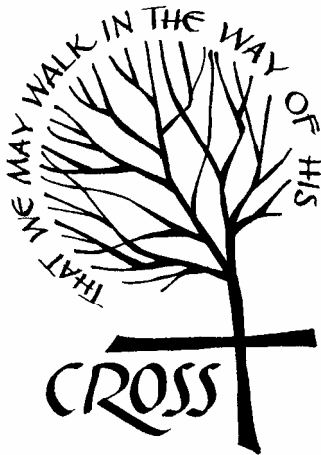


Prayer Vigil 2011



We are pleased that you have accepted the invitation to pray during these hours. It is our prayer that this time will be a blessing to you and that your daily prayer life will be enhanced by this experience.

Our theme for this year's Prayer Vigil calls and encourages us to pray for families, whatever their size or shape. This hour will take you through the Scriptures as they talk about families, marriage, children, and even the unmarried. We will silently sing hymns for families, and, of course, pray for families in their needs.

We pray: (hymn # 863)

*Our Father, by whose name All fatherhood is known,
Who dost in love proclaim Each family Thine own,
Bless Thou all parents guarding well, with constant love as sentinel,
The homes in which Thy people dwell.*

*O Christ, Thyself a child Within an earthly home,
With heart still undefiled, Thou didst to manhood come;
Our children bless in every place That they may all behold Thy face,
And knowing Thee may grow in grace.*

*O Spirit, who dost bind Our hearts in unity,
Who teachest us to find The love from self set free,
In all our hearts such love increase That every home by this release
May be the dwelling place of peace.*

It is no coincidence that Jesus' first miracle was performed at the wedding at Cana in Galilee (read John 2:1-11). Jesus and His disciples had been invited to the marriage. A little while into the marriage the wine gave out. When he preached on this text, Luther commented at this point, "Ain't that the truth!" How often it is that a marriage starts out with such promise and expectation, but within a few months they want to be done with it all. When Christ is invited into a marriage, He brings the best wine, the best blessings. So we pray that our Lord Christ would be the centre of our homes and families.

What difference does Christ make when He is among us every day?

Ecclesiastes 4:9-12; *"Two are better than one, because they have a good return for their work: If one falls down, his friend can help him up. But pity the man who falls and has no one to help him up! Also, if two lie down together, they will keep warm. But how can one keep*

warm alone? Though one may be overpowered, two can defend themselves. A cord of three strands is not quickly broken."

Prayer for Marriages

- ❖ Pray for the institution of marriage in our country. The lifelong union of one man and one woman in the bonds of marriage has always been the foundation and strength of families and society. The erosion of marriage in our society today can only bring dire consequences. Pray that our Lord would preserve the estate of marriage among us and protect us from those who would debase and destroy this great blessing from God.
- ❖ Pray for those about to be married, that the Lord Jesus would be for them the glue that binds them together with one another in holy love.
- ❖ Pray for those newly married, that the Lord Jesus would teach them the true meaning of sacrificial love and service toward one another.

There is an immense onslaught on family life. We need that third strand in our homes and families. There has probably never been a time in history when marriage and family life have been under such strain. Purposeful, systematic, intelligent and persevering prayer is necessary in this area. Here are some "how to" ideas for your home and family.

- ❖ It is important that every family pray together. Husband and wife should pray together regularly, but there should be a certain time each day when the whole family prays together and studies the Bible.
- ❖ Create an atmosphere for Bible study and prayer in your home. It should be possible to pray naturally for any matter in the home be it a crisis or thanking the Lord for an answer to prayer, or something that He has done.
- ❖ There must be a specific time and place when and where you can pray. There must be a place where the family can get together to have fellowship with God. There must be a specific time that suits everybody, and everybody should be aware that this is the time the family spends together with God.
- ❖ Use a book in which the family can write down their prayers and be sure to enter the answers regularly. It builds faith and teaches us to thank God for His answers.
- ❖ It is also meaningful to have, apart from the specific prayers concerning the family, a prayer schedule according to which you can pray. For instance, you can pray for the authorities on a Monday, on Tuesday you can pray for your minister/pastor and a

missionary (one whom the family has "adopted"). On Wednesday you can pray for unsaved people, etc. Each family can draw up their own programme.

- ❖ Each member of the family must participate in prayer. Don't force anybody to pray - each member must do it out of his own free will.
- ❖ Practice continued prayer. Each person prays for one item at a time and the others join him/her in silent prayer. Otherwise each member of the family can choose an item he/she wants to pray for on that occasion.
- ❖ Share answers that you have received on prayer throughout the day with each other. It builds the other's faith and gives them more confidence to ask for specific things as well.
- ❖ Teach your family members to ask specific things of the Lord. When we pray for specific things we expect specific answers.
- ❖ The family altar is not a substitute for your personal quiet time.
- ❖ The following elements are important for family prayer:
 - ❖ praise and worship;
 - ❖ thanksgiving;
 - ❖ personal requests by different members of the family;
 - ❖ praying Scripture;
 - ❖ intercession for the outside world - for unsaved people and the poor.

