



LONGING TO BE LIKE CHRIST

Praying to Grow in
Christ-likeness Together

Introduction to the 40-Day Prayer Guide

Synod 2023 is coming quickly and looks to be another challenging year for us together. As we look ahead to Synod 2023, you are invited to participate by joining others across North America in prayer. These prayers will reflect the theme of Philippians 2:1-11, summarized by verse 5: “In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus.”

These prayers are written by CRC members, missionaries, pastors, and staff. They are written by young and old. They are written in many languages, with English translations for all, reflecting the beautiful diversity of the CRC.

The authors of these prayers hope that you find in them a perspective of grace, generosity, love, and longing, encouraging us all to have a Christlike mindset in our relationships with one another.

—Jon Hoekema

SUNDAY, APRIL 30, 2023 - DAY 1

40 Days of Prayer

Theme: Same Attitude as Christ

Suggested Bible Reading: Ephesians 3:17-21

I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the Lord’s holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God. Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.

Prayer

By Jon Hoekema, CRC prayer shepherd and pastor of Horizon Community Church, Downers Grove, Illinois

Dear Father in heaven,
In your great love, you demonstrated your humility to us by sending Jesus to become one of us. Your love is beyond what our created minds can understand.

God, we praise you for your extravagant love.
We praise you for a love that we don't deserve.
We praise you for a love so freely given.

Lord Jesus, we praise you for your humility, that you left the glory of heaven to bring us the good news of God's grace. We praise you that the creator became the created.

Lord, we know that this truth should completely transform our relationships with others as you have transformed our relationship with you. But we confess that we don't demonstrate the love and humility and grace you have for us to one another. We like to be heard, we like to get our way, we like to be important, and we like to look out for our own interests rather than the interests of others.

Forgive us, Father, for not having the same attitude as that of Christ Jesus.

Continue to work in us the transforming power of your Holy Spirit to make us more and more like Christ. May we grow in being gracious, generous, and loving toward one another as we long to be more like Christ.

Father, you're able to do more than we can ask or imagine through the power of the Spirit who is at work within us. May you receive all glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever!

Amen.

Questions for reflection and/or conversation

What aspect of Jesus' astounding act of humility causes you to praise God?

To whom in your life do you need to demonstrate the same humility that Jesus demonstrates to you? Lord Jesus, we praise you for your humility, that you left the glory of heaven to bring us the good news of God's grace. We praise you that the creator became the created.



LONGING TO BE LIKE CHRIST

Praying to Grow in
Christ-likeness Together

MONDAY, MAY 1, 2023 - DAY 2

40 Days of Prayer

Theme: Same Attitude as Christ

Suggested Bible Reading: Romans 5:8-10

God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God's wrath through him! For if, while we were God's enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life!

Prayer (in Ukrainian)

By George de Vuyst, Resonate missionary, Kyiv, Ukraine

Небесний Батьку, Бог примиритель, Цар народів, ми приходимо до тебе з серцями,

сповненими вдячності за все, що ти зробив для нас у Христі Ісусі. Дякуємо, що ти даєш все необхідне для нашого примирення з тобою та один з одним через Ісуса.

Оскільки ми зібралися маленькою частиною твоєї церкви, ми молимо, щоб ти наповнив наші серця бажанням зцілення і примирення усіх наших стосунків. Ми визнаємо, що ми швидкі, щоб поранити інших, і повільні, щоб просити пробачення. Наші намагання поєднати істину і благодать дуже часто далекі від того, чого ми бажаємо, не кажучи про те, чого бажаєш ти. Господь, прости нас знову, ми молимо.

Коли ми ще були твоїми ворогами, ти дав нам прощення і примирення. Нам також важко це зрозуміти. Даруй нам сил бути твоїми агентами примирення. Ми молимося за мир і примирення всюди у твоєму світі, де є розділення і війна. І ми визнаємо, що ми – церква - також потребуємо твого миру і примирення один з одним. Ти хотів, щоб ми жили в єдності і раділи нашій різноманітності. Натомість ми створили розділення і сприймаємо тих, хто відрізняється від нас, як загрозу, замість того, щоб бачити в них потенційне джерело благословінь. Допоможи нам побачити один одного з твоєї точки зору, шанувати і цінувати інших більше, ніж себе.

