to escape. Some of them are far away, and some of them are our nearby neighbors. We are anxious too about our beloved church, wondering if we can faithfully follow your Word and also keep unity in love for one another, proving to the world that we are your disciples. Lord, no matter what our circumstances, in our seasons of worry, take away our fears, lead us by your Spirit, and help us to extend our hands to our perplexed neighbors so that we may guide them to the peace of mind that comes to all who place their faith in you. In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ we pray. Amen.

Questions for Reflection and/or Conversation

- Look at your hands. In what situations have anxiety and fear made you clench your hands tight?
- Read God's promises again in Isaiah 43. How might God be calling you to extend your hands—open to receive and ready to seek peace?



GOD WITH US

*"...And they will call him Immanuel"
(which means 'God with us')."*

—Matthew 1:23

THURSDAY, MAY 9, 2024 - DAY 5

God With Us: In Fear

Suggested Bible Reading: Psalm 23:4

Even though I walk
through the darkest valley,
I will fear no evil,
for you are with me;
your rod and your staff,
they comfort me.

Prayer

By Hannah Admiral, a member of Calvin CRC in Ottawa, Ontario, and a student at Redeemer University. She currently attends Meadowlands CRC in Ancaster, Ontario, while away from home.

God, you are with me no matter where I go or what I do. Whether my days are joyful and fulfilling, or fearful and feeling empty, your presence is my comfort and joy. Even in the darkest valley you are by my side, leading me in your light toward everlasting comfort and peace.

Lord, when we fear, we can feel as if you are infinitely far away. Help us remember that you are always with us, dwelling in our hearts through all turmoil and every trial. Help us not to fear but to instead delight in your presence, knowing that you have conquered our every enemy.

I pray for all your people who will gather at Synod 2024. This is a time when changes are near. Lord, we don't know what the future holds, and many of your people are afraid. Remind all your people that you are here in this uncertain space with us and that every decision made is guided by you.

Lord, I thank you that your Spirit is here with us, and that you are ever-present in the internal struggles of your church as well as in every struggle happening internationally. I pray that your people may find peace in your presence and in the knowledge that we need not fear evil, for you are with us always. Please conquer our fear in order to make room in our hearts for the blessings of love and wisdom that you shower on us.

I thank you for sending your Son to die for us so that evil has no power and we can be free from fear.

In his glorious name, Amen.

Questions for Reflection and/or Conversation

- Where have you experienced God's comfort recently? Thank him for it.
- Where might you still feel as if you are walking in the shadow? Ask God to lift your head to see his staff as he leads you through.

GOD WITH US

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(which means 'God with us')."*

—Matthew 1:23

FRIDAY, MAY 10, 2024 - DAY 6

God With Us: In Peace/Shalom

Suggested Bible Reading: John 16:33

"I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world."

Prayer

By Ralph Koops, a retired CRC pastor and a member of Hope CRC in Brantford, Ontario, who continues to preach a fair bit

Dutch

"Niet ons, o Here, niet ons, maar U naam komt eer toe" (Psalm 115:1).

U bent de God van het verbond. God met ons. U houdt trouw tot in eeuwigheid.

Met het oog op de komende synode van onze kerk belyden wy, zoals wy dat vaak doen in een kerkdienst, dat onze hulp en onze verwachting is in de naam van de drieenige God, de God van vrede. Wy zyn wel eens bezorgd over onze kerk, dat toch U kerk is. Wy zyn maar een kleine schare in de ene algemene Christelyke kerk. Geef dat op de komende synode, al de afgevaardigden vervult mogen zyn met U, o Heilige Geest.

Heer, wy leven en belyden in een wereld en in een maatschappy waar U vroeger een uitroepeten was en tegenwoordig alleen maar een vraagteken. Wy weten echter dat wy te doen hebben met een God die alles regeert en bestuurd. En de engelen by Jezus' geboorte spraken van vrede. In dat vertrouwen gaan we ook verder, de komende synode inclusief, wetende dat Jezus Christus Zyn kerk in stand houdt. U, Heer Jezus, hebt toch gezegd dat alle macht in hemel en op aarde aan U gegeven is. En U vrede dringt tot de hele schepping door.

Er is zoveel gebeden voor onze kerk, vooral wanneer de synode vergadert. Wil, om Jezus wil, al die gebeden horen. En geef ons vrede. U zegt zoveel in Uw woord en voegd daaraan toe, "Dit heb Ik tot u gesproken, opdat gy in my vrede hebt." (Johannes 16:33) Die vrede beslaat toch het hele leven. Geef dat wy in Uw kerk en ook op de komende synode die vrede mogen ervaren. Wy vragen dit alles in de naam van Uw Zoon, Jezus Christus. Amen.

English

"Not to us, LORD, not to us, but to your name be the glory" (Ps.115:1).
You are the God of the covenant, God with us. You are faithful into all eternity.

With respect to the upcoming synod of our church, we confess, as we do in a church service, that our help and our expectation is in the name of the triune God, the God of peace.

Sometimes we are worried about our church, which is really your church. We are only a small crowd in the one universal Christian church. Grant that at the coming synod, all the delegates may be filled with you, O Holy Spirit.

Lord, we live and confess in a world and in a society where you used to be an exclamation mark but presently are only a question mark. However, we know that we are dealing with the God who rules and leads everything. At Jesus' birth, the angels spoke of peace. In that assurance we go on, including, at the coming synod, knowing that Jesus Christ will maintain his church. You, Lord Jesus, have said that all power in heaven and on earth has been given to you. And your peace establishes itself in your entire creation.

There has been much prayer for our church, especially when synod meets. Lord, hear all those prayers for Jesus' sake. And give us peace. You say so much in your Word, and then you add, "I have told you these things, so that you may have peace" (John 16:33). That peace touches all of life. Grant that we in your church and also at the upcoming synod may experience that peace. We ask all this in the name of your Son, Jesus Christ. Amen.

Questions for Reflection and/or Conversation

- Take some time to reflect on God's faithfulness in your life, in your congregation, and in the CRC.
- Pray for all who will gather at synod, that they may have the space to remember God's faithfulness and the time to discern where his Spirit is leading them.



GOD WITH US

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(which means 'God with us')."*

—Matthew 1:23

SATURDAY, MAY 11, 2024 - DAY 7

God With Us: In Peace/Shalom

Suggested Bible Reading: John 14:27

Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid."

Prayer

By Julia Gho, a second year M.Div. student at Calvin Theological Seminary. She grew up in the CRC tradition, and her parents are missionaries for Resonate Global Mission

Dear Father in heaven,

We know that you have given us peace. As it is written in John 14:27, "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid."

However, as we come before you from a variety of contexts and circumstances, we see the chaos and confusion in our lives and in the world. And we come before you with a plethora of things that are on our hearts and minds. Some of us come with heavy hearts and unspoken fears and worries. Oh, how we long to break free from these negative thoughts that hold power over us. There is no one we can turn to but you, Father, for true peace.

As we come together for Synod 2024, we pray for your peace in all of us. Guide us to find peace within ourselves and among one another even when we struggle and face trials that are beyond our understanding. Help us to rest in your presence. Rejuvenate our weary souls. And remind us to use the gifts that you have given us, to pass along your love, peace, and mercy.

Father, we invite you to continually transform our thoughts and behaviors. Strengthen us with the Holy Spirit, free us from our worries and fears, and lead us to desire what is pleasing and acceptable to you. Make us into a light for others.

As your Word says in Colossians 3:15, "Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace."

In your name we pray. Amen.

Questions for Reflection and/or Conversation

- Where do you need to experience the peace that "transcends all understanding" (Philippians 4:7)?
- Where can you serve as a shalom bringer?



GOD WITH US

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(which means 'God with us')."*

—Matthew 1:23

SUNDAY, MAY 12, 2024 - DAY 8

God with Us: In Peace/Shalom

Suggested Bible Reading: Mathew 11:28-30

"Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light."

Prayer

By Madeline Witvliet, a member of Church of the Servant CRC in Grand Rapids, Michigan. She is in her third year at Calvin University, studying English.

Merciful God,

Thank you for your gentleness, kindness, mercy, and love. You are faithful to your children. You lead us on the path of righteousness. Your goodness transcends our understanding. For that we praise You.

We admit that we have done wrong. We have sinned against you and your people. We have failed to show love to you, ourselves, and our neighbors. We have been selfish, envious, and prideful. Please forgive us for all the ways we fall short.

We are weary and weighed down by the injustice in the news, the trials of our daily lives, and our anxious thoughts. We long to see universal justice and peace on this earth. We long for a break from our daily obligations. We long for our minds to be put to rest.

We repent for every time we have turned to earthly things to ease our burdens. We know that we can only find perfect peace and true rest in you. Thank you for walking alongside us. Thank you for carrying our burdens, our sin, and our shame. Thank you for sending your Son, Jesus Christ, so that we might be saved.

God, open our hearts so that we may be closer to you. Help us to learn from your Son, Jesus Christ. Help us to love others as you love us. Help us to live in a way that is pleasing to you so that all may see your goodness.

In Jesus' name, Amen.

Questions for Reflection and/or Conversation

- In what ways do you long to find rest from the worries and anxious thoughts of each day?
- Jesus says, "I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light." Reflect on your longing for that lighter burden of Jesus rather than the heavy burdens you carry. Ask God to meet you in that struggle.



GOD WITH US

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(which means 'God with us')."*

—Matthew 1:23

MONDAY, MAY 13, 2024 - DAY 9

God With Us: In Anxiety

Suggested Bible Reading: Philippians 4:6

Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.

Prayer

By Aaliyah Verhoef, a 17-year-old high school student and member at River Park CRC, Calgary, Alberta

Our Father in heaven,
Thank you. Thank you for embracing us in our anxiety and walking with us in times of difficulty. You are truly the Rock on which we can build our strong foundation. Thank you for providing us with our daily bread and keeping us safe.

God, we want to say we are sorry. We are sorry for the damage that we cause in this world, to your creation, and to each other. We are sorry for the ways in which we sin and fall short. Thank you for your "never stopping, never giving up, unbreaking, always and forever love."

Lord, we ask for support in difficult times and guidance in difficult conversations. Please continue to walk alongside us and show us the best way as we attempt to discern the right path.

God, help us to open our hearts to your will. We ask, Lord, that you take away our anxieties, our stresses, our fears, and our hurts and fill the spaces left behind with your divine love and patience.

Father, help us each to remember that we are your children, made in your image. Help us to submit ourselves to you and let your will be done.

In your glorious name, Amen.

Questions for Reflection and/or Conversation

- How can becoming more thankful to God for all he has provided shift our perspective on being anxious?
- Bringing our prayer and petitions, with thanksgiving, before God requires honesty. What do you need to be honest about before God that is causing you to worry and be anxious?

GOD WITH US

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(which means 'God with us')."*

—Matthew 1:23

TUESDAY, MAY 14, 2024 - DAY 10

God With Us: In Anxiety

Suggested Bible Reading: 1 Peter 5:6-7

Humble yourselves, therefore, under God's mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time. Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you.

