

Night Prayer

[Ember Days – The Episcopal Church](#)

The Wednesday after the Day of Pentecost

Emmanuel Episcopal Church, Wakefield, MA

May 27, 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

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 – 1 Timothy 1:18 – 2:8

A Reading from the First Letter to Timothy

I am giving you these instructions, Timothy, my child, in accordance with the prophecies made earlier about you, so that by following them you may fight the good fight, having faith and a good conscience. By rejecting conscience, certain persons have suffered shipwreck in the faith; among them are Hymenaeus and Alexander, whom I have turned over to Satan, so that they may learn not to blaspheme.

First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings should be made for everyone, for kings and all who are in high positions, so that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and dignity. This is right and is acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour, who desires everyone to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. For there is one God;

there is also one mediator between God and humankind,
Christ Jesus, himself human,
who gave himself a ransom for all

—this was attested at the right time. ⁷For this I was appointed a herald and an apostle (I am telling the truth,^{*} I am not lying), a teacher of the Gentiles in faith and truth.

I desire, then, that in every place the men should pray, lifting up holy hands without anger or argument;

PSALM 119 He

Teach me, O Lord, the way of your statutes, *
and I shall keep it to the end.

**Give me understanding, and I shall keep your law; *
I shall keep it with all my heart.**

Make me go in the path of your commandments, *
for that is my desire.

**Incline my heart to your decrees *
and not to unjust gain.**

Turn my eyes from watching what is worthless; *
give me life in your ways.

**Fulfill your promise to your servant, *
which you make to those who fear you.**

Turn away the reproach which I dread, *
because your judgments are good.

**I long for your commandments; *
in your righteousness preserve my life.**

PSALM 119 Waw

Let your loving-kindness come to me, O Lord, *
and your salvation, according to your promise.

**Then shall I have a word for those who taunt me, *
because I trust in your words.**

Do not take the word of truth out of my mouth, *
for my hope is in your judgments.

**I shall continue to keep your law; *
I shall keep it for ever and ever.**

I will walk at liberty, *
because I study your commandments.

**I will tell of your decrees before kings *
and will not be ashamed.**

I delight in your commandments, *
which I have always loved.

**I will lift up my hands to your commandments, *
and I will meditate on your statutes.**

**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 12: 43-50

A Reading from the Gospel According to Matthew

“When the unclean spirit has gone out of a person, it wanders through waterless regions looking for a resting place, but it finds none. Then it says, ‘I will return to my house from which I came.’ When it comes, it finds it empty, swept, and put in

order. Then it goes and brings along seven other spirits more evil than itself, and they enter and live there; and the last state of that person is worse than the first. So will it be also with this evil generation.”

While he was still speaking to the crowds, his mother and his brothers were standing outside, wanting to speak to him. Someone told him, “Look, your mother and your brothers are standing outside, wanting to speak to you.” But to the one who had told him this, Jesus replied, “Who is my mother, and who are my brothers?” And pointing to his disciples, he said, “Here are my mother and my brothers! For whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother.”

Ember Days are observed four times a year, including the Wednesday after the Day of Pentecost. In ancient times, they were associated with sowing, harvest and vintage, for which one expressed humility through prayer, fasting and giving alms. More recently, they became occasions for ordination, for which the Christian community prayed and the candidates prepared themselves by prayer and retreat, seeking God’s guidance for ministry. Today we pray for our own Karen Aalto, who is preparing for ordination this coming weekend.

Ember Days hold a significant place in the Anglican liturgical calendar, providing opportunities for prayer, reflection, and support for those in ministry. They are a time to seek God's guidance and to express gratitude for the gifts of nature and the church's mission.

(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?

How do we discern God’s call in our lives?

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 – For all Christians in their Vocation

Almighty and everlasting God, by whose Spirit the whole body of your faithful people is governed and sanctified: Receive our supplications and prayers, which we offer before you for all members of your holy Church, that in their vocation and ministry they may truly and devoutly serve you; through our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of 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 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: John Aalto, Donna Boudreau, Peter Brown, Lydia Cedrone, Jacob DeCarlen-Bumiller, John and Richard DeNatale, Elizabeth Downs, Peggy Downs, David Fieldhouse, Connor Gallagher, Mary Gasson, Peggy Givans, Kristen Goddard, Michelle Hager, Louise Haldeman, Heidi, Karen Dodd Howard, CJ, Jack Jephson, Ted Jobe, Ginny Johnson, Tim Kelsey, Kevin, Ken Leach, Kevin MacKenzie, Diane Manning,

Keith Manville, Mark Martino, Don McCarter, Sara Murphy, Neil, Gayle Gammon Nelson, Steve Newman, Judith Oder, Jim O'Reilly, Joe, Jane Pennacchia, Muriel Peters, Dustin Pollard, JP Quinn, Tim, Rebecca, Trudy, Amy Walsh, Bill & Jan, Vicky Wegweiser, Kelly, 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.