Дякуємо тобі за дар твоєї церкви. Пробач нам те, що ми не живемо за покликанням, яке ти нам дав. Зціли нас. Примири нас. Віднови нас. Направляй нас, щоб ми були вірним тілом Христа, чого ти завжди хотів для нас, щоб твоє Ім'я було возвеличено, прославлено і було великим серед народів.

В ім'я Ісуса

Амінь.

English translation:

Heavenly Father, reconciling God, King of the nations,

We come to you with hearts filled with gratitude for all you have done for us in Christ Jesus. Thank you for providing all that is needed for our reconciliation to you and to each other through Jesus.

As we gather as a small part of your church, we pray that you will fill our hearts with a longing for the healing of all our relationships. We confess that we are quick to wound others and slow to ask forgiveness. Our attempts to combine truth and grace so often fall far short of what we desire—not to speak of what you desire. Lord, forgive us again, we pray.

While we were still your enemies, you reconciled us to yourself through Jesus. That is so hard for us to comprehend. Grant us the strength to be your Christlike agents of reconciliation. We pray for peace and reconciliation everywhere in your world where there are divisions and war. And we confess that we, the church, also need your peace and to be reconciled to each other. You desired for us to live in unity and to celebrate our diversity. But we have created divisions and tend to see those who are different from us as threats instead of potential sources of blessing. Help us to see each other from your perspective, and to honor and value others above ourselves.

Thank you for the gift of your church. Forgive us for the ways that we have not lived up to the calling you have given us. Heal us. Reconcile us. Restore us. Guide us into being the faithful body of Christ that you have always intended for us, that your name may be honored, glorified, and made great among the nations.

In Jesus' name, Amen.

Questions for reflection and/or conversation

With whom might God be prompting you to be reconciled? What is one step you might take to make reconciliation with that person possible?

How does the statement "While we were God's enemies, we were reconciled to him" transform your attitude and heart toward others?



LONGING TO BE LIKE CHRIST

Praying to Grow in
Christ-likeness Together

TUESDAY, MAY 2, 2023 - DAY 3

40 Days of Prayer

Theme: United with Christ

Suggested Bible Reading: Luke 9:23

[Jesus] said to them all: “Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me.”

Prayer

By Al Postma, transitional executive director-Canada; Brantford, Ontario

Loving God,

When Jesus first instructed his disciples to “take up their cross daily,” how much they must have shuddered. When we look ahead to our own deaths, we yearn to die in peace and comfort. We certainly do not hope for a violent and painful death. We do not want to take up a cross.

When we reflect on all the ways you ask us to take up our cross daily, we know how resistant we are to it. We see how the depth of our own brokenness is anything but clean and comfortable. Whatever the cross is that we carry, dying to ourselves is vulnerable, challenging, and painful. We lament the energy we give to avoiding our own cross, seeking instead the safety we have become accustomed to within our own brokenness.

Particularly in these moments of resistance, we ask that you give us the reminder of your own willingness to take up your cross. Remind us that you are not asking us to do anything you were not willing to do. And remind us that we are united in taking up our crosses. The pain of dying to ourselves is a call you give not just to me but to us all. We die with you. We die together.

So we pray for ourselves, asking you to work in us the capacity to submit to dying with you. We pray for our communities, asking that we can be places where we feel your support and love in dying together. We pray that we may experience our unity with you and with one another as together we deny ourselves, take up our crosses, and follow you.

Amen.

Questions for reflection and/or conversation

What are you holding on to in your life that you need to let go of in order to take up your cross?

Our union with Jesus Christ is both a gift (something we receive from God) and a daily practice (something we are learning to live into with the Spirit). What are one or two ways in which your friends, family, or small group can encourage each other to receive and practice our union with Jesus Christ?



