

# 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.



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(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?



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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?



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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

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(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?



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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?



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**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.