Prayer

By Amie Spriensma, who attends Rusk CRC and lives, works, and worships in Allendale, Michigan. She is a daughter, sister, auntie, friend, and dog-lover. Aside from spending time with her family and friends, she likes to read, color, and ride her Terra-Trike.

Lord our God,

We praise you and thank you today as our Savior and Sustainer. We acknowledge you as the giver of our life and breath. You know when we sit; you know when we rise.

Help us be attentive to the needs of the people we serve among. Enable us to serve them well not because we have to but because we want to. Help us to love you and serve you with all that we are and have. We want to live, love, and work according to your will.

Free us from the cares and anxieties we have in this life as we live in humble, grateful dependence on you. We cannot add one hour to our lives by worrying about things and situations we cannot change. Thank you for your gracious providence, which keeps us and leads us moment by moment.

As we cast all our burdens before you, we come in the confidence that you will hear us, guide us, and meet our needs. You are our loving shepherd; we are your servant-hearted sheep. As we listen for your voice, read your Word, and heed your Spirit,

you make known to us the path of life. Thank you so much for the joy and freedom we find in knowing you. We look forward to spending our eternal forever in your worthy glorious presence.

Questions for Reflection and/or Conversation

- God's mighty hand will lift us up in due time. How does that truth help us to face the uncertainties of day-to-day living?
- We have confidence that God will hear us, guide us, and meet our needs. Often that does not look like what we envision it to be. Spend a few moments asking God to give you eyes to see God's provision as he provides it, rather than how you may want it.

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(which means 'God with us')."*

—Matthew 1:23

WEDNESDAY, MAY 15, 2024 - DAY 11

God With Us: In Anxiety

Suggested Bible Reading: Proverbs 12:25

Anxiety weighs down the heart, but a kind word cheers it up.

Prayer

By Daniel Budilaksono, who helps lead ReFrame Ministries' Indonesian Ministry in Jakarta, Indonesia

Indonesian

Bapa Surgawi,
Engkau senantiasa ada bersama-sama dengan kami.
Engkau mengerti pikiran kami.
Engkau memahami kedalaman hati kami.
Engkau mengetahui setiap tingkah langkah kami, bahkan sebelum kami melakukannya,
karena Engkaulah Allah yang menciptakan kami.
Engkaulah Tuhan, Penguasa hidup kami.
Tidak ada satu pun bagian hidup kami yang ada di luar kendali-Mu, semuanya Kaurengkuh di dalam kuasa-Mu yang penuh kasih.
Namun demikian,
kami sering tidak menyadari kehadiran-Mu.
Kami lupa bahwa Engkaulah Sang Imanuel – Allah yang menyertai kami.
Kami membiarkan keraguan memasuki pikiran kami,
kecemasan menguasai hati kami,
dan kekhawatiran menentukan tindakan kami,
sehingga beban hidup menjadi semakin terasa berat menekan,
dan kami kehilangan kegembiraan dan sukacita.

Ampuni kami, Tuhan.
Ya Yesus Anak Allah,
kami bersimpuh di hadirat-Mu, menantikan firman-Mu,
firman yang menghidupkan, menyegarkan, dan memulihkan.
Firman-Mu menghapus keraguan kami,
melenyapkan kecemasan kami,
dan menyingkirkan kekhawatiran kami.
Angkatlah beban yang menindih kami,
sehingga kami dapat kembali tegak berdiri,
bergembira dan bersukacita dalam Engkau.
O Roh Kudus,
tolong kami agar dapat menghayati penyertaan-Mu dalam hidup kami,
dan beri kami kekuatan untuk menyatakan kehadiran-Mu bagi dunia.
Taruhlah hikmat-Mu dalam pikiran, perkataan dan perbuatan kami,
sehingga kami dapat memberi keyakinan kepada yang ragu,
ketenangan kepada yang cemas,
dan damai sejahtera kepada yang khawatir.
Kiranya melalui kami banyak orang disegarkan dan dipulihkan.
Dalam nama Bapa, Anak dan Roh Kudus. Amin.

English

Heavenly Father,
You are always with us.
You understand our thoughts.
You know the depth of our hearts.
You know our every move, even before we make it,
for you are the God who created us.
You are the Lord, the Master of our lives.
No part of our lives is beyond your control,
You embrace everything in your loving power.
Yet
we are often unaware of your presence.
We forget that you are Immanuel – “God with us.”
We allow doubt to enter our minds,
anxiety to rule our hearts,
and worry to dictate our actions
so that the burdens of life become more and more pressing
and we lose our joy and happiness.
Forgive us, Lord.

O Jesus, Son of God,
we kneel before you and wait for your Word,
a Word that revives, refreshes, and restores.
Your Word removes our doubts,
banishes our anxieties,
and takes away our worries.
Lift the burden that weighs us down
so that we can stand tall again,
rejoicing and delighting in you.
O Holy Spirit,
help us to live out your presence in our lives,
and give us the strength to proclaim your presence to the world.
Put your wisdom into our thoughts, words, and actions,
that we may give confidence to the doubtful,
calm to the anxious,
and peace to the worried.
May many people be refreshed and restored through us
in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Questions for Reflection and/or Conversation

- “Anxiety weighs down the heart, but a kind word cheers it up.”
- God’s Word revives, refreshes, and restores. What verse can you carry with you today that will do this for you? Ask the Holy Spirit to lead you to the verse God wants to use to revive, refresh, and restore you today.



GOD WITH US

*"...And they will call him Immanuel"
(which means 'God with us')."*

—Matthew 1:23

THURSDAY, MAY 16, 2024 - DAY 12

God With Us: In Trust

Suggested Bible Reading: Jeremiah 17:5-8

This is what the LORD says: "Cursed is the one who trusts in man, who draws strength from mere flesh and whose heart turns away from the LORD. That person will be like a bush in the wastelands; they will not see prosperity when it comes. They will dwell in the parched places of the desert, in a salt land where no one lives.

"But blessed is the one who trusts in the LORD, whose confidence is in him. They will be like a tree planted by the water that sends out its roots by the stream. It does not fear when heat comes; its leaves are always green. It has no worries in a year of drought and never fails to bear fruit."

Prayer

By Laura Dieleman, a member of Grace Christian Reformed Church in Chatham, Ontario, who enjoys serving as a youth leader

Dear heavenly Father,
We come to you with hearts filled with thankfulness for your love and faithfulness. When we have times of doubt, thank you for graciously reminding us that we are not in control and to turn our eyes to you for strength.

In a world filled with uncertainty and doubt, we find our refuge in your unchanging promises and perfect plans. You are our rock and our salvation, our firm foundation in the midst of life's storms.

Give us the courage to not lean on our own understanding but to trust in your infinite wisdom in all areas of our lives, including our relationships, our families, our careers, our finances, our safety, and our futures.

May we find peace in the knowledge that you hold our future in your hands and that your plans for us are always good.

In times of trial, may our trust in you remain unwavering, knowing that you are always with us, walking beside us every step of the way. Strengthen our hearts, and help us to trust in your perfect timing and providence.

As we walk through life, may our trust in you be seen by others around us as a testimony of your goodness and grace to all those near us. May others see your faithfulness reflected in our lives and be drawn closer to you.

In Jesus' name, we pray.

Amen.

Questions for Reflection and/or Conversation

- Jeremiah gives the picture that trusting God brings abundance. In what ways have you experienced God's abundance when you trusted him in your life?
- How has your trusting God in moments of uncertainty, or in times of following God's leading, been a testimony of God's goodness and grace?



GOD WITH US

*"...And they will call him Immanuel"
(which means 'God with us')."*

—Matthew 1:23

FRIDAY, MAY 17, 2024 - DAY 13

God With Us: In Trust

Suggested Bible Reading: Psalm 34:8–11

Taste and see that the LORD is good;
blessed is the one who takes refuge in him.
Fear the LORD, you his holy people,
for those who fear him lack nothing.
The lions may grow weak and hungry,
but those who seek the LORD lack no good thing.
Come, my children, listen to me;
I will teach you the fear of the LORD.

Prayer

By Bethany Besteman, worship coordinator at Silver Spring (Md.) CRC. She also serves as an editor for the Reformed Worship quarterly journal.

Writer's note

What struck me as I was reading this psalm was how it felt very much like a person giving a testimony—someone who wanted to share what God had done in their life and how they had seen God at work. The praise of God by the community is spurred on by the testimony of the individual who shares God's work. As you sing (or read) the psalm text below, spend a few moments reflecting on where you have seen God's hand at work in your own life today.

Psalm 34

Tune: Arise (Southern Harmony) or Servant Song (Will You Let Me Be Your Servant)
8.7.8.7

Come, my children, to the table;
gather round from near and far.

Taste and see what God is doing;
know the grace no sin can mar.

I will tell you of his goodness;
let afflicted, downcast hear:
How out of the depths he lifted
up his servant, drew me near.

Round about the ones who fear him
God's wide arms protect and shield.
Radiant sunlight falls on faces
from their shame and troubles healed.

Come, my children, listen to me:
On the righteous shine God's eyes.
Turn from evil, seek, pursue peace;
from your lips God's praises rise.

We will taste the life God offers;
we will glorify his name!
From our sins and sorrows woven,
joyful hope lives free from shame.

Prayer

God, when we come together, when we gather, we hear again the work you do among us. We are invited through our fellowship with each other to taste the life you offer us. When your children testify to your goodness, to the flavor and wholesomeness of the food you offer, it makes each of us more eager to join the feast. We praise you for the work being done in the lives of our brothers and sisters. Make us eager to spread the news of how wonderful life is when lived in the fear and knowledge of the Lord.

Questions for Reflection and/or Conversation

- Spend a few moments reflecting on where you have seen God's hand at work in your own life today.
- Take a few moments today—in person, through a phone call, email, chat, or some other way—and ask a brother or sister in Christ about the work God is doing in their life today.



GOD WITH US

*"...And they will call him Emmanuel"
(which means 'God with us')."*

—Matthew 1:23

SATURDAY, MAY 18, 2024 - DAY 14

God With Us: In Trust

Suggested Bible Reading: Jeremiah 17:7-8

"Blessed is the one who trusts in the LORD,
whose confidence is in him.
They will be like a tree planted by the water
that sends out its roots by the stream.
It does not fear when heat comes;
its leaves are always green.
It has no worries in a year of drought
and never fails to bear fruit."

Prayer

By Amelie Froehlich, a second-year bachelor of commerce and minor in music student at The King's University in Edmonton, Alberta

Dear Lord,

As we reach the time leading up to synod, let us reflect on these words. Help us to trust in you completely, bringing all of our worldly troubles to you, Lord, and ensuring we know that they are not ours alone to bear. Let us confide in you, Lord, every thought and action, as you know everything we have done and will do. Give us confidence in your Word, that we may know when you are speaking and how to discern your Word. Take away all fear for what will come, and help us to trust that you will take care of us. Let us know that like a tree planted by the water, our source of comfort in you is always close. Help us to never fear for a year of drought because we know that in you we will never thirst. Just as with a tree planted by the water, may our thirst and hunger for you never run dry. And as the leaves stay ever green, let our faith in you stay ever present and unwavering. In times of uncertainty teach

us to fully devote ourselves to you, and cast away all our fears. Lord, let us surrender our anxious thoughts and worries to you, clearly knowing that you will provide for us eternally.

