

Women of Faith with Arms Wide Open

PRAYERS for WOMEN lovingly written for you by North Carolina Clergy Women

Prayer for clarity/vision

Prayer for children

Prayer for those suffering chronic pain

Prayer for healing

Prayer against fear and worry

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Prayer for clarity/vision:

open my eyes...

Open the eyes of my heart, God, to
see the holiness of every breath, of every being.

Open the eyes of my heart, God, to
see wonder in every moment, in every experience.

Open the eyes of my heart, God, to
see the pain of my sisters and brothers,
to share it, to work to heal it- all part of the
shared reality of being interconnected.

Open the eyes of my heart, God, to
see the incredible beauty of creation,
to acknowledge my misuse and abuse
of its treasures.

Open the eyes of my heart, God, and

of my eyes, that I might hear both the
life-shattering beauty of music and the
heart-shattering cries of pain resounding
through life's corridors.

Let me live with arms wide open
to embrace and savor every bit of life
which comes my way, not worrying,
or weighing its value to the 'world' but
rather welcoming whatever comes as
my portion of what is to be learned,
inculcated, celebrated.

Open the eyes of my heart, God.
Let it be so.

The Rev. Linda Faltin, Retired pastor, writer

Prayer for children:

Loving Father -

Thank you for the precious gift of children and grandchildren in our lives, for the amazing opportunity to love them, to enjoy ordinary moments and celebrate special times in life with them. Care for them, keep them safe, and help them to grow in faith in you. Amen

The Rev. Ruth Ann Sipe, Pastor of Mt. Zion Lutheran Church, Richfield, NC and grandmother of triplets

Prayer for those suffering chronic pain:

O God of healing and wholeness, fill me with your abundant grace and help your healing Spirit to wash over me this day. Enable me to move without pain so that I may be your hands and feet this day. Be with all who suffer with daily pain. Ease their burden and fill us all with your peace. I praise and thank you for your healing touch. Amen

The Rev. Judy Lewis Copeland, Interim pastor at St. Martin's Lutheran Church in Albemarle

Prayer for healing:

O Healing One, we pray for the touch of your healing hand on all those in need – those broken in mind or spirit or body. By your touch, bring healing and comfort and peace to their lives. Amen.

The Rev. Dr. Jane Mitcham, Retired pastor and former synod bishop's staff member

Prayer against fear and worry:

Lord, when storms surround me and I am in danger of sinking, I will not focus on the violent winds and crashing waves. Instead, I will keep my eyes on you, for you are my helper and the winds and waves obey your voice. I will not worry and meditate on negative news, lies, doubts, and fears, but instead I will meditate on what your Word says, and your peace which surpasses all understanding mounts guard over my heart and mind. No matter what dark valley of death I may walk through, I fear no evil for you are with me and your protecting rod and your guiding staff comfort me. I take your Word that says you will keep me and my loved ones' going out and coming in from this time forth and forevermore. Because you are my light and my salvation, my refuge and stronghold, I will not be afraid of any evil, for nothing can separate me from your love in Christ Jesus, Amen.

Scripture refs: Matthew 14:23-36; Philippians 4:6-7; Psalm 23; Psalm 121; Psalm 27; Romans 8:31-39

The Rev. Jenni Zima, Pastor of Friedens Lutheran Church, Gibsonville, NC

Prayer for strength or times of sorrow:

Jesus the Christ, you have redeemed us, named us and claimed us in such a way that nothing – nothing in all the world – can separate us from your love for us. Sometimes it seems that nothing but trouble and pain and grief and sorrow consume our days, and yet, when we look to you we find the strength and the comfort and the peace to continue to put one foot in front of the other. Remind us every day that you walk with us and that if we but stay close to you, you will provide all that we need. Amen.

The Rev. Dr. Jane Mitcham, Retired pastor and former synod bishop's staff member

Prayer during depression

depression is its name...

Immobilized this morning,
unable to do even the simplest
tasks, unable to see the light
in the surrounding, enfolding
darkness. I know it's called depression...
and as the moon wanes, it pulls
my spirit with it...down, down, down
into the vortex...in spite of yesterday's
laughter, in spite of Saturday's fun...

