

Prayers of the Church Guidelines

“First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all people, for kings and all who are in high positions, that we may lead a peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way” (1 Timothy 2:1-2).

I thank God for your willingness to make “supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings” on behalf of the church and the world. The Prayer of the Church is a powerful and almighty thing. As Luther explains, “We must take to heart the needs of all people and pray for them in real sympathy and in true faith and trust. Oh, if any congregation were to pray in this way, so that a common, earnest, heartfelt cry of the whole people were to rise up to God, what immeasurable virtue and help would result from such a prayer” (*Luther’s Works*, Vol 44).

I have written this little guideline to help you in constructing the Prayer of the Church. When writing the prayers try to include these simple pieces. I have also included an example prayer on the next page.

The Invitation – Invite congregation into prayer. Because the Prayers of the Church are prayers for the world, the traditional invitation is, “Let us pray for the whole people of God in Christ Jesus and for all people according to their needs.” Obviously, one does not need to use this traditional invitation; however, it is a good invitation to use.

The Petitions – The petitions are the place in the prayer where we fervently pray for the Church and intercede for the world. Martin Marty once said, “Intercession is loving your neighbor on your knees.” Examples of petitions are:

- For the local congregation and the Church at large
- For right teaching
- For protection from the assaults of the devil
- For the government
- For those who are at war
- For those who suffer
- For the welfare, safety, and health of ourselves and others
- For the conversion of the unbeliever
- For the restoration of those who have left the Church.

Since the Prayer of the Church is the congregation’s prayer, you can add their voices to the petition by the words, “Lord in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**”

Finally, because this is a prayer, and not a sermon, the prayers should be vertical in nature and not horizontal. This is not a time to tell the people what to do. Rather, it is a time to ask God for what we need. Also, be mindful of the time given to you by using words with great economy. “A rambling, undisciplined prayer is often distracting. So too is a long or complex prayer” (Huffman, p. 44). Thank you again for serving in this high and holy ministry.

Resources

Huffman, Walter. Prayer of the Faithful. Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1992

Kinnaman, Scott. Worshiping with Angels and Archangels. St. Louis: Concordia, 2006.

Example of the Prayer of the Church

Invitation -

“Let us pray for the whole people of God in Christ Jesus and for all people according to their needs.”

Petitions -

Lord, you have been our dwelling place in all generations. Before the mountains were brought forth, before you had formed the earth and the world, from everlasting to everlasting you are God. Continue to uphold your creation by the power of your Word – In our homes, in our schools, in our government, in work and at play, in all calamities and disasters.

A: Lord, in your mercy;

P: Here our prayer

Continue to uphold your church through your Word and Sacraments.

A: Lord, in your mercy;

P: Here our prayer

Watch over our missionaries the Christopherson, Elias, and Williams families.

A: Lord, in your mercy;

P: Here our prayer

Continue to send your Spirit to open hearts, to guide us, to help us against the Evil One.

A: Lord, in your mercy;

P: Here our prayer

We pray for those who are sick. Especially (insert names). Keep each one of us, in all the fragility and brokenness of this life, now and at the end.

A: Lord, in your mercy;

P: Here our prayer

Transition into Lord's Prayer -

Lord, your steadfast love never ceases. Your mercies never come to an end. They are new every morning. Great is your faithfulness. You have made us your own, therefore we will hope in you. We pray these petitions in the name of your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord who taught us to pray...