

# 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?



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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.



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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?





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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?



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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?



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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?



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—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”?