O God of Grace, O God who populates
even the depths, come to my rescue
this day. Thrust your hand into my
swirling darkness that I may cling
to it and not be lost, not be swallowed
up by the threatening dark.

Let me rest in the certainty that
this, too, shall pass...
this, too, shall pass...
this, too, shall pass.

The Rev Linda Faltin, Retired pastor, writer

Prayer for sleep

Lack of Sleep
It is hard to be mindful
when you are tired...
awareness of the value
of each moment slips
away when the body
reels from too little sleep.
Exercise takes a back
seat even though it is
needed even more for
stress release...and
crankiness elbows out
compassion.

Patient, Loving God,
walk with this tired child
of yours this day. Grant
some tiny oases of rest
here & there among the
daily tasks. Soothe my
irritated & roughened
edges with the balm of
your understanding and
grant that I may find
peace in the maelstrom,
knowing that I do not
walk alone.

The Rev Linda Faltin, Retired pastor, writer

Prayer for the forsaken:

Gracious Lord, we pray for all those for whom no one prays. You know their names. You know their needs. Open our eyes to see them, our hearts to respond to them, and direct our feet to go to them and care for them as you would have us do. Amen.

The Rev. Dr. Jane Mitcham, Retired pastor and former synod bishop's staff member

Prayer when seeking direction:

Which way, Lord?

I want you to ease and enslave me.

Lead me blindfolded

with ears muffled

by the nose

down a

narrow

tunnel

to a

small

doorway

into a tiny cell

I can only inhabit in

Fetal crampedness.

Slam me shut,

Dead bolted from the outside

with a keyless lock.

Which way, Lord? You choose torture me with freedom.

I dance with limbs outstretched

in an open field

yielding only to the bright sky

with no landmarks in sight.

Your subtle whisper is the soft breeze

in my face

and to my back

and on either side.

Cruel grace! For once limit me With THE answer...

Which way, Lord?

The Rev Dr. Nancy Kraft, Pastor of Holy Trinity Lutheran Church, Charlotte, NC, writer

A prayer for women in situations of domestic violence:

My Lord, I lie here beside my husband, trying hard not to tremble lest he wake up, angry, and the violence begin again. You see me, God: you see the black eye, the lacerations on my body, the bruises I hide with long sleeves so they won't scare the children. Some days, Lord, it is all I can do to get through the day, and I dread the nights. I've been trying to muster the courage to take the children and leave, get us to a safe house where he cannot touch us. He has robbed me of hope time and again. Wrap your arms around us, Lord, and carry us to safety. Let your holy angels stand guard around us to protect us, and send those to us who can help us escape.....and Lord, although my husband is my enemy, I pray that he will come to a place of realization of what he has done, and repent, and seek forgiveness from you. Until our day of deliverance and beyond, help us to trust in you, and never lose hope in your love. In the name of your Son, Jesus Christ, our Redeemer and Lord, Amen.

*The Rev. Elizabeth Toler, Pastor of Grace Lutheran Church, Bessemer City, NC
25 years as a pastor in the NC Synod*

God's Creation

Creator God, we thank you for all your blessings to us: for creation, for rain, for snow, for blue skies and sunshine and for early spring flowers daring to poke their heads above the ground. Keep us every mindful of our responsibility to be good stewards of this earth. Amen

The Rev. Dr. Jane Mitcham, Retired pastor and former synod bishop's staff member

mind-full...

Who are we humans,

that You are mindful of us? of me?

A universe of stars, planets,
unknowns exists out there, O God-
but as mysterious as what exists
in *here*, within me?

a miniature cosmos with
constellations of emotions and
patterns of thought...
shooting stars of pain and joy...
each atom intricately intertwined
with all others, as surely as we are
connected with all other atoms
everywhere and at all times,
our cells bearing within the
very energy of the stars-
or so the quantum physicists,
Your own alchemists, tell us.

How incredible!

How breathtaking!