In Jesus' mighty name, Amen.

Questions for Reflection and/or Conversation

- Our confidence can be in God. Where do you need to grow in confidence that this world belongs to God and will be sustained by his gracious hand?
- Where can you testify that trusting in God has brought you to streams of living water?

GOD WITH US

*"...And they will call him Immanuel"
(which means 'God with us')."*

—Matthew 1:23

SUNDAY, MAY 19, 2024 - DAY 15

God With Us: When We Think We're Alone

Suggested Bible Reading: Psalm 4:1

Answer me when I call to you,
my righteous God.
Give me relief from my distress;
have mercy on me and hear my prayer.

Prayer

By Sergei Sosedkin, who has been leading the Russian-language outreach of ReFrame Ministries since 2001. He is married to Olena, a native of Ukraine, and they have two daughters.

Ukrainian

Отче наш!

Ми підносимо до Тебе наші душі зі словами псалмопівця: "Коли я кличу, почуй мене, Боже правди моєї! Помилуй мене і почуй молитву мою."

Заголовки новин щоденно кричать нам про біль і страждання. Обриваються життя, розбиваються мрії, ллються гіркі сльози. Ехо воєн та конфліктів по всьому світі тяжко лежить на серцях наших, змушуючи нас звертатися до Тебе.

У цьому неспокійному світі ми визнаємо Тебе нашим праведним Богом, наповненим любов'ю, милосердям і співчуттям. Утішлива істина, що ми належимо Твоєму Сину, нашому Господу і Спасителю Ісусу Христу, дарує нам спокій.

У наших молитвах за тих, хто страждає від болю і самотності, нехай Твій дотик зцілить серця, що сповнені болем. Даруй нам силу стояти в солідарності з простими людьми, які несуть тягар воєн і конфліктів. Наповни нас бажанням ділитися Доброю Звісткою про спасіння в Твоєму Сині з тими, хто поряд, і тими, хто далеко. Допоможи нам простягати руку любові та підтримки, віддзеркалюючи Твоє милосердя світу, який потребує допомоги.

Ми дякуємо Тобі, Господи, за те, що Ти – Бог, який чує наші молитви про мир і справедливість, попри нашу власну гріховність та схильність до конфліктів.

В ім'я Твого Сина, Ісуса Христа, нашого Князя Миру, ми молимося. Амінь.

English

Our Heavenly Father,
Amid the world's turmoil, we lift our hearts to you, echoing the plea of the psalmist:
"Answer me when I call to you, my righteous God."

The news headlines serve as a daily reminder of the pain and suffering surrounding us. Lives are lost, dreams are shattered, and bitter tears are shed. The echoes of wars and conflicts worldwide weigh heavily on our hearts, prompting us to turn to you.

Even in the midst of strife we acknowledge you as our righteous God, abounding in love, mercy, and compassion. We are reminded of the comforting truth that we belong to your Son, our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

As we intercede for people affected by suffering and loneliness, may you bring healing to the hearts that ache. Grant us strength to stand in solidarity with the civilians affected by wars and conflicts. Fill us with your godly ambition to share the good news of salvation in Jesus with those who are near and those who are far. Help us to extend our hands in love and support, reflecting your mercy to a world in need.

We thank you, Lord, for being a God who hears our cries for peace and justice, even in the face of our own personal sinfulness and inclination toward conflict.

In the name of your Son, Jesus Christ, our Prince of Peace, we pray. Amen.

Questions for Reflection and/or Conversation

- How does having a God who hears our cries for peace and justice give you hope?
- Do you know someone who lives alone and may be lonely? Take a moment today to reach out to them and remind them they are loved.



GOD WITH US

*"...And they will call him Immanuel"
(which means 'God with us')."*

—Matthew 1:23

MONDAY, MAY 20, 2024 - DAY 16

God With Us: When We Think We're Alone

Suggested Bible Reading: Deuteronomy 4:31

The LORD your God is a merciful God; he will not abandon or destroy you or forget the covenant with your ancestors, which he confirmed to them by oath.

Prayer

By Denise L. Posie, the discipleship in redemptive diversity coach at Calvin Theological Seminary

Almighty God,
giver of life, our present help, and Redeemer,
We thank you for your church, made up of witnesses in the world near and far.
Remind us that you will not abandon us, your children, because you love us and we belong to you. Help us believe that you are always with us, no matter where we find ourselves in life. In darkness and in light you are there. Remind us that nothing can separate us from your love and presence. You promise never to leave or forsake us.

We don't always see or feel your presence, but you are there.

Sometimes we pay more attention to life's challenges and circumstances and forget you are with us. Help us, Lord, to discern and resist Satan's attacks when he distracts us from believing your Word. Forgive us, Lord, for those times when we have given in.

Help us cast down every negative thought, doubt, or fear that gives us any reason to think you have abandoned us—feelings or thoughts of failure, shame, guilt, or not being enough. Enable us to walk with you and with each other in unity and oneness

in Jesus Christ and to reach out to those who feel or think God has abandoned them. Fill us with your Holy Spirit, as on the day of Pentecost. May we and others recognize the presence of your Spirit working in our homes, churches, and communities in your love, reconciling power, and hope.

Thank you, Lord, that you will not abandon us. In the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit we pray. Amen.

Questions for Reflection and/or Conversation

- Where in your life do you need to ask the Holy Spirit to help you cast down every negative thought, doubt, or fear that might lead you to think that God has abandoned you?
- Where do you see the work of the Holy Spirit in your home? In your church? In your community?



GOD WITH US

*"...And they will call him Immanuel"
(which means 'God with us')."*

—Matthew 1:23

TUESDAY, MAY 21, 2024 - DAY 17

God With Us: When We Think We're Alone

Suggested Bible Reading: Psalm 16:9-11

Therefore my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices;
my body also will rest secure,
because you will not abandon me to the realm of the dead,
nor will you let your faithful one see decay.
You make known to me the path of life;
you will fill me with joy in your presence,
with eternal pleasures at your right hand.

Prayer

By Rylan Brue, a second-year M.Div. student at Calvin Theological Seminary

O LORD, you are our portion and our cup, our very great reward. Apart from you we have no good thing. Grant us, we pray, the secure joy of following you—that although we rarely see what lies around the bend, you are not in the habit of abandoning your people. You are not merely our destination but also our traveling companion.

We pray for wisdom and discernment for ourselves and for the assemblies of the CRCNA—for local councils, classes, and synod—that we may differentiate what is good from what only appears to be good. By your Spirit, may the conversations we have, the committee work that is put forward, and the decisions that will ultimately be made, play their part in conforming us to the image of your Son, Jesus, and stand as a credible witness to the beauty, truth, and goodness of the gospel in which you make known to us the path of life. Outfit us for the journey, we pray.

To the convicted, grant gentleness. To the timid, courageous faithfulness. To the weary, patience. To the worried, peace. And to all, we pray, love. Not to us but to you be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, now and forevermore. Amen.

Questions for Reflection and/or Conversation

- In what ways do you feel secure in your life because you know that you belong to Jesus and he will not abandon you?
- In your path of life, where are you filled with joy in being in God's presence?



GOD WITH US

*"...And they will call him Immanuel"
(which means 'God with us')."*

—Matthew 1:23

WEDNESDAY, MAY 22, 2024 - DAY 18

God With Us: In the Unknown

Suggested Bible Reading: Proverbs 3:5-6

Trust in the LORD with all your heart
and lean not on your own understanding;
in all your ways submit to him,
and he will make your paths straight.

Prayer

By Mark Knetsch, pastor of Resurrection Life Church in Apex, North Carolina. Rev. Knetsch is married to Heather and has five children, ages fourteen to one year old.

Dear Lord,
Proverbs 3:5-6 invites us to trust in you. We forget or fail to do so. We trust you partly, somewhat, or halfway. To trust you with *all* our heart forces us into uncomfortable vulnerability. To trust you with an "all in" mentality takes away our control over situations. We confess that we lean on our own insights, ideas, and agendas. These verses prompt important questions in our walk with you: Why do I struggle to trust you? Do I acknowledge you in all I do? Why do I continue to stray from your straight path?

Forgive me, Lord, for grasping tightly to my own understanding apart from your revealed Word. Help me to follow Christ closely along this journey of faith. Keep my eyes fixed on Jesus, the author and perfecter of my faith. Thank you for his nearness, our Immanuel, who gives me grace upon grace. May the Holy Spirit help me to trust in you fully, leaning into your understanding and following your path.

We offer these petitions also as they apply to us corporately within the Christian Reformed Church. You have shown your relentless faithfulness to us through the

generations. As part of the body of Christ, we ask for a covenantal call to trust you, to incline our collective mind toward your understanding, and to follow your path together, in faith.

We pray this all in Christ's name alone.
Amen.

Questions for Reflection and/or Conversation

These verses prompt important questions in our walk with God. Take a few moments to wrestle with these:

- Why do I struggle to trust God?
- Do I acknowledge God in *all* I do?
- Why do I continue to stray from God's straight path?



GOD WITH US

*"...And they will call him Emmanuel"
(which means 'God with us')."*

—Matthew 1:23

THURSDAY, MAY 23, 2024 - DAY 19

God With Us: In the Unknown

Suggested Bible Reading: Joshua 1:9

"Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged, for the LORD your God will be with you wherever you go."

Prayer

By Jill Feikema, a member of the CRCNA Council of Delegates who lives in Munster, Indiana, with her husband and two dogs, Winnie and Charlie.

Dear God,

As with Joshua, you command us to be strong and courageous. I confess that when I face the unknown, or when tasks are especially daunting or seem impossible, my heart shrinks and I feel like running away. I replace my confidence in you with fear. Forgive me when I rely on my own strength instead of yours.

When I second-guess myself, God, come alongside me to reassure me. Remind me, Lord, of your faithfulness. Fill me with the overwhelming presence of your Holy Spirit.

As it must have been with Joshua, when you are with me, I cannot surrender to discouragement. Keep me grounded and meditating on your Word. Do not allow me to get distracted or to act apart from you. Set my feet on solid ground; guide my actions. Give me the daily provisions I need to travel with you.

You promise to remain by my side. There is no failure when I remain in you. Remind me of how you have always provided for me and for those who came before me.

I remember your goodness, God; lift my heart to be strong and courageous to walk forward with you. Help our leaders to do the same.

In the precious name of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, Amen.

Questions for Reflection and/or Conversation

- Consider a daunting task before you and our church; are you afraid or discouraged? Name those things and give them to God.
- Praise God for specific ways in which he has uniquely created you as his child. Recall a passage of Scripture that has brought you comfort, and thank God for how those words have helped you. In what ways has God shown you that he cares for you and is with you?
- Thank God for the people who have gone before you to prepare the way for you now. Praise God for his faithfulness to you and to our church. What are some examples of God's faithfulness and goodness that you like to share with others?