LONGING TO BE LIKE CHRIST

Praying to Grow in
Christ-likeness Together

WEDNESDAY, MAY 3, 2023 - DAY 4

40 Days of Prayer

Theme: United with Christ

Suggested Bible Reading: Romans 6:5-14

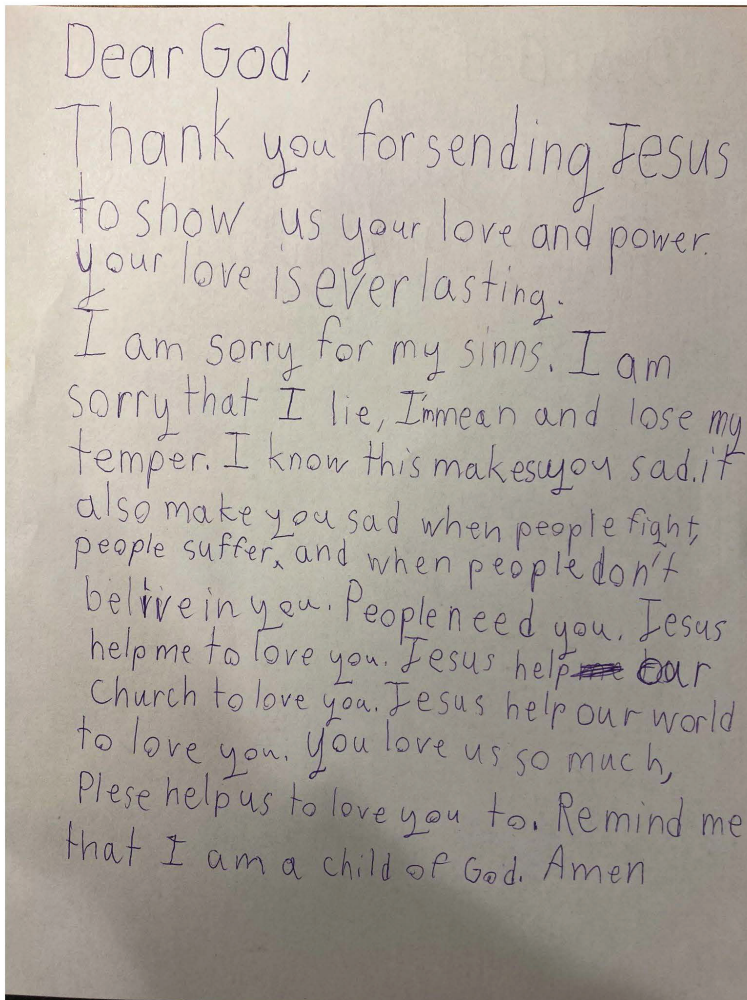
If we have been united with him in a death like his, we will certainly also be united with him in a resurrection like his. For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body ruled by sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin—because anyone who has died has been set free from sin.

Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. For we know that since Christ was raised from the dead, he cannot die again; death no longer has mastery over him. The death he died, he died to sin once for all; but the life he lives, he lives to God.

In the same way, count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus. Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its evil desires. Do not offer any part of yourself to sin as an instrument of wickedness, but rather offer yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life; and offer every part of yourself to him as an instrument of righteousness. For sin shall no longer be your master, because you are not under the law, but under grace.

Prayer

By Mia Roelofs (9 years old), violin player, Washington DC CRC



Questions for reflection and/or conversation

Where do you need Jesus in your life to help you to love him?

What is one way you can remind someone else that they are a child of God? And what is one way someone else could remind you that you are a child of God?



LONGING TO BE LIKE CHRIST

Praying to Grow in
Christ-likeness Together

THURSDAY, MAY 4, 2023 - DAY 5

40 Days of Prayer

Theme: United with Christ

Suggested Bible Reading: John 15:1-4

"I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful. You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you. Remain in me, as I also remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me."