How amazing! Amen

The Rev Linda Faltin, Retired pastor, writer

prayer at the ocean's edge

O God of Many Faces,
O God of Many Names,
I sit in awe at the majesty of creation.
Ocean's bold and briny deeps
stretching far beyond the misty
far horizon, breaking in foam-capped
waves upon the nearby sands, daily,
hourly, minute-by-minute rewriting
their shape and story.
As I await the rising sun,
the only sound I hear is surf-song,
a never-ending serenade, a lullaby,
an aria to eternity, a haunting and
yet achingly familiar melody,
accompaniment to every breath
I take upon this holy shore.

And gradually, as light begins
to bathe the waiting earth, we
heave a sigh together, nature's wild
loveliness and I, which turns into
a prayer of gratitude and joy-
for this new day, for life and light,
for majesty and mystery and
the mundane realities which mark
the passing of the hours, which
make a life, each step filled with
the significance of the never-before, never-again,
the forever and ever.

Amen

The Rev Linda Faltin, Retired pastor, writer

Prayer for the Church:

O Holy Spirit, renew your Church. There is so much brokenness, so much division, so much anger, so much judging, so much condemning, so much self-righteousness abounding that we cannot see or hear one another. You came into our lives the moment we were baptized and you give us gifts – gifts of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. Remind us, even as St. Paul reminded the Galatians, that there is no law against such things. Remind us and then empower us to live the new life we have in Christ Jesus our Lord. Amen.

The Rev. Dr. Jane Mitcham, Retired pastor and former synod bishop's staff member

Lenten Prayer:

Holy Jesus,

as you stride down the road to Jerusalem and the ugly plot that is drooling in anticipation of your arrival, we limp along behind you feeling sorry for ourselves. The requests for our time are annoying, the disciplines we hastily set are wearing thin, and the broken promises to put you above all else rub our hearts raw. And then there are the people we travel with, those who are irritatingly slow to understand you, and the needy who insist on interrupting our carefully planned itineraries.

Help us, Holy Jesus. Tear off the "We're Number One" banner that we drape around ourselves. Show us that the interruptions are our ministries. Help us understand the power of having less. Forgive our brokenness. Focus our eyes on you and your mission to seek and save the lost. Take off our blinders to the gifts of your Spirit, which are all we need to follow you and become more like you.

So be it, precious Lord and Savior, so be it.

The Rev. Sue Gamelin, Retired pastor and former synod bishop's staff member, writer and retreat leader

palm sunday

Early morning silence...it
enfolds me like a comforting
mantle, draping itself around
my world-weary shoulders.
The darkness outside enshrouds
me, envelops me, as human
noises seem held at bay,
while I sit in a circle of
lamplight, of candlelight,
of early morning silence.

Grant me inner peace this day,
O God, though I dwell in tumult,
aware, as always, of things
needing to be done...of a world
of people in need...and of my
inability to do it all! to heal
all wounds...to solve all
problems- even as my awareness
tears my heart in two.

Grant me inner peace this day,
O God, as I open my clenched
fists of determination and hand
it all over to you- for just a
little while- and then, after I
rest and relinquish and relax,
open me to your wisdom and
strength and courage which
reside deep within me, within
each created child of yours,
as once again I answer
your call to LIVE...to SERVE...
to BE.

And help me to know, God
of Grace, that for today,
it is enough.

The Rev. Linda Faltin, retired pastor, writer

Prayer of Pentecost:

pentecost

Come, Creative Spirit

Come, Holy Oneness

Come, Voice of Truth

Come, and fill my heart with your love

Come, and fill my heart with your peace

Breathe into me

In-spire me

Give me my voice that I may

 speak from my heart

Touch me with a holy flame

Clear away all that keeps me bound

Push me from the nest of security

 into the boundless flight of hope

 Amen & amen

The Rev. Linda Faltin, retired pastor , writer

christmas pilgrimage

O God, though I have long
lived with more questions
about you than answers,
of one thing I am certain-
from you flows all Creative Energy,
from you flows Life,
from you flows Love.