GOD WITH US

*"...And they will call him Immanuel"
(which means 'God with us')."*

—Matthew 1:23

FRIDAY, MAY 24, 2024 - DAY 20

God With Us: In the Unknown

Suggested Bible Reading: Isaiah 40:29

He gives strength to the weary and increases the power of the weak.

Prayer

By Rita Klein-Geltink, pastor of Grace Church in Cobourg, Ontario

Dear God,

We hear your promises—that you will give strength to the weary and power to the weak—and we confess that we don't know what that will look like. For we are weary, and we are weak. We become weary when we see our communities, our families, and, yes, our church, too, being consumed by challenges and struggles. We feel weak and helpless in the face of homelessness, and war, and poverty, and abuse, and racism. We become afraid of what the future might bring; we lose sight of your good news. Forgive us for taking our eyes off of you.

We pray that you will give us strength—strength to help build your kingdom on earth as it is heaven. Give us strength to step in to bless those who are weak—the marginalized, the lonely, the vulnerable.

May your power be made perfect in weakness (2 Corinthians 12:9), that we may serve you in humility, trusting you to love us, to strengthen us, and to empower us. Thank you for your promises that you will be with us always and that nothing is impossible with you.

Transform our weakness and our weariness into strength and power, courage and confidence. May our lives demonstrate your love wherever we go and in whatever we do. Take those small gifts and multiply them for your purposes.

And in all of this, make us into joyful and hope-filled followers of Jesus.

We pray in his name. Amen.

Questions for Reflection and/or Conversation

- What things are happening in your life that cause you to feel weak or weary?
- How have you seen God's power made perfect in weakness—your weakness or that of another?



GOD WITH US

*"...And they will call him Immanuel"
(which means 'God with us')."*

—Matthew 1:23

SATURDAY, MAY 25, 2024 - DAY 21

God With Us: In Community

Suggested Bible Reading: Philippians 2:5

In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus. . . .

Prayer

By Dave Vroege, who serves as pastor with All Nations CRC in Halifax, Nova Scotia

Lord Jesus Christ:

we read Philippians 2:1-11,
and we are amazed that you would humble yourself!

We wonder why . . .

. . . but, of course, all of Scripture teaches us why!

You love us!

Your humility sobers us about our sin
and strengthens the assurance of our salvation.

Thank you, thank you, thank you.

Covenant God,

by your Holy Spirit,

guide us, the Christian Reformed Church, into the way of the cross.

United with Jesus,

in community with others,

may we indeed

have more and more the same mindset as Jesus:

humble . . .

servant-like . . .

obedient . . .

tender . . .
compassionate . . .
loving . . .
valuing others . . .
looking to their interests . . .
. . .focused on the cross.

Bless us also with encouragement,
with comfort,
with joy.

Then may every tongue and heart,
in the Christian Reformed Church and everywhere,
praise you, Jesus, as Lord,
to the glory of God the Father.

Amen.

Questions for Reflection and/or Conversation

- What does having the same mindset of Christ, a mindset of humility, of giving up our own self, look like to you today?
- Pray that the Holy Spirit will help you grow in being humble, servant-like, obedient, tender, compassionate, loving, valuing others, looking to their interests, and focused on the cross.

GOD WITH US

*"...And they will call him Immanuel"
(which means 'God with us')."*

—Matthew 1:23

SUNDAY, MAY 26, 2024 - DAY 22

God With Us: In Community

Suggested Bible Reading: 2 Corinthians 6:16 (고린도후서 6:16)

"I will live with them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they will be my people."

하나님의 성전과 우상이 어찌 일치가 되리요 우리는 살아 계신 하나님의 성전이라 이와같이 하나님께서 이르시되 내가 그들 가운데 거하며 두루 행하여 나는 그들의 하나님이 되고 그들은 나의 백성이 되리라

Prayer

문상면, 캘리포니아 알테시아에 있는 생명샘 교회 담임목사

By Sang Myeun Moon, a pastor at Lifestream CRC in Artesia, California

Korean

우리는 살아계신 하나님의 성전:

교회는 이 세상에 있는 모든 건물 중에서 가장 아름다운 곳입니다. 주님의 몸된 교회의 건물이 화려하고 웅장하거나 아니면 예술적인 모양을 하고 있기 때문에 아름다운 것은 아닙니다. 교회가 이 세상에서 가장 아름답고 향기나는 곳이라고 생각하는 이유는 교회가 진리의 기둥과 터이기 때문입니다. (딤후 3:15)

주님, 어두운 밤에 바다를 향해하는 배가 길을 잃어버리지 않고 안전하게 향해할 수 있도록 하는 등대처럼 주님의 몸된 교회가 세상의 빛이 되는 교회가 되게 해 주시옵소서! 우리가 살아가는 이 시대는 점점 진리에 대하여 목말라 하지 않습니다. 진리에 대하여 분별력을 상실하며 살아가도 전혀 감각없이 살아가는 시대입니다.

주여! 주님은 우리를 교회라고 부르셨습니다. 우리로 하여금 교회가 교회되게 하셔서 분별력을 상실하며 살아가는 자들에게 빛이 되게 하시고 나침반이 되게 하여 주옵소서. 특별히 북미주 개혁교회가 이 소명을 잘 감당할 수 있도록 일깨워 주시고, 2024년 총회를 통해 총대들이 우리가 하나님의 성전이라는 것을 기억하고,

심의함에 있어 서로 경청하고 존중하게 하시며 분별력을 더하여 주옵소서. 우리 안에서 두루행하시는 하나님의 역사를 보기 원합니다. 다뤄지는 모든 사안이 하나님의 뜻대로 인도함 받게 하여 주시고, 우리가 깨어있어 세상 사람들로 하여금 교회가 진정 하나님의 집이라는 사실을 깨닫도록 해 주시옵소서.

English

We are the temple of the living God:

The church is the most beautiful of all the buildings in this world. The buildings of the Lord's body, the church, are beautiful not because they are colorful, magnificent, or artistically shaped. The reason I think the church is the most beautiful and fragrant place in the world is because it is the pillar and ground of the truth (1 Timothy 3:15).

Lord, as your body, the church, we can be a light to the world, like a lighthouse that enables a ship sailing on the sea in the dark night to sail safely and not get lost! The age in which we live is increasingly getting lost in the sense of thirst for the truth; this is an age in which we live with numbness, lacking discernment about the truth.

Lord, you have called us the church. Help us to be the church, to be a light and a compass to those who are living in a state of loss of discernment. Help the Christian Reformed Church in North America in particular to fulfill this calling, and help the delegates to Synod 2024 to remember that we are God's temple, to listen to and respect one another in our deliberations, and to be more discerning. We want to see you walking among us. May we be guided by your spirit in every matter we address, and may we be vigilant so that the world may realize that the church is truly your temple.

Questions for Reflection and/or Conversation 성찰 및 대화를 위한 질문

- Do you believe you are the beautiful church of God?
당신은 자신이 아름다운 하나님의 교회임을 믿습니까?
- Do you give others a fragrance of the church of God that gives them hope through your life?
당신의 삶의 모습을 통하여 다른 사람들에게 소망을 주는 하나님의 교회로서의 향기를 주고 계십니까?
- Do you believe that the beautiful power of the church filling all things is dwelling in you?
당신 자신에게 만물을 충만하게 하는 교회의 아름다운 능력이 함께 거하고 있다는 사실을 믿으십니까?



GOD WITH US

*"...And they will call him Emmanuel"
(which means 'God with us')."*

—Matthew 1:23

MONDAY, MAY 27, 2024 - DAY 23

God With Us: In Community

Suggested Bible Reading: Romans 15:5-7

May the God who gives endurance and encouragement give you the same attitude of mind toward each other that Christ Jesus had, so that with one mind and one voice you may glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Accept one another, then, just as Christ accepted you, in order to bring praise to God.

Prayer

By Pablo Kim Sun, senior leader for antiracism and intercultural conciliation for the CRCNA

Creator God,

In your infinite grace, you've shown us the path of endurance and encouragement through Christ Jesus. We approach you now, seeking the strength and humility to embody these virtues, aiming to foster unity and love within our community, with a keen ear for the voices of the marginalized. Grant us, O Lord, the mindset of Christ Jesus toward one another so that our thoughts, words, and deeds may mirror his boundless love and acceptance.

As we endeavor to live in unity, cherishing our diversity rather than seeking uniformity, guide us to glorify you in harmony. In our differences may we see the splendor of your divine tapestry, masterfully crafted by your hands. Encourage us to welcome each other with the grace and mercy Christ has shown us, acknowledging your image in every person. Teach us to let go of any thoughts and practices that hinder true acceptance, and grant us the wisdom to discern and abandon those barriers.

Throughout our faith journey, remind us of your constant presence, guiding and supporting us through every challenge and joy. Let our fellowship serve as a

testament to your everlasting love, drawing others into your embrace, where eternal joy and peace abound.

Lord, in accepting one another, may our united praise glorify your name. Let our shared testimony shine as a beacon of hope in a world yearning for your light. In all we do, let us honor you, the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, whose companionship is our most cherished blessing.

In Jesus' name we pray.
Amen.

Questions for Reflection and/or Conversation

- Do your thoughts, words, and deeds toward others mirror God's boundless love and acceptance of you? In what areas do you need to be further transformed by the Holy Spirit in this?
- Where do you think you can grow in welcoming others with the grace and mercy Christ has shown us, acknowledging God's image in every person?



GOD WITH US

*"...And they will call him Emmanuel"
(which means 'God with us')."*

—Matthew 1:23

TUESDAY, MAY 28, 2024 - DAY 24

God With Us: In Troubles

Suggested Bible Reading: 2 Corinthians 4:16-18

Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day. For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen, since what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.

Prayer

By Marc D. Nabie, who has worked with Reframe Ministries since 2015 as French ministry director. He lives in Burkina Faso, his native country, and is a graduate of Faculté Jean Calvin in France. He and his wife, Jocelyne, founded New Alliance Church of Burkina Faso in Ouagadougou, with branches in five villages. Spreading the good news of Jesus through media and training church leaders are his passions.

French

Dieu notre Père, nous te remercions pour la grace de t'appartenir, et d'avoir été sauvé de nos péchés par l'oeuvre de Ton Fils, attesté dans nos coeurs par le Saint Esprit, par lequel, nous crions, Abah Père. Merci de ce que nous sommes déjà assis la haut en Christ, au dessus de tout domination et situation. Cette réalité, visible par les yeux de la foi, fonde notre espérance, alors que nous luttons contre vents et marées dans ce monde. Nous ne sommes point abandonné. Donne nous d'abonder en actions de graces, au milieu des épreuves auxquelles nous sommes soumis, souviens toi de nos frères et soeurs partout dans le monde qui luttent et souffrent pour leur foi. Aide nous à donner un sens à nos douleurs, et à te confier nos blessures, parfois corporelles, émotionnelles ou spirituelles. Rend nous ferme dans la foi, face à un monde de plus en plus injuste, de plus en plus braqué contre

tes voies. Que nos yeux restent focalisés sur l'invisible, et nous ne perdrons point courage. Nous prions pour le Synode, afin qu'il soit encouragé dans sa mission, malgré les défis, à continuer de proclamer le *sola scriptura* (l'Écriture seule), *sola Christus* (Christ seul), *sola fide* (la foi seule), *sola gratia* (seulement la grâce), [et *solī Deo gloria* (Gloire à Dieu seul)]. Nous t'avons ainsi prié au Nom de Jésus Ton Fils bien aimé, Amen.

