

Night Prayer

[First Ordination of Women to the Priesthood in The](#) Episcopal Church
The Wednesday after the Ninth Sunday after Pentecost

Emmanuel Episcopal Church, Wakefield, MA
July 29, 2026

From A New Zealand Prayer Book,
adapted to include elements of *BCP* Evening Prayer

The offering of prayer late in the evening, by laity, religious orders or clergy, often called Compline, has sometimes been described as the 'goodnight prayer of the Church'. It rounds off the day and prepares us for a quiet night. As the psalmist wrote:

*I lie down in peace and take my rest
for it is in God alone that I dwell unafraid.*

Night Prayer derives its content from the wisdom of the centuries in Scripture and above all in the psalms, but also from contemporary Christian experience of God. It celebrates the awareness that each of us who tries to pray is a part of the human whole. So we are taken over the threshold from daytime, not in a mood of self-centered spirituality, but as representatives of humanity, acknowledging our creaturehood before God.

APPROACH

The angels of God guard us through the night,
and quieten the powers of darkness.

The Spirit of God be our guide
to lead us to peace and to glory.

It is but lost labor that we haste to rise up early, and so late take rest, and eat
the bread of anxiety.
For those beloved of God are given gifts even while they sleep.

My brothers and sisters, our help is in the name of the eternal God,
who is making the heavens and the earth.

CONFESSION

**Dear God, thank you for all that is good,
for our creation and for our humanity,
for the stewardship you have given us of this planet earth,
for the gifts of life and of one another,
for your love which is unbounded and eternal.**

**O thou, most holy and beloved, our Companion,
our Guide upon the way, our bright evening star.**

We repent the wrongs we have done:

Silence for personal confession

We have wounded your love.

O God, heal us.

We stumble in the darkness.

Light of the world transfigure us.

We forget that we are your home.

Spirit of God, dwell in us.

Leader: Eternal Spirit, living God, in whom we live and move and have our being, all that we are, have been, and shall be is known to you, to the very secret of our hearts and all that rises to trouble us. Living flame burn into us, cleansing wind, blow through us, fountain of water, well up within us, that we may love and praise in deed and in truth. **Amen.**

INVOCATION

Eternal Spirit, flow through our being and open our lips,
that our mouths may proclaim your praise.

Let us worship the God of love.

Thanks be to God.

FIRST LESSON – Galatians 3: 23-29

Now before faith came, we were imprisoned and guarded under the law until faith would be revealed. Therefore the law was our disciplinarian until Christ came, so that we might be justified by faith. But now that faith has come, we are no longer subject to a disciplinarian, for in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith. As many of you as were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus. And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's offspring,^{*} heirs according to the promise.

PSALM 119 Yodh

Your hands have made me and fashioned me; *
give me understanding, that I may learn your commandments.

**Those who fear you will be glad when they see me, *
because I trust in your word.**

I know, O Lord, that your judgments are right *
and that in faithfulness you have afflicted me.

**Let your loving-kindness be my comfort, *
as you have promised to your servant.**

Let your compassion come to me, that I may live, *
for your law is my delight.

**Let the arrogant be put to shame, for they wrong me with lies; *
but I will meditate on your commandments.**

Let those who fear you turn to me, *
and also those who know your decrees.

**Let my heart be sound in your statutes, *
that I may not be put to shame.**

PSALM 119 Kaph

My soul has longed for your salvation; *
I have put my hope in your word.

**My eyes have failed from watching for your promise, *
and I say, “When will you comfort me?”**

I have become like a leather flask in the smoke, *
but I have not forgotten your statutes.

**How much longer must I wait? *
when will you give judgment against those who persecute me?**

The proud have dug pits for me; *
they do not keep your law.

**All your commandments are true; *
help me, for they persecute me with lies.**

They had almost made an end of me on earth, *
but I have not forsaken your commandments.

**In your loving-kindness, revive me, *
that I may keep the decrees of your mouth.**

**Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit: *
as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be for ever. Amen.**

SECOND LESSON – Matthew 27: 45-54

A Reading from the Gospel According to Matthew

From noon on, darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon. And about three o'clock Jesus cried with a loud voice, “Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?” that is, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” When some of the bystanders heard it, they said, “This man is calling for Elijah.” At once one of them ran and got a sponge, filled it with sour wine, put it on a stick, and gave it to him to drink. But the others said, “Wait, let us see whether Elijah will come to save him.” Then Jesus cried again with a loud voice and breathed his last. At that moment the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom. The earth shook, and the rocks were split. The tombs also were opened, and many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised. After his resurrection they came out of the tombs and

entered the holy city and appeared to many. Now when the centurion and those with him, who were keeping watch over Jesus, saw the earthquake and what took place, they were terrified and said, "Truly this man was God's Son!"

Through most of the history of the Christian Church the position of women has been secondary to that of men. During the first half of the twentieth century many women became church workers or directors of religious education or "Deaconesses" a separate order from male Deacons. The movement gained explicit momentum in 1970 when laywomen were seated with voice and vote for the first time in General Convention, and called for a vote to eliminate the canon law on Deaconesses so that male and female deacons would be treated equally.