How, then, God of Creativity, Life & Love,
have we, your children, so perverted
your gifts that we can look at other
human beings, created- like us- in
the Divine Image, and see only differences,
permitting them to separate, divide us?

Beneath this thin covering we call skin,
beneath the surface appearance of
uniqueness, we are the same! We are one!
A beating heart enlivens each of us...
blood of red flows through arteries and
veins...intestines digest the food that
nourishes us and, with the kidneys, rids
the body of what is not needed...and,
wonder of wonders, within each head
resides a brain, the seat of personality
and thought, of the emotions of wonder
and awe but also, it seems, of anger &
hatred & judgment.

Why, Loving God, does the difference
of race or religion or sexuality of another
so threaten us?

Why do we so stridently demand the
right to be who & how we are while
at the same time oxymoronically
denying that right to others?

Why is our sense of security so
dependent upon keeping the world
we are meant to steward wisely &
well in such a state of fear & insecurity?
How do we justify kneeling at the
manger of the one called the Prince
of Peace while within us & without
wars rage- with our support?

Christmas approaches...and those of
us calling ourselves "Christian" will
light candles, will raise our collective
voices- "Silent night, holy night,
all is calm, all is bright..." as in our
city, our nation, our world, bombs
explode, children cry from hunger,
people are tortured for their ethnicity
or sexuality, whole nations live in
darkness, the rich become richer on
the backs of the poor, and the powerful
plot to seize ever more power from the
already-powerless.

My heart & head are heavy, Holy One,
as I seek to find the cause for
celebration in the midst of chaos &
conflagration...yet even now, the faces
of my grandchildren, flicker across my
mind- their openness and awareness
and loving spirits, their acceptance and
whole-hearted appreciation of all they
meet, their creativity and compassion-
and I am reminded that our hope, the
hope of this troubled world, lies in a Holy
Child, in the holiness of children everywhere.
And so, I wipe my tears & breathe...
and walk haltingly on the path toward
this Christmas Day.

The Rev. Linda Faltin, Retired pastor, writer

Morning prayers:

All by The Rev. Linda Faltin, Retired pastor, writer

morning plea

Grant me peace today, O Wise One,
Mother God.

Grant me rest today,
as I seek to let go of problems
beyond my ability to solve.

Grant me joy today-
some small measure of love &
tenderness which touches
my heart's pain.

Grant me laughter today-
rumbling from deep within,
releasing what has been
held captive there.

And if tears should come,
gather me in your arms &
hold me close, this wounded,
hurting child of yours.

amen & amen

morning prayer

Come, Holy Spirit.

Come, Divine Energy.

Come, Mother of Creativity.

Come, Source of Life...

Enter, surround, uplift,
empower me this day.

Open my eyes, my ears,
my heart, my pores to
the presence of holiness
in my everyday world.

Fill me with light, that
it may shine from every
broken place, turning
it into a source of healing.

Holy Mystery, grant me
the wisdom to know that
there will always be more
questions than answers,
that the spiritual path is
the adventure of living
with the questions.

As I embark upon this
new day, as I take the first
step of living it, fill me
with reverence for every life
I encounter, gratitude for
every experience, and
wonder for the reality that
this life is a precious gift.

Let it be so. Namaste

awakening prayer

Help me to stay fully awake
today, O God of Light.

Open my heart as well as
my mind...

help me to receive what is
being given, both from
without and within.

Help me to remember

that awakening is marked
by doubt...

and help me to cherish,
to nurture, that doubt,
to see it as a gift,
as another stepping-stone
on this life pilgrimage.

Bless me as I seek & struggle,
as I question & discover...

and as I let go of the
need for answers.

Bless all I love.

Bless the whole hurting,
amazing, life-filled world.

Be my vision, my truth.

And all manner of
things WILL be well.

morning blessing

O Creative Spirit, each time
i begin to see my life as small,
as insignificant, open me to the truth
of my experience-
the pain of many losses,
the joy of travel to a few significant places,
the presence of many wonderful people,
the wonder of giving voice to my thoughts and
sharing them with others,
the innumerable books read, places lived,
things learned.