English

God our Father, we thank you for the grace of belonging to you, and of having been saved from our sins by the work of your Son, attested in our hearts by the Holy Spirit, by whom we cry, "Abba, Father." Thank you that we are already seated with you in Christ, above all rule and authority. This reality, visible through the eyes of faith, is the basis of our hope as we struggle against all odds in this world. We are not abandoned. Give us to abound in thanksgiving, in the midst of the trials to which we are subjected. Remember our brothers and sisters all over the world who fight and suffer for their faith. Help us to make sense of our pain and to confide our wounds to you, sometimes bodily, emotional, or spiritual. Make us firm in faith, facing a world that is increasingly unjust, increasingly turned against your ways. Let our eyes remain focused on the invisible, and we will not lose courage. We pray for synod, that it may be encouraged in its mission, despite challenges, to continue to proclaim *sola scriptura* (*scripture alone*), *sola Christus* (*Christ alone*), *sola fide* (*faith alone*), *sola gratia* (*grace alone*), [and *solī Deo gloria* (*glory to God alone*)]. We pray to you in the name of Jesus, your beloved Son. Amen.

Questions for Reflection and/or Conversation

- How does having an eternal perspective shape the way you face earthly, temporary struggles?
- Often our struggles do not seem "light and momentary." Some of our burdens seem heavy and can last for years. Ask the Father to give us a bigger perspective on what may seem able to consume us, and to assure us that nothing can separate us from his love.



GOD WITH US

*"...And they will call him Immanuel"
(which means 'God with us')."*

—Matthew 1:23

WEDNESDAY, MAY 29, 2024 - DAY 25

God With Us: In Troubles

Suggested Bible Reading: Psalm 27:1-6

The LORD is my light and my salvation—
whom shall I fear?

The LORD is the stronghold of my life—
of whom shall I be afraid?

When the wicked advance against me
to devour me,

it is my enemies and my foes
who will stumble and fall.

Though an army besiege me,
my heart will not fear;

though war break out against me,
even then I will be confident.

One thing I ask from the LORD,
this only do I seek:

that I may dwell in the house of the LORD
all the days of my life,

to gaze on the beauty of the LORD
and to seek him in his temple.

For in the day of trouble

he will keep me safe in his dwelling;
he will hide me in the shelter of his sacred tent
and set me high upon a rock.

Then my head will be exalted

above the enemies who surround me;
at his sacred tent I will sacrifice with shouts of joy;
I will sing and make music to the LORD.

Prayer

By Nate Van Denend, the pastor at First Christian Reformed Church in Chatham, Ontario

Think about all the idiomatic phrases we use that include the concept of light. “Shine some light on this.” “Let me enlighten you.” “Clear as day.” “That was a lightbulb moment for me.” We use words like *brilliant* and *bright* to describe someone who is intelligent. Light has to do with knowledge, wisdom, and insight. God speaks light into existence first so that God’s will and God’s purposes for the world can be seen and known by that light as creation unfolds. As Synod 2024 approaches, let us pray for light, God’s light, to make visible the way forward for the Christian Reformed Church.

Here is a condensed and modified version of a prayer John Calvin wrote, called “Prayer before the Day.” It is a prayer asking for the light of God to dawn as it did on the first day of creation, so that God’s purposes for our lives can be seen and known. Note the references to light in bold.

My God—my Father and Preserver—who in your goodness has watched over me during the past night, and brought me to this day, grant also that I may spend it wholly in worship and service. . . . Let me not think, or say, or do a single thing which tends not to your service and submission to your will, that thus all my actions may aim at your **glory** and the salvation of my brothers and sisters. . . .

As you are **giving light** to this world for the purposes of external life by the **rays of the sun**, so enlighten my mind by the **effulgence (brilliantly bright light)** of your Spirit, that he may guide me in the way of your righteousness.

I entreat of you, O Lord, **not only to be my guide and director for this day**, but to keep me under your protection to the very end of life, that thus my whole course may be performed under your superintendence. . . . [May] you add daily more and more to the gifts of your grace until I wholly adhere to your **Son, Jesus Christ**, whom we justly regard as the **true Sun, shining constantly in our minds**. . . . Forget, and out of your infinite mercy, forgive my offenses, as you have promised that you will do to those who call upon you in sincerity.

Grant that Synod 2024 may hear your voice in the morning because we put our hope in you.

Show Synod 2024 the way in which we should walk, since we have lifted up our souls unto you.

Deliver Synod 2024 from spiritual enemies, O Lord; we have fled to you.

Teach us to do your will, for you are our God.

Let your good Spirit conduct all the delegates to synod onward to the land of uprightness.

Amen.

Questions for Reflection and/or Conversation

- What are the confusions, the darkneses, and the mysteries in the deep of your life into which you need God's light to shine?



GOD WITH US

*"...And they will call him Emmanuel"
(which means 'God with us')."*

—Matthew 1:23

THURSDAY, MAY 30, 2024 - DAY 26

God With Us: In Troubles

Suggested Bible Reading: Psalm 46:1-3

God is our refuge and strength,
an ever-present help in trouble.
Therefore we will not fear, though the earth give way
and the mountains fall into the heart of the sea,
though its waters roar and foam
and the mountains quake with their surging.

Prayer

By Tristin Mun, who writes, "I attend All Nations Church in the San Fernando Valley, which is north of Los Angeles. Our church is a Korean American church that has Korean and English ministries. I attend the English ministry with my mom, dad, and my older sisters. I also attend GM (God Made), which is a ministry for special needs. I am on the autism spectrum, so I participate in the therapy service. In the past two years I have been blessed and have become a helper for the little ones. I'm filled with the Holy Spirit when I do this. Thank you, Jesus, for giving me a purpose at church!"

Dear Heavenly Father,

I thank you for all the struggles you have helped me to overcome. Psalm 46:1-3 says you are "an ever-present help in trouble," meaning that you help me when times are tough. Because of your grace, I overcame stressful times and issues with my autism. I thank you for empowering my parents with the Holy Spirit to power through my language and behavior problems. The way my life is going, I can feel the Holy Spirit fill me for the glory of God.

I still have a long way to go, so I ask that you continue to help me through the struggles in my life. Though I am not perfect, you helped me use my autism to help others like me, even though it took time to overcome challenges with talking and behaving well. Thank you for filling me with the Holy Spirit and keeping me close to you. Please continue to bless my fellow special-needs friends at GM.

Currently I'm learning to become a teacher's assistant for the little ones. I thank you for allowing me to support and nurture them as they grow. I overcame some of my struggles, and I would like to help the younger kids overcome the same issues I faced. God, please continue to help me overcome my difficulties so that one day I may become a role model for others like me. I pray all this in your name.

Amen.

Questions for Reflection and/or Conversation

- How can we pray an honest prayer about the struggles in our lives?
- In what areas of our lives do we need faith that God will use each of us through the power of the Holy Spirit?



GOD WITH US

*"...And they will call him Immanuel"
(which means 'God with us')."*

—Matthew 1:23

FRIDAY, MAY 31, 2024 - DAY 27

God With Us: In Love and Joy

Suggested Bible Reading: 1 John 4:7-12

Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love. This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him. This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. No one has ever seen God; but if we love one another, God lives in us and his love is made complete in us.

Prayer

By Al Postma, executive director-Canada for the Christian Reformed Church in North America

Note: First John is a letter that is saturated with love. It reminds us that our love for others directly flows from God's love for us, and that God's love took a very active form in sending Jesus to die and rise for us and for our salvation. Since our love for others flows out of God's love for us, our love should give evidence that we are in Christ.

Loving God,

As we approach Synod 2024, we ask that you continue to shower us all with your love. We ask this for delegates, support staff, members, leaders across our denominational community, and ourselves. Remind us of your graciousness to us and of your atoning, life-changing work that you gave to us so freely even when we did not deserve it. As we experience the full force of your love, make us channels of your love to others. May it be that when others experience us, they experience you. As we love one another in all that we say and do, may your love be made complete in us. Amen.

Questions for Reflection and/or Conversation

- We prayed, “May it be that when others experience us, they experience you.”
What do others learn about God through you?
- Ask the Holy Spirit to impress on your heart the depth of God’s love for you.
Then reflect on how that can overflow to others.



GOD WITH US

*"...And they will call him Immanuel"
(which means 'God with us')."*

—Matthew 1:23

SATURDAY, JUNE 1, 2024 - DAY 28

God With Us: In Love and Joy

Suggested Bible Reading: John 15:9-1

"As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love. If you keep my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commands and remain in his love. I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete. My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you."

Prayer

By Emily Zuidema, a third-year nursing student at Dordt University and a member of First CRC in Sioux Center, Iowa

Loving Father,
Your care for us is all encompassing. It is deep and true and rich, bringing us rest in you.

Your handiwork is so full of joy—creation shouts your name and is brought to fullness through your order. God, help us to bear fruit through following your commands.

It is so easy to love at times; remind us to embrace those moments.

We thank you for sweet notes left in lunch boxes. We thank you for snowy driveways scooped by neighbors. We thank you for coworkers who bring us coffee on particularly long days. We thank you for Sunday dinners around the table and for the conversations they come with. We thank you for held hands and lingering hugs when we need them most.

You call us to love others at all times and in all places. Lord, please help us to surrender our selfishness, and forgive us when we fall short. Our true joy comes from complete service to all of your people—not just those with whom we find it

easy to get along. God, grant us empathy and patience, and guide us in all of our interactions with your imagebearers.

Father, we love your law. Help us to live in accordance with it and to praise you in all we do.

Amen.

Questions for Reflection and/or Conversation

- In keeping God's commands, we remain in his love. Jesus tells us this so that our joy may be complete. Where have you experienced joy in keeping the Lord's commands?
- What do you need to confess and repent from in order to experience the fullness of joy in him?

GOD WITH US

*"...And they will call him Immanuel"
(which means 'God with us')."*

—Matthew 1:23

SUNDAY, JUNE 2, 2024 - DAY 29

God With Us: In Love and Joy

Suggested Bible Reading: 1 Peter 1:8-9

Though you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy, for you are receiving the end result of your faith, the salvation of your souls.

Prayer

Spanish

Por Karlos Palacios, quien dice, "Soy pastor comisionado de la CRC desde el año 2000. Ahora estoy sirviendo al Señor ministrando a la iglesia Comunidad de Fe CRC en Kissimmee, Florida. Comunidad de Fe CRC es la primera Iglesia Cristiana Reformada Hispana en el área central del estado de la Florida."