Prayer (in Navajo)

By Sharon Jim, Sunday school teacher at Window Rock (Ariz.) CRC

Nihi Diyin nihik'ijídljinií,

T'áá 'aníinii bee nanihinítin, ayoo ch'íid bits'áaji' nihaa'áhólyá.

Nizaad éí baa dadzíínlí. Nida'íínlíigo binahji' ni'bikáá honiídló áádóó nihe'oodlą' danęęsé, ílástsii' dadíníitsééhígi át'éego. Nihe'oodlą' éí nizaad t'áá aníinii binahji' danęęsé. Nizaad, t'áá ákwííj bik'ehgo dahinii'náa le', nináhagháá biyi'góó. Na'áłchíní daniídljinií Diyin k'ehgo dahinii'náanii nihe'oodlą' da'ahólzha'go bee naadahwii'niih. Yá'ąąshiidi yah anáhiikaigo nihe'oodlą' bee naadahwii'niih doo. Nízhí' binahji' t'áá 'ákót'ée doo. Amen

English translation:

Our blessed Lord,

You have taught us truth from lies. You have taught us. You are truth. So we trust your words of truth. We have learned to trust you to be our source of existence, to become the fertile seeds of growth. Our growth comes from being supported by your holy words.

May we be in accordance with your written words to us with every rotation of the earth, with every change of the seasons, and throughout every course of a year. May the Christlike livelihoods of our brothers and sisters' intertwining vines together bring you glory until we are united with you at the feasting table to share our fruits in heaven.

We pray these things in your holy name.

Amen.

Questions for reflection and/or conversation

Though fruit comes in particular seasons, branches remain connected to the vine year-round. What practices have you found helpful for remaining connected to Jesus throughout the year?

What fruit from remaining in the vine in your life will be for God's glory?



LONGING TO BE LIKE CHRIST

Praying to Grow in
Christ-likeness Together

FRIDAY, MAY 5, 2023 - DAY 6

40 Days of Prayer

Theme: United with Christ

Suggested Bible Reading: Galatians 2:20

I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.

Prayer

By Andy Sytsma, pastor at New Life CRC in Spring, Texas

Lord, what an amazing gift you give—a new identity in Christ! I confess I have struggled in the past. Other experiences and challenges have caused me to look elsewhere. Yet it is you who remind and assure me: I belong to Jesus. I am not my own. My life is now hidden “in Christ.” What a gift to know that I’m not alone, that I am not defined by my past or circumstances. Thank you, Jesus, for saving me from my sin. Now I am free to live for you and in your love. Give me eyes of faith to see this truth.

Thank you that I can rest in this comfort. I don’t need to pretend my sins aren’t that bad. You remind me: “I have been crucified with Christ.” My sins are no more. You have removed them from me, as far as the east is from the west. And thank you for the comfort that I don’t need to perform to gain approval from others: “Christ lives in me.” Jesus, you are my righteousness. Help me rest in this new identity.

Lord, I confess that at times my pretending and performing have left me spiritually exhausted. I have been striving to avoid or attain something I am not. Thank you for this reassurance that I can live into what already is—your finished work on the cross applied to my life, here today. Give each of us eyes of faith to see our new identity “in Christ.” Help us to rest “in Christ.” Remind us of who we belong to. Help us to

know your love. Encourage our hearts so that we can encourage others. You are enough, Lord.

Amen.

Questions for reflection and/or conversation

In what areas of your life do you need to be reminded to live into your identity in Christ?

What is one tangible way you can help someone else to experience God's love for them in Jesus Christ?



LONGING TO BE LIKE CHRIST

Praying to Grow in
Christ-likeness Together

SATURDAY, MAY 6, 2023 - DAY 7

40 Days of Prayer

Theme: Comfort from his love

Suggested Bible Reading: 1 John 1:9

If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.