A Model Marriage: Priscilla and Aquila

Priscilla and Aquila worked together with Paul as tentmakers (Acts 18:1-3). This arrangement allowed Paul to attend the synagogue every Saturday to witness to the Gospel of JESUS CHRIST (v.4). Priscilla and Aquila helped Apollos, a great apologist for the messiah-ship of JESUS, to proclaim the Gospel more completely (vv.24-26). Paul sent greetings to Priscilla and Aquila, who risked their lives to save his life and earned his thanks and those of all the Gentile churches (Romans 16:3-4). Aquila and Priscilla also hosted a Christian church in their home (1 Corinthians 16:19). Paul instructed Timothy to greet Aquila and Priscilla (2 Timothy 4:19).

Luke, the author of the Acts of the Apostles, portrays the husband and wife team of Aquila and Priscilla as an ideal model of Christianity. They are friendly, hospitable, and generous. Aquila was a tentmaker who traveled extensively throughout the New Testament world with his wife Priscilla (see Acts 18:2-28; 1 Corinthians 16:19). It is also suggested that Priscilla may have been a woman who had influence in her community. This may be one reason why she is often mentioned before her husband in Scripture.

Prayer for Marriages

- ❖ Pray for husbands and wives who not only serve their children and one another in love and gentleness, but who also enable and support one another in serving the Lord and His church.
- ❖ Thank God for them. Pray for them to have strength and wisdom to encourage others in faith and Christian life.
- ❖ Pray for them that they may reflect the light of Christ to our dark world that others may be drawn to the Saviour.
- ❖ Pray for them that they may be apt teachers for their children. Pray that they may be encouragers of others who serve the Lord.

Prayer for the Unmarried

Not everyone is blessed with the home and family that they long for. Like Hanna in 1 Samuel, some are childless for many years. Like Naomi in Ruth 1:1-5, some are left as poor widows with little or no support. Others struggle though life as a single parent because of divorce or separation. Still others never marry. Some struggle to be content even as they pray for God to bless them with the life partner of His choosing in His time.

- ❖ Pray that God would grant special grace to the unmarried that they would know and cling to the abiding love of God their Saviour. Pray for God's gift of contentment in every situation in life.
- ❖ Pray for widows and widowers who continue day by day to mourn the death of the one they love. Pray that the Lord would help them through the day to day challenges of life alone. Pray that the Lord would grant them the help and encouragement of other people.
- ❖ Pray that the Lord would make all of us sensitive to their hurts and tears that we might be ministers of comfort to them.
- ❖ Pray for those whose marriages have broken down. Pray that God would grant restoration and healing. Pray that God would give special care to their children. In the midst of their brokenness, pray that God would uphold and strengthen them, especially when the days are dark.
- ❖ Pray for those who long for a child but remain childless. Ask God to give them contentment in their situation, and if it is His will, to hear their prayer for a family, even as he did for Hanna and Sarah.

A Hymn to Pray (#860 written as a marriage hymn, but can be applied to all)

*Gracious Saviour, grant Your blessing to all husbands and their wives
That in peace they live together In Your love throughout their lives
Christ, defend them from the tempter And from all that would destroy
Love's foundation You have laid here, And its threshold paved with joy.*

*Lord, if you are not the builder, Then the house is built in vain,
For a home without Your presence Shall without true love remain.
Yet when You within a marriage Come and dwell with grace divine,
There You fill the empty vessels, Changing water into wine.*

*Cana's guest, this union hallow; Tenderly embrace this pair.
Clothe this couple with the garments They will daily need to wear:
Patience, kindness, and compassion, Gentleness, humility;
Robe them, Lord, with love to bind them In a perfect unity.*

*Make their love a living picture Showing how You loved Your bride:
When You gave Yourself to cleanse her, When for her You bled and died.
Jesus, You have made her holy, Pure and fair her radiant train;
To Yourself Your Church presenting, Without wrinkle, spot, or stain.*

*Father, You created Adam Crafted Eve, and made them one;
Jesus, from their sin You saved us, As God's true incarnate Son;
Holy Spirit, You forgive us; From our sins we are released.
Bring us, Lord, at last to heaven, To the endless wedding feast.*

Prayer for fathers and husbands

One of the greatest areas of concern in the church today is the spiritual leadership with which husbands and fathers are entrusted. Fathers, you are not running for office, you have an office, given to you by God. You are called to be the head of the family, its guide and compass. The leadership that you are to give is not as one who lords it over his family, but as one who sacrifices and serves. (Ephesians 6:4) "Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord." (1 Peter 3:7) "Husbands, in the same way be considerate as you live with your wives, and treat them with respect as the weaker partner and as heirs with you of the gracious gift of life, so that nothing will hinder your prayers."