Padre Celestial,

te damos gracias por tu Palabra a través del apóstol Pedro en 1 Pedro 1:8-9. Gracias por recordarnos que nuestro amor no se basa en lo que vemos de Cristo, sino en todo lo que sabemos de Él por fe con acción de gracias. Lo amamos por todo lo que sufrió en la Cruz por nosotros, por la vida que nos da a través de Su Resurrección y por la gloria que nos está preparando en el cielo.

Tú revelaste que el mandamiento más grande para nosotros es amarte, Señor, y amar a nuestro prójimo. Señor, oro para que tu Espíritu guíe a los líderes del Sínodo 2024 en todas las decisiones para tu iglesia. Habrá muchas propuestas para discutir, pero al mismo tiempo la mejor oportunidad para dar amor y misericordia a todos. Oro por dirección a través de tu Palabra. Oro para que lleves a la asamblea a la unidad en una sola Fe, un solo Padre, un solo Salvador, y un solo Espíritu en todas las decisiones. Debemos recordar que nuestro entendimiento espiritual está fundamentado en la Palabra de Dios revelada a nosotros por el Espíritu, la cual es derramada en plenitud

en nuestros corazones para ser transformados a la imagen de Cristo. Te amamos Dios porque Tú nos amaste primero. Salvador mío, moriste para redimirnos, para liberarnos del pecado, vivir en santidad y resucitaste para darnos vida.

Regocijémonos en nuestro corazón. Llenémonos de un gozo inexpressable al pensar en todo lo que has hecho por nosotros. Gracias, en el nombre de Jesús.
Amén.

English

By Karlos Palacios, who says, "I have been a commissioned pastor in the CRC since 2000. I am now serving the Lord by ministering to the Comunidad de Fe CRC ("Community of Faith CRC") in Kissimmee, Florida. Comunidad de Fe CRC is the first Hispanic Christian Reformed church in the central area of the state of Florida."

Heavenly Father,

We thank you for your Word through the apostle Peter in 1 Peter 1:8-9. Thank you for reminding us that our love is not based on what we see of Christ but on all we know about him by faith with thanksgiving. We love him for all that he suffered on the cross for us, for the life he gives us through his resurrection, and for the glory he is preparing for us in heaven.

You revealed that the greatest commandment for us is to love you, Lord, and to love our neighbors. Lord, I pray that your Spirit will guide the leaders of Synod 2024 in all their decisions for your church. There will be many overtures to discuss, but at the same time the best opportunity to give love and mercy to everyone. I pray for direction through your Word. I pray that you would bring the assembly to unity in one faith, one Father, one Savior, and one Spirit in all decisions. We must remember that our spiritual understanding is founded on the Word of God revealed to us by the Spirit, which is poured out in fullness into our hearts to be transformed into the image of Christ. We love you, God, because you loved us first. Savior, you died to redeem us, to free us from sin, to live in holiness, and you rose to give us life.

Let us rejoice in our hearts. Let us be filled with inexpressible joy as we think of all that you have done for us. Thank you, in the name of Jesus.

Amen.

Questions for Reflection and/or Conversation

- How does realizing the immense love that God has for you help you to love those who are similar to you? Different from you? Even your enemies?
- As you reflect on God's grace, how does this truth fill you with an inexpressible and glorious joy?



GOD WITH US

*"...And they will call him Immanuel"
(which means 'God with us')."*

—Matthew 1:23

MONDAY, JUNE 3, 2024 - DAY 30

God With Us: In Doubt

Suggested Bible Reading: John 20:24-29

Now Thomas (also known as Didymus), one of the Twelve, was not with the disciples when Jesus came. So the other disciples told him, "We have seen the Lord!"

But he said to them, "Unless I see the nail marks in his hands and put my finger where the nails were, and put my hand into his side, I will not believe."

A week later his disciples were in the house again, and Thomas was with them. Though the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you!" Then he said to Thomas, "Put your finger here; see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Stop doubting and believe."

Thomas said to him, "My Lord and my God!"

Then Jesus told him, "Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed."

Prayer

By Barb Hibma, the prayer coordinator for Classis Heartland, who resides in Sheldon, Iowa

Heavenly Father,
Forgive us in our days and hours of unbelief.
Forgive us in our days of doubt and fear.

We believe all things work together for the good of those who love you, God, and to those who are called according to your purpose. We affirm that we love you, Lord Jesus, and that you have called us. You have inscribed us in the palms of your hands.

We put our faith and trust in your divine purpose for all of our days.

We trust you, Lord. You are our God. Go with us in the days ahead. You are the One who dwells with us, who protects us, and who will not leave us or forsake us.

Your kindness does not depart from us. Your covenant of peace surrounds us. We pray for your mercy to us.

You are our deliverer, our comforter, our keeper, our hiding place, our refuge and strength, and a very present help in trouble.

You call us by our names because we are yours. You have redeemed us, so we do not live in fear. You strengthen us and uphold us with your righteous right hand.

Your presence is what we long for. We trust in you, the Lord our God. How great is the Father's love for us.

Yours, O Lord, is the greatness, the power and the glory, the victory, and the majesty; for all that is in heaven and in earth is yours; yours is the kingdom, O Lord, and you are exalted as head overall.

In the name of the Savior, Jesus Christ, who endured the cross,
Amen.

(1 Chronicles 29:11; Isaiah 49:16; Isaiah 41:10; Psalm 46:1; Isaiah 43:1; Psalm 9:9; Psalm 34:19; Isaiah 54:10; Deuteronomy 31:6; Romans 8:28)

Questions for Reflection and/or Conversation

- Jesus calls you by name because you are a child of the Father. How does this truth shape you when facing doubt?
- In our times of doubt Jesus says "Peace be with you." Ask God for his peace even though you may not see things clearly right now.



GOD WITH US

*"...And they will call him Immanuel"
(which means 'God with us')."*

—Matthew 1:23

TUESDAY, JUNE 4, 2024 - DAY 31

God With Us: In Doubt

Suggested Bible Reading: Proverbs 3:5-8

Trust in the LORD with all your heart
and lean not on your own understanding;
in all your ways submit to him,
and he will make your paths straight.

Do not be wise in your own eyes;
fear the LORD and shun evil.
This will bring health to your body
and nourishment to your bones.

Prayer

By Henry Kranenburg, the lead pastor at West End Christian Reformed Church in Edmonton, Alberta

Lord God, we confess our trust in you. To confess this trust is part of our faith, part of our theology, part of your Word. We know this trust is good, not because we are so decent at trusting but because you are so worthy as the object of our trust.

At the same time we confess that although you are fully trustworthy, our trust is imperfect. Often we trust you only with part of our heart or only in the matters we understand fairly well. We tend to limit our trust in you to the ways of life where we already submit to you, or in ways with which we are already personally or culturally comfortable. We do trust in you, but deep down we often do so conditionally: we lack trust when we sense you are not making our paths straight. But here too, Lord, we acknowledge that what may be straight to you might seem anything but that to us.

So in trust we ask you to help us with our trust. Help us not to be wise in our own eyes but to look for your wisdom in all we do. Let your wisdom dwell in our hearts through faith. Help us not just to trust you when we have certainty but especially when we don't. . . . Especially then let us look to you because you are worthy of our trust.

May our trust in you—individually, with our faith community, with our denomination, and with the worldwide body of Christ—lead to humility without despair, dependence without fear of abandonment, submission without fear.

Receive and grow our trust, such as it is, through the one who is the Word, God with us. Amen.

Questions for Reflection and/or Conversation

- Where in your life are you trusting God but are not seeing it as a straight path? Name this and ask God to help you grow in trust.
- How does understanding that God is worthy of our trust help when trusting is difficult?



GOD WITH US

*"...And they will call him Immanuel"
(which means 'God with us')."*

—Matthew 1:23

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 5, 2024 - DAY 32

God With Us: In Doubt

Suggested Bible Reading: Mark 9:21-24

Jesus asked the boy's father, "How long has he been like this?"

"From childhood," he answered. "It has often thrown him into fire or water to kill him. But if you can do anything, take pity on us and help us."

"If you can?" said Jesus. "Everything is possible for one who believes."

Immediately the boy's father exclaimed, "I do believe; help me overcome my unbelief!"

Prayer

By Steven Berkenpas, pastor of Living Hope CRC, Abbotsford, British Columbia

Lord, help us to respond with the immediacy of this boy's father—an immediacy that is open, honest, and humble before you. "I do believe; help me overcome my unbelief!"

We have uninvited voices of doubt that swirl around within us. It can come in many forms. We don't believe that you can mend hurts from things done by the church. We don't believe that you can pave a way forward for the denomination. We don't believe that your work of salvation is enough—and we slave away trying to mend things on our own . . . "help us in our unbelief!" Move past the doubts that can weigh so heavy, and give us comfort through the Holy Spirit. Draw us into the comfort that comes in our wholly belonging to you. Remind us that through the cross, we have the ultimate victory in you, that our encounters with Jesus are met with the words of assurance "Everything is possible for the one who believes."

In the midst of the voices within us that speak doubts, into any and all of those places, we also claim the truth “I do believe.” Caught in a paradox of belief in the midst of unbelief, we respond like this father caring for his son—believing that you can heal all wounds, that you can draw us into flourishing. And in the nagging pulls of unbelief, the doubts that wander their way into our thoughts, our words, our actions, our anxieties, our emotions . . . help us. Fortify us with your strength, allowing us to confront our weakness. Open our eyes to the possibilities when you are leading us. We pray this in Jesus’ name.

Amen.

Questions for Reflection and/or Conversation

- Where in your life are you praying, believing that God can show up and yet doubting that he will? Confess that to God and ask him to help you in your unbelief.
- Since God is with us, how does that reassure you even in your doubt?

GOD WITH US

*"...And they will call him Emmanuel"
(which means 'God with us')."*

—Matthew 1:23

THURSDAY, JUNE 6, 2024 - DAY 33

God With Us: In Assurance

Suggested Bible Reading: *Colossians 1:15-18*

The Son is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For in him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things have been created through him and for him. He is before all things, and in him all things hold together. And he is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy.

Prayer

By Raf Alaskarov, a missionary support specialist working as a part of the advancement and donor relations team for Resonate Global Mission. He is based in Niagara Falls, Ontario.

Russian

Отец наш небесный, мы благодарим тебя за дар сына твоего, в котором все держится вместе. Он - центр и вершина всего, Логос, кем было создано все что есть. Он - сияние твоей славы и точное отображение твоей сущности, кто, хоть и был в образе Бога, но снизошел до нас и принял вид страдающего слуги, похожего на нас всех. А теперь Иисус, как первый среди воскресших из мертвых дарует нам уверенность в вечной жизни через нашу веру в него.