Prayer

By Benet EB Dogonyaro, Calvin Theological Seminary Th.M. student; pastor in the Christian Reformed Church of Nigeria

A story was told of a wealthy man and two of his workers. One took care of the garden and the flowers, while the other took care of the washing. The wealthy man had two geese that he loved dearly. One day, the gardener was trying his new catapult and accidentally killed one of the geese. Then he secretly buried it. But the other worker saw him do that and always used it against him. The washerman would threaten the gardener, forcing him to do the washing as well as the gardening—otherwise, he said, he would tell their master that the gardener had killed the goose. The gardener suffered under this fellow for a long time until one day he decided to confess his sin and tell his master everything. The master forgave him. But the other worker did not know that his colleague had confessed and had been forgiven. So the next time the washerman threatened him, he told the man that he should go and tell their master. What a comfort the gardener found in acknowledging and confessing his sin!

This sounds like me whenever I am holding on to an unconfessed sin. Real joy and comfort come from Christ alone, when we acknowledge and confess our sins.

Dear Lord,

You know me inside and out. I am before you just as I am, with my filthiness. I know that I have sinned in many ways, knowingly and unknowingly, with sins of commission and sins of omission. Help me, by your grace, to confess my sins in your presence and to find comfort that comes from you alone.

My Lord and my Father, hold my hand and lead me through this life so that I will be true to you and not fall back again.

In Jesus' name, Amen.

Questions for reflection and/or conversation

What have you been holding on to that you need to confess to God?

How would you complete this sentence: "Forgiveness of sin is like . . ."



LONGING TO BE LIKE CHRIST

Praying to Grow in
Christ-likeness Together

SUNDAY, MAY 7, 2023 - DAY 8

40 Days of Prayer

Theme: Comfort from his love

Suggested Bible Reading: Psalm 102:1-2

Hear my prayer, Lord; let my cry for help come to you. Do not hide your face from me when I am in distress. Turn your ear to me; when I call, answer me quickly.

Prayer

By Andrew Oppong, justice mobilization specialist for the CRCNA in Grand Rapids, Michigan

God of comfort and restoration,

Some days the ills and brokenness in our world feel too much to hold.

The pervasiveness of sin and injustice creeps deeper and deeper with no end in sight.

Grief and lament have become all too familiar, exhaustion and defeat all too near. Our collective hope and joy sometimes withers with each passing tragedy and injustice.

Genuine comfort and love in our times of distress have felt foreign, with despair ever threatening to take root in our tender hearts.

But in all this we still cling steadfastly to the promise of your restoration, to the promise of your peace and comfort that surpass *all* understanding.

So on this foundational promise we cry out to you, Lord:

That on the days when the ills and brokenness feel too much to hold, you hold it all with us.

That when sin and injustice creep in, your justice will roll down like waters.

That you respond to our exhaustion and defeat by giving us a renewed spirit.

That in the face of tragedy and injustice you grant us holy audacity.

Lord, we cry out to

you who coo over us tenderly as a long, warm, loving embrace;

you who fiercely protect our minds and bodies;

you who nourish our soul with your abounding love;

you who choose us each day.

Let our cries come to you.

Incline your ear to us.

Answer us speedily when we call.

And grant us your comfort and peace.

Amen!

Questions for reflection and/or conversation

In your life, where are you clinging to the promises of God?

Where has God shown up as a promise-keeper throughout your faith journey? Give thanks for his faithfulness.



LONGING TO BE LIKE CHRIST

Praying to Grow in
Christ-likeness Together

MONDAY, MAY 8, 2023 - DAY 9

40 Days of Prayer

Theme: Comfort from his love

Suggested Bible Reading: Psalm 32:5

I acknowledged my sin to you and did not cover up my iniquity. I said, "I will confess my transgressions to the Lord." And you forgave the guilt of my sin.

Prayer

By John Lippert, pastor of community life at Olympia (Wash.) CRC

Father in heaven,

Your patience and mercy astound me.

So often I act like a selfish child, stubbornly stuck in my own ways of being.

I embrace my own self-fulfilling council rather than the wisdom of the faithful ones you have surrounded me with.

I become so self-centered that I easily confuse my own intent for yours, oblivious or ignoring the way your Spirit is gently guiding me in the way of Christ.