A resolution was also put forward by the women deputies at the 1970 General Convention to approve women's ordination to the priesthood and episcopate. It failed to pass the House of Deputies, but nonetheless had much positive support. By July 1974, as supporters of women's ordination to the priesthood grew restless, an ordination service was scheduled to ordain women to the priesthood by three retired bishops. These women, called the "Philadelphia Eleven", were Merrill Bittner, Alla Bozarth-Campbell, Alison Cheek, Emily Hewitt, Carter Heyward, Suzanne Hiatt, Marie Moorefield, Jeannette Piccard, Betty Schiess, Katrina Swanson, and Nancy Wittig. They were ordained on July 29, 1974 at the Church of the Advocate in Philadelphia, PA.

The House of Bishops declared them "irregular" and the women were not allowed to exercise priestly functions in the Episcopal Church. Finally, at the next General Convention in September 1976, the ordination of women to the priesthood was approved, to begin on January 1, 1977. The previous "irregular" ordinations were regularized, and about 100 women were ordained that first year.

(silence to prayerfully collect our thoughts)

We share reflections on the day's scripture.

What do you notice?

What is speaking to you?

What difference does it make?

What does faithful courage look like in the church today?

Hymn (spoken together)

Be still and know that I am God
Be still and know that I am God
Be still and know that I am God

I am the God that healeth thee
I am the God that healeth thee
I am the God that healeth thee

In thee, O God, I put my trust
In thee, O God, I put my trust
In thee, O God, I put my trust

Prayers

Into your hands, O God, I commend my spirit,
for you have redeemed me, O God of truth and love.
Keep me, O God, as the apple of your eye;
hide me under the shadow of your wings.

**Preserve us, O God, while waking, and guard us while sleeping,
that awake we may watch with Christ, and asleep we may rest in peace.**

Collect of the Day

O God, the protector of all who trust in you, without whom nothing is strong, nothing is holy: Increase and multiply upon us your mercy; that, with you as our ruler and guide, we may so pass through things temporal, that we lose not the things eternal; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. **Amen**

**Preserve us, O God, while waking,
and guard us while sleeping,
that awake we may watch with Christ,
and asleep may rest in your peace.**

Lord, have mercy.
Christ, have mercy.
Lord have mercy.

*We offer intercessions and thanksgivings from our heart
either silently or aloud or in the chat function.*

We pray for healing for those on the parish prayer list, including:

Darryl Abbey, Andrew, Donna Boudreau, Debbie and Evelyn Bourne, Peter Brown, Lydia Cedrone, Jacob DeCarlen-Bumiller, John DeNatale, Peggy Downs, Eric, Erica, Joan Finn, Kristen Goddard, Michelle Hager, Karen Dodd Howard, CJ, Ginny Johnson, Ken Leach, Kevin MacKenzie, Mark Martino, Sara Murphy, Muriel Peters, Mo Pollman, Rebecca, Carolyn and Jeff Robinson, Kristin Schomer Trudy, Amy Walsh, Charlie Wisner, Kelly Wood, and Alan Wright.

The Lord's Prayer

**Eternal Spirit,
Earth-maker, Pain-bearer, Life-giver,
Source of all that is and that shall be,
Father and Mother of us all,
Loving God, in whom is heaven:**

**The hallowing of your name echo through the universe!
The way of your justice be followed by the peoples
of the world!
Your heavenly will be done by all created beings!
Your commonwealth of peace and freedom
sustain our hope and come on earth.**

**With the bread we need for today, feed us.
In the hurts we absorb from one another, forgive us.
In times of temptation and test, strengthen us.
From trials too great to endure, spare us.
From the grip of all that is evil, free us.
For you reign in the glory of the power that is love,
now and for ever. Amen.**

I will lie down in peace and take my rest,
for it is in God alone that I dwell unafraid.
Let us bless the Earth-maker, the Pain-bearer, the Life-giver,
let us praise and exalt God above all for ever.
May God's name be praised beyond the furthest star,
glorified and exalted above all for ever.

Night Prayer

Lord,
it is night.
The night is for stillness.
Let us be still in the presence of God.
It is night after a long day.
What has been done has been done;
what has not been done has not been done;
let it be.
The night is dark.
Let our fears of the darkness of the world and of our own lives rest in you.
The night is quiet.
Let the quietness of your peace enfold us, all dear to us, and all who have no
peace.
The night heralds the dawn.
Let us look expectantly to a new day, new joys, new possibilities.
In your name we pray. Amen.

Sentence of the Day:

O God, strengthen your servants with your heavenly grace, that we may continue
yours for ever, and daily increase in your Holy Spirit more and more, until we
come to your everlasting kingdom.

Wednesday:

Dear God, your eternal word of love
endures for ever in the universe.
Your truth stands fast from one generation to another.
You have laid the foundations of the earth, and it abides.
In fulfilment of your purpose it continues to this very day,

for all things serve you.
**If my delight had not been in your wisdom,
I should have perished in my trouble.**
I shall never forget your truths,
for with them you have given me life.
**I belong to you: save me;
for I have sought your counsel.**
The ungodly laid wait for me to destroy me,
but I will meditate on your law.
**I see that all things come to an end,
but your commandment is exceeding broad.** (*Psalm 119:89–96*)

Final Versicle

The divine Spirit dwells in us.
Thanks be to God.