Молим Тебя, Отче, чтобы мы никогда не теряли уверенность в этом великом даре, ибо у нас есть Пастырь, любящий и заботящийся о своей пастве. Он всегда с нами и в нем мы строимся вместе в обитель, созданную Духом. Напоминай нам, Господи, что мы, подобно тому, как тело состоит из многих органов, составляющих в совокупности одно тело, так же и Христос. Как тело

едино и в нем много членов, так и мы, церковь во Христе, составляем единое тело. Мы молимся за уверенность в том, что Ты, сохранишь свою паству, свой праведный остаток во всех поколениях, и по твоей воле твоя церковь восторжествует. Укрепи теперь нашу веру и дай нам пребывать в твоей благодати. Слава тебе Господи, аминь!

English

Our heavenly Father, we thank you for the gift of your Son, in whom all things hold together, who is the center and pinnacle of all. He is the Logos by whom and through whom all things were created. He is the radiance of your glory and the exact imprint of your nature, who, even though he was in the form of God, he lowered himself and took the form of a suffering servant in the likeness of all of us. And now Jesus, as the firstborn from the dead, gives us the assurance of eternal life through our faith in him.

We pray, Father, that we may never let go of the assurance of this great gift to us, for we have a shepherd who loves and cares for his flock. He is with us, and in him we are built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit. Remind us, O Lord, that we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another. Just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with us the church in Christ. We pray for the assurance that you preserve your flock, your righteous remnant across all generations, and by your will your church will prevail. Strengthen our faith in the meantime and let us abide in your grace. To you be all the glory. Amen!

Questions for Reflection and/or Conversation

- In what ways are you assured that God preserves his flock?
- When you think of Jesus being the head of the body, the church, how does that give you confidence in difficult times?



GOD WITH US

*"...And they will call him Immanuel"
(which means 'God with us')."*

—Matthew 1:23

FRIDAY, JUNE 7, 2024 - DAY 34

God With Us: In Assurance

Suggested Bible Reading: Deuteronomy 31:8

"The LORD himself goes before you and will be with you; he will never leave you nor forsake you. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged."

Prayer

By John Schuurman, a minister emeritus of the Christian Reformed Church, having served First CRC in Sioux Falls, South Dakota, and Wheaton (Ill.) CRC

Holy and merciful God, we come to you in this season before synod confessing that we are intimidated by what seems to be a daunting mountain range lying before us—one that we must cross. There are many of us in our company, and we seek to find a way through this obstacle together. But the mountains are formidable, and our early attempts have proved disappointing and dangerous. Because of your mighty acts that have preserved and helped us before, we pray today that you will act again to show us the way.

We pray for those who will lead us at synod. Comfort them with the assurance of your steadfast love. Grant them wisdom, clarity of thought, courage, and the faith that knows that selfless service in your name and for your church is always blessed. We thank you for them and pray that you will help them sleep.

We pray for the delegates as they gather from many points on the continent. Help them to study the materials prayerfully. Guide them by your Spirit to know when it would be helpful to speak—and when not to—in the various meetings. Grant all of them the ability to listen with charity. We thank you for their willingness to serve, and we pray that you will help them sleep.

Lord God, your church stands today and looks at the steep and hazardous way ahead. We will need your love to make it through. In as much as we are confident of your love, help each of us to cling to one another as beloved and respected brothers and sisters in Christ. As we step out together, help us to remember that the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours now and forever.

Triune God, help us.
Amen.

Questions for Reflection and/or Conversation

- With daunting mountain ranges before us, how are you assured that this world and the church belongs to God?
- What does clinging to one another look like for you in the midst of disagreements? How do we see Jesus loving those he disagreed with?



GOD WITH US

*"...And they will call him Emmanuel"
(which means 'God with us')."*

—Matthew 1:23

SATURDAY, JUNE 8, 2024 - DAY 35

God With Us: In Assurance

Suggested Bible Reading: Revelation 21:3-5

I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Look! God's dwelling place is now among the people, and he will dwell with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. 'He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death' or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away."

He who was seated on the throne said, "I am making everything new!" Then he said, "Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true."

Prayer

By Catherine Chan, a member of Grace Christian Reformed Church in Toronto, Ontario. She is the spouse of the late CRC pastor Timothy Chan. She currently serves in an outreach ministry in Toronto: FaithHopeLove Ministry.

Dear Lord,

We pray for everyone attending synod. We pray that they will enjoy the presence of our triune God like never before. Preside over their conversations and decisions. We pray that individuals who come to synod with heavy hearts will reach out to you, our Lord and Savior, and gratefully receive your assurance that the old order of things has passed away, and that you, our God, are making everything new. We pray that the synod attendees and the decisions that they make as a body will illuminate others to know and experience your presence and assurance and let you, God, be God.

Amen.

Questions for Reflection and/or Conversation

- Where is your hope that God is making all things new?
- What is your prayer for the people who will be attending synod, that they will know “that God himself will be with them”?

GOD WITH US

*"...And they will call him Emmanuel"
(which means 'God with us')."*

—Matthew 1:23

SUNDAY, JUNE 9, 2024 - DAY 36

God With Us: On Mission

Suggested Bible Reading: Psalm 56:3-4

When I am afraid, I put my trust in you.

In God, whose word I praise—
in God I trust and am not afraid.

What can mere mortals do to me?

Prayer

By Adrian Jacobs, who is Ganosono of the Turtle Clan of the Cayuga Nation from Six Nations Reserve in southern Ontario. He is father of five and grandfather of four and the CRCNA senior leader for Indigenous justice and reconciliation, working out of the CRCNA office in Burlington, Ontario.

Mohawk

Sonkwaiatison, Takwaienha, Kanistensera, tanon Iontsenha,
Tekatkakwarisi katkato kiotkon takwanoronkwa nonon wennisaratenion
Teiotsathaien tsi ratiiesas.

Katahonsiiost a-onkwtontene saianeronestonkwa nonen teiaonhare
rontatakwataniens ne iatetehonsterista nonkwe.

Aiawens ne satonnitonraskwon a saswate tsiakotirewahta ne onkwe.

Tasakenkwaronniat weserakon ne aonsakarakewe onwatsiake ne
iakoriota o-ienkwara.

Aiawens kahnekiio aknekira tsi niore iakoriota tanon tsi oienkwaroskon
tsi watsatatenion.

lesos, seriwahtonta ne wahetken tanon sesetsienta nonkwe.

lahte iotahateron, kariwii serihonnieni tehkahere takwawis,

tetisatsate ne a-on saiakwatkwatako tanon taonsakaweriiake ne wahetken.

Tanon aiawens skennon a onsonon onwatsiakekon ne Onkwanistenha. Etonaiawen.

English

Creator,

Open my eyes, let me see always that you love us when there are days that are cloudy and where people are suffering.

Let me listen well to hear your goodness always when there is the great noise of bombing by those who do not care about people.

It is the wish that your mercy will extinguish the fire of punishment they have against people.

Make the smoke of fragrant grasses to wipe (smudging) clean the earth of fires and smoke that kill us.

It is the wish to find and drink good water because the clouds are full of toxic smoke.

Jesus, you who make bad things disappear and you who heal people, it is not a dangerous road, the good Word/news that you teach. You give us everything; your outstretched hands help and heal us and settle the storms of what is cruel.

And it is the wish for peace all over Mother Earth.

Let it be so.

Questions for Reflection and/or Conversation

- When the world has been polluted by sin, where do you need to grow in trusting that even in this God is with us?
- How are your prayers when you are afraid bolstered with the assurance that God is with us?

GOD WITH US

"...And they will call him Emmanuel"
(which means 'God with us')."

—Matthew 1:23

MONDAY, JUNE 10, 2024 - DAY 37

God With Us: On Mission

Suggested Bible Reading: Joshua 1:9

"Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged, for the LORD your God will be with you wherever you go."

Prayer

By Munchul Kim, who serves as a chaplain for the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation

Korean

우리와 함께 하시는 하나님: 선교

"내가 네게 명령한 것이 아니냐 강하고 담대하라 두려워하지 말며 놀라지 말라 네가 어디로 가든지 네 하나님 여호와와가 너와 함께 하느니라 하시니라" (여호수아 1:9)

은혜의 하나님,
저희를 은혜로 구원하시고 하나님 자녀 삼아 주심에 감사와 찬양을 드립니다. 죄 많은 세상에서 구별된 자로 우리를 부르시고 하나님의 대사로서의 선교적 사명을 갖고 살아갈 수 있는 특권까지 주심에 더더욱 감사합니다. 특별히 우리를 CRC 교단의 멤버로 부르셔서 주의 사랑을 구체적으로 배우며 복음을 증거할 수 있도록 인도하심에 감사합니다.

긍휼의 하나님,
비록 은총과 특권을 누리에도 불구하고, 우리의 선교적 소명과 정체성을 잃고 하나님을 거스릴 때가 자주 있었음을 고백합니다. 가나안 입성을 코 앞에 두고도 모세를 잃었다는 이유로 절망하며 용기를 잃어버린 여호수아와 이스라엘처럼, 우리 역시 불확실한 현실에 직면할 때 낙심하며 주를 향한 믿음을 쓸모 없는 것으로 인식할 때가 있었음을 고백합니다. 구별된 자로서 살아감으로 세상에서 하나님을

증거하라는 소명과 정체를 잃은 저희의 죄를 용서하여 주소서. 혹여 우리 교단의 방향이 또 총회가 하나님의 뜻을 분별하기 보다는 우리 자신의 뜻을 이루는 데 초점을 모은 적이 있다면 용서하여 주소서.

약속의 하나님,

비록 우리는 연약하지만 우리와 함께 하시는 하나님과 함께 할 때 우리도 강해질 수 있음을 믿게 하소서. 비록 모세를 잃고 낙심에 빠졌지만 “강하고 담대하라 ... 네가 어디로 가든지 네 하나님 여호와와 함께 하느니라” (수 1:9) 는 약속 말씀에 힘입어 이스라엘을 가나안으로 이끈 여호수아를 기억합니다. 혹여 장기간의 팬데믹 후유증, 인플레이션, 전쟁, 양극화, 상대주의 등으로 인해 두려움과 낙심에 빠져 있다면 변함 없는 하나님의 약속 말씀으로 힘과 용기를 얻어 전진할 수 있도록 도와주소서. 총회 참석하는 총대들이 다양한 목소리로 인한 갈등과 긴장을 경험할 때에 함께 하시는 하나님으로 인해 잘 극복할 수 있도록 도와주소서.

승리의 하나님

주님을 잃고 의심과 절망에 빠졌던 불완전한 열 한명의 제자들 (마 28:16-17) 에게 지상 최대의 사명과 더불어 “...내가 항상 함께 하겠노라” (마 28:18-20) 며 힘과 용기를 주신 부활하신 주님을 기억합니다. 비록 저희는 불완전하고 약할지라도 주님의 약속을 기억하며, 항상 우리와 함께 하시는 성령 하나님과 더불어 강하고 담대하게 하나님의 선교에 동참하도록 인도하소서. 우리의 총회가, 총대들이, 그리고 전 교단이 주님의 지상 최대사명을 늘 기억하며 함께 하시는 하나님의 인도하심 따라 복음증거에 매진하게 도와주소서.