Then you give me a glimpse of myself in the mirror.

I see a weathered face looking back, weary from laboring on my own path.

I hear you inviting me to your table to rest in your presence and be nourished by your mercy.

So I come, with all of my baggage, with all of my vain striving, with all of my plans and purposes.

I lay them at your feet, and in your mercy you forgive me; you hold me close; you restore me and give me the faith to keep following you.

Lord, we rejoice in your forgiveness and steadfast love!

We shout for joy in your ever-faithful presence in our lives, in our churches, in our denomination, and in our world!

We thank you for not leaving us to ourselves but continuing to work in us, your children.

Give us the ears to hear your Spirit's call in our lives.

Give us the heart of Christ Jesus, emptying ourselves of our own desires so that we may follow you, our good Father.

Amen.

Questions for reflection and/or conversation

In your life, where do you need to follow God and empty yourself of your own desires?

What kinds of support and accountability structures are you asking God to give you for this emptying process?



LONGING TO BE LIKE CHRIST

Praying to Grow in
Christ-likeness Together

TUESDAY, MAY 9, 2023 - DAY 10

40 Days of Prayer

Theme: Comfort from his love

Suggested Bible Reading: Romans 8:35-39

Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? As it is written: "For your sake we face death all day long; we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered."

No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Prayer

By Jolene DeHeer, prayer mobilizer at LaGrave Avenue CRC in Grand Rapids, Michigan

Loving Father,

We long to be like Christ and live our lives in unity with respect for all your imagebearers. But when we look at the world we live in, we are overcome with an awareness of the hardships, persecutions, divisions, deprivations, wars, and injustices that surround us. It feels like some force is pulling apart our families, churches, and denomination. It is all too easy to get discouraged and feel like we are sheep being led to be slaughtered.

When those feelings come, may your Spirit remind us that you are still the Lord of all creation. You are still on the throne and still all powerful. Assure us repeatedly that there is nothing, absolutely nothing in all creation that can separate us from your love or your providential care.

You have already conquered death through your resurrection. You have already defeated the powers of the evil realm with your sacrifice. You are almighty God, and you hold the present and the future in your hand. You have a plan, and that plan will be carried out to completion when Jesus Christ returns. When we are tempted to feel discouraged or defeated, may your Spirit empower us to be constantly aware of the height and depth of your grace that enfolds us and the scope of your power that is at work within us. Enable us to find comfort in the truth that your love will never cease or ever let us go.

We pray in the overcoming, powerful name of Jesus Christ.
Amen.

Questions for reflection and/or conversation

What do you need to be reminded of today that God has already conquered through Jesus Christ?

Where might the “father of lies,” the devil (John 8:44), be distracting you or misdirecting you from believing this powerful promise in Christ?



LONGING TO BE LIKE CHRIST

Praying to Grow in
Christ-likeness Together

WEDNESDAY, MAY 10, 2023 - DAY 11

40 Days of Prayer

Theme: Fellowship with the Spirit

Suggested Bible Reading: 1 Peter 4:10-11

Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God's grace in its various forms. If anyone speaks, they should do so as one who speaks the very words of God. If anyone serves, they should do so with the strength God provides, so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ. To him be the glory and the power for ever and ever. Amen.

Prayer

By Yohan Lee, Calvin Theological Seminary Th.M. student, São Paulo, Brazil

Dear heavenly Father,

I praise and worship you, Lord, for all that you have done in and through our denomination. I thank you for the many lives that have already been blessed and transformed by your Word in our denomination. We have the living hope that the Lord Jesus still has much to pour out on us and through us. I praise you, Lord, because you are the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abundant in love and faithfulness, offering us forgiveness for our sins through the living and holy sacrifice of Jesus. It is through this sacrifice that we can be called your people, and through your Spirit dwelling in us that we can live as your people. Despite such grace, however, we do not always live according to our identity as the people of God. Like Israel, we often fail to be a people who are holy and reflect your love and goodness. We fail to use our gifts to serve others and be stewards of your grace. We fail to speak in godly ways; we fail to serve in your power and not our own; and we fail to make the name of the Lord Jesus glorified in all that we do. That's why we humbly want to place our hearts and our denomination before the Lord and ask that you may have compassion on us, blessing us with wisdom and understanding

through your Word to make the necessary decisions, always aiming to glorify Christ. Deliver us from thoughts and intentions that do not come from you and your Word, and keep us from wanting to please people instead of the Lord. May the name of Jesus be the only one praised and glorified in our denomination.

