Night Prayer

Hilda of Whitby, Abbess and Peacemaker

Emmanuel Episcopal Church, Wakefield, MA
November 18, 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.

BIDDING

Let us confess our sin against God and our neighbor:

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:

Time for reflecting on where we have missed the mark.
Silence

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: Ephesians 4:1-6

I therefore, the prisoner in the Lord, beg you to lead a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, making every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope of your calling, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all and through all and in all.

PSALM 122

**I was glad when they said to me, *
"Let us go to the house of the Lord."**

Now our feet are standing *
within your gates, O Jerusalem.

**Jerusalem is built as a city *
that is at unity with itself;**

To which the tribes go up,
the tribes of the Lord, *
the assembly of Israel,
to praise the Name of the Lord.

**For there are the thrones of judgment, *
the thrones of the house of David.**

Pray for the peace of Jerusalem: *
"May they prosper who love you.

**Peace be within your walls *
and quietness within your towers.**

For my brethren and companions' sake, *
I pray for your prosperity.

**Because of the house of the Lord our God, *
I will seek to do you good."**

**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.**

READING – Matthew 19:27-30

Then Peter said in reply, 'Look, we have left everything and followed you. What then will we have?' Jesus said to them, 'Truly I tell you, at the renewal of all things, when the Son of Man is seated on the throne of his glory, you who have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or fields, for my name's sake, will receive a hundredfold, and will inherit eternal life. But many who are first will be last, and the last will be first.

Hilda of Whitby

Hilda of Whitby, Abbess and Peacemaker, was a Celt of the 7th Century. "Hild" as she was called in her day, was baptized at the age of 13, and became a nun at 33. At a place and time in history when women were virtually powerless, Hilda became a great leader and authority figure in the Celtic church. She established several monasteries, the last one being a holy center for both men and women. Hilda served as governor of both and developed it as a great center of learning in the Church.

Mounting conflict was rising between the Roman and Celtic church, mostly around two primary issues: how to calculate the date of Easter and the proper way for monks to cut and style their hair. Seriously.

Hilda met the unpleasantness head on and worked towards reconciliation. The collect that remembers her states she was endowed with gifts of justice, prudence, and strength to rule as a wise mother over the nuns and monks of her household.

And she did this by not only offering leadership in the midst of these arguments that seem silly and trite to us, but by backing down and "letting the other side win." Because she knew that it wasn't important. She knew that what was truly important was Jesus and the Gospel of peace as she called it.
Hilda was a strong and effective leader who above all else, advocated for keeping the peace of the Gospel, even on her death bed. The story goes that Hilda died mid-sentence, still preaching the gospel of peace she so deeply and passionately believed. I imagine Hilda to have been a prolific writer, the academic and student that she was, but almost nothing survives.

(The Rev. Kate Wesch)

(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?

Where can we compromise and collaborate in service to the Gospel?

Hymn (spoken together)

God be in my head, and in my understanding;
God be in my eyes, and in my looking;
God be in my mouth, and in my speaking;
God be in my heart, and in my thinking;
God be at my end, and at my departing.

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 of peace, by whose grace the abbess Hilda was endowed with gifts of justice, prudence, and strength to rule as a wise mother over the nuns and monks of her household: Raise up these gifts in us, that we, following her example and prayers, may build up one another in love to the benefit of your Church; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for 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 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: Andrew, Debbie and Evelyn Bourne, Peter Brown, Lydia Cedrone, John Claya, Jacob DeCarlen-Bumiller, John DeNatale, Donna, Erica, Kristen Goddard, Michelle Hager, CJ, Ginny Johnson, Jonathan, Kevin MacKenzie, Diane Manning, Mark Martino, Sara Murphy, Olivia, Mo Pollman, Rebecca, Carolyn and Jeff Robinson, Sheila and Josh, Jamie Souliotis, Trudy, Amy Walsh, 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:

Christ be within us to keep us,
beside us to guard,
before us to lead,
behind us to protect,
beneath us to support,
above us to bless.

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.