Jesus set the example for us when he humbled himself unto death on the cross for our sins. A husband is called to love his wife as much as Jesus loves him, and to be a servant, a priest

to and for his family. Consider how Joshua showed such leadership as he spoke the words, "As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord."

- ❖ Pray that the husband will love his wife as Christ loves the church. "Husbands, love your wives just as Christ loved the church and gave Himself up for her...husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies...he feeds and cares for it, just as Christ does the church" (Eph.5:25-32). "Husbands love your wives and do not be harsh with them" (Col.3:19).
- ❖ Pray that the father will be the priest in the home by giving guidance and praying for his family.
- ❖ Pray that the father will exercise his authority given to him by God and not leave it to his wife.
- ❖ Pray that the husband will be reasonable towards his wife. Pray for the husband for patience with his wife and for self control with regard to his family.
- ❖ Pray that he will be aware of his wife's need for love, safety and security, together with all her other needs and that he will pay attention to them.
- ❖ Pray that he will exercise leadership (spiritually as well as socially) at home and that he will provide for his family.

Prayer for wives and mothers

Wives and mothers have formidable challenges today too as they try to balance home and school and work. They are expected to be all things to all people and are pulled a dozen different ways. Too often they are taken for granted.

Take a few minutes to meditate on Proverbs 31:10-31. These verses are sometimes read as a burden ... this is what wives and mothers must do. They are not intended that way at all. The real blessing is found in Proverbs 31:30: "Charm is deceptive, and beauty is fleeting; but a woman who fears the LORD is to be praised."

- ❖ Pray that she will submit to her husband in everything as the church is submissive to Christ (Ephesians 5:22-24). "Wives in the same way be submissive to your husbands so that if any of them do not believe the Word they may be won over without words by the behaviour of their wives when they see the purity and reverence of your lives. Your beauty should not come from outward adornment such as braided hair and the wearing of gold jewellery and fine clothes" (1 Peter 3:1-3) "...the wife must respect her husband" (Ephesians 5:33).

- ❖ Pray for a quiet and gentle spirit, and that she will know when to keep quiet. Pray for the wife for patience with her husband.
- ❖ Pray that she will respect her husband and that she will not try to dominate or prescribe to him.
- ❖ Pray that she will not complain about her husband but will respect him and try to meet his needs.
- ❖ Pray that the wife will accept her husband's leadership.
- ❖ Pray for the wife whose husband is an unbeliever that her silent witness and tender heart may be an example to her husband and win him without a word.
- ❖ Pray that the wife will realize that her husband is a fellow sinner, that she will have patience with his faults, and that she will allow him the freedom to be himself.
- ❖ Specifically pray against a domineering attitude in the wife (especially in cases where she is spiritually stronger than her husband), because this can cause endless damage to the children. Also pray against any form of manipulation on the part of the wife. Manipulation is always negative.

Prayer for children (hymn # 866)

*Lord Jesus Christ, the children's friend, To each of them Your presence send;
Call them by name and keep them true In loving faith, dear Lord, to You.*

*In Christian homes, Lord, let them be Your blessing to their family;
Let Christian schools Your work extend In living truth as You intend.*

*That caring parents, gracious Lord, And faithful teachers find reward
In leading these, to whom You call, To find in Christ their all in all.*

*For by Your Word we clearly see That we have sinned continually;
But show us too, forgiving Lord, Your saving Gospel's great reward.*

*That all of us, Your children dear, By Christ redeemed, may Christ revere;
Lead us in joy that all we do Will witness to our love for You.*

*Then guard and keep us to the end, Secure in You, our gracious friend,
That in Your heav'nly family We sing Your praise eternally.*

- ❖ Pray for our families who have young children that their parents would see the need to practice regular family devotions with their children. Pray that the Lord would grant repentance where God's Word and prayer have been neglected. Pray that the Lord would give wisdom and courage to make needed spiritual changes in their home and family
- ❖ Pray for honour, obedience and submissiveness to the parents. Pray for their salvation and for the spiritual growth of those already saved.
- ❖ Pray for their physical growth, health and good eating habits. Pray for their education and sports activities. Pray for their intellectual development and for their growing in wisdom and knowledge.
- ❖ Pray for the figures of authority with whom they have daily contact: teachers, sports coaches, parents, grandparents, etc.
- ❖ Pray for their social development and for a pure walk in life so that they may discern between right and wrong, that they will be able to resist temptation. Pray for strength for them to resist the Evil One who will try to destroy their lives.
- ❖ Pray that our young people would embrace God's expectation of chaste premarital relationships and not cave in to the pressures of the current culture and their peers. Pray for the right choice of career and a marriage partner who is a sincere believer, that they may worship together and raise their children in the church.
- ❖ Pray that they will love God and His Word as being of first priority, and also pray for their joy in life.
- ❖ Pray that they will choose the right friends.