Let me not compare or undervalue
who i am and what has brought me
to this place. This person i am is
the person i have become, connected
to the rest of the world, filled with
hope for what still lies ahead.
May today be beautiful...may i see it
that way, no matter what befalls.
And may i offer blessing to
all i meet.

Let it be so.

for today

O God who I cannot comprehend,
I come to you this morning
with bowed head & heart.
The next step on this journey
of life is unclear...the path
before me obscured in the
fog of doubt & indecision.

But perhaps it is not a walk
I am to take but a flight...
spreading my fledgling
wings and taking a leap,
flapping with all my might
as you call me to soar...
to believe I *can*.

You have promised eagle's wings-
and though such courage and
majesty seems beyond me,

I live continually on the
strength of such promises...
they are the updraft which
keeps me aloft.

Just for today, Mothering God,
grant me wisdom
compassion
determination
courage

For today, grant me the
power to be the person you
have called me to be.
For today, strengthen my
timid wings enough to fly
above the fog & see clearly
the way I should travel.
For today is what I have-
and, for today,
it is enough.

Confession and Forgiveness:

confession

I am ensnared by a myriad of needs-
the need to please
the need to be loved
the need for approval
the need to be secure
the need for success, for acknowledgement, for recognition

And, oh, how much I need to just let go...
To open up my grasping, aching hands...
To open up my tired, aching heart.

I invite you in, Fresh Wind of the Spirit.
Sweep clean my troubled, jumbled mind.
Hold & soothe my aching body and take away
my pain.

I am so very tired-
of hurting
of being responsible
of being sad
of wanting life to be different!

Open me...crack open this hard shell
I have built around my heart...
this armor I have donned to protect
myself from pain. Tell me it is alright
to feel as I do- even when it is not very nice.
Free me from the need to know- ANYTHING!
Free me from feeling the collective pain of the planet-
for just a little while.
Grant me some joy, some laughter, some grace!

Hold up a mirror to my goodness, I pray.
Help me to see my beauty, since I am so much
more able to see my darkness, my flaws.
Be my Vision, my North Star, the Wind beneath my wings...
and as I spread those trembling wings today,
do not let me fall- too far.
Let me be wholly myself...
and help me to love me just as I am.
Let it be so, God of Love, let it be so.

The Rev. Linda Faltin, Retired pastor, writer

Confession & Forgiveness

(based on Luke 13:34 & the Story "The Little Red Hen")

Hen: I supply the seed of life: The Word of God. Who will help me plant it?

Chicks: Not !! I know that Word. It changes lives—including mine!

Hen: Then I will plant the seed myself...Who will help me tend the seed I plant? Mentoring, teaching, leading, forgiving?

Chicks: Not !! How can I lead others when I do not know the way?

Hen: Then I will tend the seed myself...Who will help me gather the grain? Seeking out the lonely and the lost?

Chicks: Not !! Those who are different make me uncomfortable.

Hen: Then I will gather them myself... Who will help me grind the grain, against injustice, poverty and pain?

Chicks: Not !! That work is hard and never-ending.

Hen: Then I will grind the grain myself...Who will help me knead the grain into dough—laying tender hands on those who need refreshment or relief?

Chicks: Not !! For I am wounded and weary too.

Hen: Then I will knead the dough myself...Who will help me bake the bread-transformed by heat to feed the world?

Chicks: Not !! I want to stay away from heat. Let's all just get along.

Hen: Then I will bake the bread myself -

See it! Smell it! Rising - Browning – Broken ~ Fragrant and Forgiving!

Who will help me eat this bread? Bread of Life, Bread of Hope, Bread of Healing, Bread of Peace?

Chicks: I will! For I want to be made whole.

Hen: Oh my children, how often I have wanted to gather you under my wings, but you would not let me. All that is needed has been provided.

The meal is ready. My new life awaits you. Come and eat!

The Rev. Mary Canniff-Kuhn, Program Director at Lutheridge Camp and Conference Center

This confession/absolution was written for a Wild Women's Retreat studying feminine images of God in the Bible.