In the name of Jesus, Amen.

Questions for reflection and/or conversation

In what way has God used this denomination to bless and transform you or others whom you love?

Where do you see an area in your life where you can grow in reflecting the Lord's love and goodness in your church?



LONGING TO BE LIKE CHRIST

Praying to Grow in
Christ-likeness Together

THURSDAY, MAY 11, 2023 - DAY 12

40 Days of Prayer

Theme: Fellowship with the Spirit

Suggested Bible Reading: Romans 12:1-2

I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship. Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.

Prayer (in Korean)

By Joshua (Kyong won) Jung, pastor of Grace Church, Orlando, Florida

거룩하신 하나님!

흠어진 우리들을 그리스도안으로 부르시고, CRCNA에 모으셔서 있는 그곳에서 하나님의 나라를 나타내게 하시니 감사합니다. 또한, 우리를 하나님의 구원의 통로로 사용해 주셔서 감사드립니다.

자비로운 하나님께서 어제나 오늘이나 내일도 동일하게 각 성도의 삶을 사랑으로 바라보시고, 권능으로 보호하시며, 아버지의 품 안에 살게 하셔서 이미 임한 하나님의 나라를 맛보고 누리게 하시니 감사를 드립니다.

하나님! 우리 교회가 (CRCNA) 시대를 쫓아가며, 사람들의 마음을 얻기 위해 노력하고, 사람을 기쁘게 하는 교회가 되지 않게 하시고, 오직 주의 말씀 안에서 날마다 거룩하게 하셔서, 하나님 선하신 뜻을 분별하며 살아가는 교회가 되게 하소서!

성령 하나님께서 날마다 말씀으로 우리를 인도하시고, 밝히 조명하셔서, 어그러지고 거스르는 세대 가운데서 하나님의 흠 없는 거룩한 자녀로, 세우셔서 세상에서 그들 가운데 빛들로 나타내는 하나님의 거룩한 교회가 되게 하소서.

이러한 삶을 위해서, 우리가 하나님의 말씀으로 변화되길 원합니다. 말씀을 증거하기 위해서 학습하는 것이 아니라, 우리가 먼저 하나님의 말씀 앞에 바로 서서 그 말씀으로 새롭게 되길 원합니다. 살아있는 하나님의 말씀의 역사가 모든 교회의 지도자들의 삶 속에 성령의 열매들로 나타나길 원합니다. 이론이 아닌 실제로 우리의 삶이 온전케 되길 원합니다.

날마다 새롭게 됨으로 하나님의 말씀을 즐거워하며 주야로 묵상하는 삶을 살아가게 하셔서 우리가 드리는 모든 예배가, 우리의 삶이 온전히 하나님께 드리지는 거룩한 제사가 되는 기쁨을 맛보게 하여 주옵소서!

하나님 우리 교회가 (CRCNA) 하나님의 마음에 합한 교회가 되길 원합니다.

하나님의 얼굴을 미소 짓게 하는 거룩한 주의 교회로 세워주옵소서!

지금도 우리와 함께 하시는 하나님의 아들! 나의 주 예수그리스도 이름으로 기도합니다.

아멘

English translation:

Our Holy God!

Thank you for bringing us back to Christ to reveal your kingdom through the Christian Reformed Church. Thank you for using us as a channel of your salvation.

Thank you, merciful God, for watching over each of us with love yesterday and today and tomorrow. You protect us with your power and allow us to live in your embrace so that we can taste and enjoy your kingdom that has already come.