Prayer for families

- ❖ Pray against the spirit of divorce, lust and impurity.
- ❖ Especially pray against the following sins, that the Holy Spirit will convict people of these and that they will turn from them: homosexuality, co-habitation, adultery, child molesting, suicide, alcohol and drug abuse.
- ❖ Pray for marriages that are experiencing difficulties in relationship between the husband and wife. Ask the Lord to help them to resolve their differences, and to help us to be of guidance to them. Pray against the involvement of a third party in the marriage.
- ❖ Pray for an open relationship and good communication in the marriage.

- ❖ Pray for deep conviction of sin and that the husband and wife will walk in the light of God together. Pray for understanding of each other's needs and the ability and willingness to meet those needs.
- ❖ Pray against every form of selfishness, self-indulgence and willfulness in the marriage.
- ❖ Pray that there will be no misunderstandings. The single, biggest problem in marriages is misunderstanding.
- ❖ Pray for the parents in their raising and handling of their children.
- ❖ Pray for forgiveness, that marriage partners will forget the past and forgive one another for what happened in the past.
- ❖ Pray for widowers, widows and couples who are unable to have children, and also for children without one or both parents as well as children in orphanages. Pray for the single and lonely people who long for the security of a family.
- ❖ Pray for children who have run away from home, and for children whose friends have a bad influence on them.

*Oh, blest the house, whate'er befall, Where Jesus Christ is all in all!
A home that is not wholly His-- How sad and poor and dark it is!*

*Oh, blest that house where faith is found And all in hope and love abound;
They trust their God and serve Him still And do in all His holy will!*

*Oh, blest the parents who give heed Unto their children's foremost need
And weary not of care or cost. May none to them and heav'n be lost!*

*Oh, blest that house; it prospers well. In peace and joy the parents dwell,
And in their children's lot is shown How richly God can bless His own.*

*Then here will I and mine to-day A solemn promise make and say:
Though all the world forsake His Word, I and my house will serve the Lord!*

Prayer for the Family of God

As children of God through faith in Christ Jesus, each one of us is part of a blessed family ... the church. If you have had opportunity to move from one city to another, one province to another, or even from one country to another, you probably know how difficult it can be to settle in a new place. You may also know just how blessed it is to discover that you have "family" there in your new home in the local Lutheran congregation. Read Acts 4:32-35. What a blessed gathering of believers that must have been.

Paul wrote to the Christians in Ephesus, "*Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and aliens, but fellow citizens with God's people and members of God's household, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone. In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord. And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit.*" (Ephesians 2:19-22)

In 1 Corinthians 11:17-22, Paul chastised the church because they did not have the love and care for one another that should have been present. They were self centered and self absorbed. In 1 Corinthians 12:12-26, Scripture describes the church as the body of Christ, where each part is reliant on the other. Paul writes in vs. 25-26, "there should be no division in the body, but that its parts should have equal concern for each other. If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it.

- ❖ Pray for our church family that our Lord would increase our love and care for one another in every need.
- ❖ Pray for our children and youth that they may grow in grace and in the knowledge of Christ our Saviour.
- ❖ Pray for our growing list of shut-ins and homebound, that the Lord would not only watch over them, but also that he would show us how we can be a caring family for them in their needs.
- ❖ Pray for those who mourn, especially those who have lost a spouse. Pray that the Lord would make us sensitive to their unique needs for fellowship and friendship and support.
- ❖ Pray for our young families who struggle with the challenges of raising their children in our world today.
- ❖ Pray that the Lord would show each of us how we can reach out to our spiritual sisters and brothers and mothers and fathers in the family of the church with real care and support at all times.

- ❖ Pray that we might build up one another and spur on one another to love and good works.
- ❖ Pray that there be no one needy among us and that we might help to provide for one another in every need.
- ❖ Pray that the Lord would remind us that the reason he blesses us with more than we need is so that we might have the means to share with others, and especially with those of the household of faith.

*Blest be the tie that binds our hearts in Christian love;
The fellowship of kindred minds is like to that above.*

*Before our Father's throne we pour our ardent prayers;
Our fears, our hopes, our aims are one, our comforts and our cares.*

*We share each other's woes, our mutual burdens bear;
And often for each other flows the sympathizing tear.*

Hymn # 649