임마누엘로 세상 끝날까지 우리와 항상 함께 하시는 예수 그리스도 이름으로 기도하옵나이다.

English

Gracious God,

We thank and praise you for redeeming us with grace and adopting us as your children. Thank you for setting us apart in a sinful world and for the privilege of living with a missionary calling as your ambassadors, God. We especially thank you for calling us as members of the CRC, enabling us to learn about your love in a concrete way, and guiding us to testify about the gospel to the world.

Merciful God,

We confess that we have lost our calling for mission and identity and often rebel against you, even as we enjoy your grace and privilege. Joshua and the Israelites fell into despair when they lost Moses just as they were about to enter the promised land. We too confess to feeling hopeless and losing our faith when facing uncertainty. Forgive us, God, for losing our identity and calling to live as your witnesses as your chosen people. If there have been times when our denomination's

direction or synod has focused more on fulfilling our own desires rather than discerning your will, forgive us.

Faithful God,

Though we are weak, help us to believe that we can be strong when we are with you, God who is always with us. Despite losing Moses and feeling discouraged, Joshua found strength in the promise, “Be strong and courageous. . . . the LORD your God will be with you wherever you go” (Joshua 1:9). If we find ourselves in fear and discouragement due to the effects of the pandemic, inflation, war, polarization, and relativism, grant us strength and courage through your unchanging promises to move forward. Lord, grant the delegates attending synod the grace to be respectful and the ability to listen to each other when conflicts and tensions arise from diverse voices.

Victorious God,

The imperfect eleven disciples fell into doubt and despair when they thought they had lost Jesus. Yet we remember the resurrected Lord giving them the Great Commission along with strength and courage: “I will always be with you” (Matthew 28:18-20). Though we are imperfect and weak, help us to remember the promises of the resurrected Lord. Guide us so that we can participate in God’s mission with joy, always empowered by the Holy Spirit who is with us. Guide the synod, the delegates, and the entire denomination to remember the Great Commission. May we be empowered by the Holy Spirit as we testify about the gospel.

We pray in the name of Jesus Christ, Emmanuel, who is always with us until the end of the age.

Questions for Reflection and/or Conversation

나눔/성찰을 위한 질문들

- How does God’s promise become manifest in despondent Joshua before entering Canaan? (Joshua 1:9-10)
가나안 입성을 앞두고 실의에 빠진 여호수아에게 주신 하나님의 약속은 무엇이었나요? (수 1:1-9)
- What transformation can be seen in the imperfect eleven disciples after receiving the Great Commission and the promise given by the Lord at that time? (Matthew 28:18-20; Acts 1-2)
실의에 빠진 불완전한 열한명의 제자들에게 하나님이 주신 지상최대 사명과 약속은 어떤 변화를 이끌었을까요? (마 28:16-20)
- Fundamentally, where does the strength to bear our calling on mission come from?
우리에게 주어진 선교적 소명을 감당하는 근본적 힘은 어디에서 비롯될까요?

GOD WITH US

"...And they will call him Immanuel"
(which means 'God with us')."

—Matthew 1:23

TUESDAY, JUNE 11, 2024 - DAY 38

God With Us: On Mission

Suggested Bible Reading: Matthew 28:20

"... teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

Prayer

By Sylvie Charliekaram, an elder and coleader of the Farsi ministry at Willowdale CRC in Toronto, Ontario, and a global partner missionary with Resonate Global Mission

Farsi

،زیزع ینامسآ ردپ

می آی تروضح هب ،وت شیاتس زا هتشارفارب ییاهادص و یرازگرکش زا هدنکآ ییاهبلق اب
ام اب هراومه ،نیمز و نامسآ قلاخ ،وت .می یامن رارقا ار تروضح هوکش و تاکرب یناوارفات
مینک یم میدقت تروضح هب ار دوخ شیاتس و ساپس ،رطاخ نی هب و ،یتسه

نامز لوط رد وا مالک هک ،مینونمم تی عقاو هب ،حیسیم یسیع ،ترسپ هیده رطابخ وت زا ،ادنوادخ
رگا یتح ،دیورب هک اج ره دیشاب نیئمطم: "دنکیم نیمضت ام هب و هدوب زادنا نینط هتسویپ
،شم آرا ،هدعونی ارد .(۲۰ هی آ ۲۸ یتم)" !میتسه امش هارمه هشیمه نم ،دشاب ایند مطقن نیرت رود
مینیبیم اجر ب اپ دیم و تردق

اعقاو ،ینکیم تیداده یگدنز فل تخم لوصف رد ار ام و یتسه ام هارمه هشیمه مکنی زا ،ردپ یا
ار ام زور ره وت ضیف و ،تسا مدرک هطاح ار ام رپس دننام وت تبجم .میرازگساپس وت زا
و رادی اپ ،رضاح وت ،ام طیارش هب هجوت نودب مکنی زا نانیمطا یارب ار وت .دنکیم تیحام
می یاتس یم ،یتسه ریذپانرییغت

ار وت تسد درواتسد ات نک اطع تمکح ام هب ،مىنکىم روبع ىگدنز ىاهرىسم زا هک ىماگنه
رون رد ندومىپ زا هک ىداهش و ،مىور شىپ وت تىاده اب ات امرف ل طع ىنتورف ،مىهد صىخشت
دنشاب وت ىرادافو و تبجم باتزاب نام ىاهىگدنز هک دشاب .مىوش دنمه هب ،دىآىم وت

هب شىاتس و ىرازگرکش اب ار اعدن ىا ،ام رضاح هشىمه و هدنز دنوادخ ،حىسم ىسىع مان هب
مىنک ىم دنلب تروضح

نىمآ

English

Dear Heavenly Father,

With hearts filled with gratitude and voices lifted in praise, we come before you, acknowledging the abundance of your blessings and the majesty of your presence. You, the Creator of heaven and earth, are with us always, and for this we offer our thanks and praise.

Lord, we are truly grateful for the gift of your Son, Jesus Christ, whose words resonate through time, assuring us, "I am with you always, to the very end of the age" (Matthew 28:20). In this promise we find comfort, strength, and unwavering hope.

Thank you, Father, for being our constant companion, guiding us through the varied seasons of life. Your love surrounds us like a shield, and your grace sustains us each day. We praise you for the assurance that, regardless of our circumstances, you are present, steadfast, and unchanging.

As we journey through life's pathways, grant us the wisdom to recognize your hand at work, the humility to yield to your guidance, and the joy that comes from walking in your light. May our lives reflect your love and faithfulness.

In the name of Jesus Christ, our living and ever-present Lord, we offer this prayer with gratitude and praise.

Amen.

Questions for Reflection and/or Conversation

- In what ways do you find comfort, strength, and hope in Jesus' words, "I am with you always"?
- How do Jesus' words, "I am with you always" give you confidence in being "on mission" in his world?



GOD WITH US

*"...And they will call him Emmanuel"
(which means 'God with us')."*

—Matthew 1:23

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 12, 2024 - DAY 39

God With Us

Suggested Bible Reading: Revelation 21:3-5

I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Look! God's dwelling place is now among the people, and he will dwell with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. 'He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death' or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away."

He who was seated on the throne said, "I am making everything new!" Then he said, "Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true."

Prayer

By Diane Dykgraaf, a retired CRC employee who served in Worship Ministries and now serves on the CRC Prayer Team. She attends Friendship CRC in Byron Center, Michigan.

"Look, God's home is now among his people! He will live with them, and they will be his people. God himself will be with them" (Rev. 21:3, NLT).

Sovereign God, from before creation and into the new creation, you are God.

We praise you . . .

for creating, loving, keeping.

We thank you . . .

for the promise of home with you.

"[God] will wipe every tear from their eyes, and there will be no more death or sorrow or crying or pain" (Rev. 21:4, NLT).

Whose tears, God?

Your tears, my child.

And the tears of all . . .

who are misunderstood, accused, maligned,
who labor for the gospel, in established or marginal places,
who experience pain, injury, abuse,
who are unloved, lonely, cast out,
who see death, war, and persecution. . . .

And the one sitting on the throne said, "Look, I am making everything new!" (Rev. 21:5, NLT).

God, even now you are making everything new.

Show us how to work for the day when . . .

creation stops groaning;
the feast table is set for all;
all division, separation, and conflict are swept away in Jesus;
every tribe, language, and nation worship together as one. . . .

Accept our work, our discernment, our worship, and our love as a testimony that we are part of your great kingdom coming.

As Synod 2024 begins, we come as children, not in our knowing but in our learning. We come with hands lifted in surrender and need, with eyes fixed on Jesus and hearts open to the Spirit's voice. You are our God; we need you. We will experience doubt and frustration. Remind us, Father, that we are not lost. We know where we are going—to that place where everything will be made new. Everything. You, God, will do it. We know this because you are trustworthy and true. And you are with us. Always and forever. Amen.

Questions for Reflection and/or Conversation

- How does the hope of God's eternal kingdom inform how you live today?
- Where in your life are you holding on to the hope that God will make all things new?



GOD WITH US

*"...And they will call him Emmanuel"
(which means 'God with us')."*

—Matthew 1:23

THURSDAY, JUNE 13, 2024 - DAY 40

God With Us

Suggested Bible Reading: John 15:1-8

"I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful. You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you. Remain in me, as I also remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me.

"I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing. If you do not remain in me, you are like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned. If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples."

Prayer

By Zachary King, general secretary of the CRCNA and a member of Fuller Avenue CRC in Grand Rapids, Michigan

We give thanks and praise to you, O Jesus, our fruitful vine.
We are thirsty and hungry for your nourishment.

We give thanks and praise to you, O God, our faithful gardener.
Though we are afraid, we offer ourselves joyfully for your pruning.

We give thanks and praise to you, O Spirit, grower of green shoots.
We want to bud and blossom in your verdant love.

As we enter this fortieth and final day of preparation, we know what we need most—to remain in you as you remain in us.

We've been grafted into you, O Holy Vine.
But often we forget that our sustenance comes from the root.
Bind us ever more strongly to you, that we may be your fruitful branch.

There are thorns growing in our heart; our foliage is shriveled.
We bear a harvest of pride, arrogance, and grumbling.
Prune us now, we pray, O Gardener, but be gentle.

You are the giver of new growth, O Holy Spirit.
But we stifle your power through our fears and anxieties.
Bring forth buds in us in the coming week.

You invite us, "Remain in me, as I also remain in you."
You, O Jesus, have always been with us.

Remain in us, Lord Jesus, when we laugh and sigh.
Remain in us, Lord Jesus, when we sing and cry.
Remain in us, Lord Jesus, when we hope and despair.
Remain in us, Lord Jesus, when we trust and fear.
Remain in us, Lord Jesus, through this week of synod.

Lord Jesus, you have loved us with the everlasting love of your Father—we in you
and you in us.
Remain in us, Lord Jesus, that we may bear much fruit, showing ourselves to be
your disciples.
Amen.

Questions for Reflection and/or Conversation

- Where might God need to prune in your life so that you may bear more fruit?
- What will it take to remain in the Lord Jesus in what you are facing in the weeks ahead?