Lord, please help us in the Christian Reformed Church not to conform to the pattern of this world, not to try to win the approval of people's hearts or to please others. Renew us with your Word day by day so that we can discern your good will and how to live for you.

May your Holy Spirit guide us with your Word every day and illuminate us. In this broken and fallen world, help us to live holy lives without blemish so that we can shine your light in the world.

For this, Lord, may we be transformed by your Word. Rather than just studying and learning your Word, we want to be renewed by it. Help us to be filled with your Spirit so that we may bear the fruit of the Holy Spirit. May we be thoroughly equipped by living out your Word.

May we meditate on your Word day and night, enjoying your Word by being renewed every day. In all our worship, may our lives taste the joy of being a holy sacrifice to you!

Lord, you want the CRCNA to be a church after God's heart.
Build us into your holy church that makes your face smile.

Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, who is with us even now, we pray in your name.

Amen.

Questions for reflection and/or conversation

How do you relate to the Word of God—studying and learning to be informed, or being renewed and transformed?

In what area of your life do you most struggle to resist conforming to the world?
How would you describe the kind of help you need from the incarnate Word to experience transformation in this area?



LONGING TO BE LIKE CHRIST

Praying to Grow in
Christ-likeness Together

FRIDAY, MAY 12, 2023 - DAY 13

40 Days of Prayer

Theme: Fellowship with the Spirit

Suggested Bible Reading: Titus 3:3-8

At one time we too were foolish, disobedient, deceived and enslaved by all kinds of passions and pleasures. We lived in malice and envy, being hated and hating one another. But when the kindness and love of God our Savior appeared, he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that, having been justified by his grace, we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life. This is a trustworthy saying. And I want you to stress these things, so that those who have trusted in God may be careful to devote themselves to doing what is good. These things are excellent and profitable for everyone.

Prayer

By Suzanne Knol, worship team member at First CRC in Edmonton, Alberta

Maker of the Universe,
Christ who came to save us,
Spirit who lives in us,

We pause. We wait. We humble ourselves. Our hearts cry for oneness with you.

In humility we confess that we have hurt each other.
Give us tears for the pain we have caused. Give us tears for our wounding words
and attitudes.

Forgive us for when we have been unkind, for when we have not shown love.
We are broken people who long to do your will, who long for healing and right
relationships with you and with each other.

May we be utterly convicted of this: When we were foolish and deceived, full of flaws and imperfections, Jesus, with overpowering kindness and love for humankind, came and entered our world to save us and make us completely new. He did away with our old selves, and through his grace we are accepted into God's covenant family. This is possible only because Jesus is merciful, only because of his grace, only because of his love.

In a world where we can be anything, Christ calls us to be more like him. Like him, may we love unconditionally. Longing to do his will, may we be kind. May kindness and gentleness govern our words and actions. May love and grace and mercy lead us in our daily relationships with others.

Jesus Christ, may we be one, unified in you. Convict us of love—love that cleanses us of fear and judgment—that together in fellowship with the Spirit we may find our home, our rest, our family in you.

Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer.

Amen, Father, whose love sent his Son.

Amen, Son, whose love reconciles us to the Father.

Amen, Spirit, whose love empowers us.

Amen and Amen.

Questions for reflection and/or conversation

Take two minutes to reflect on the amazing truth “When we were foolish and deceived, full of flaws and imperfections, Jesus, with overpowering kindness and love for humankind, came and entered our world to save us and make us completely new.” What thoughts about God's amazing love came to mind?

What might it look like for you, trusting in God, to devote yourself to doing what is good today?



LONGING TO BE LIKE CHRIST

Praying to Grow in
Christ-likeness Together

SATURDAY, MAY 13, 2023 - DAY 14

40 Days of Prayer

Theme: Fellowship with the Spirit

Suggested Bible Reading: Romans 15:13

May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Prayer

By Scott Bandy, deacon at Calvin CRC in Ottawa, Ontario

Our mighty Father,

who is more than able to deliver us from the trials we face,

we come to you in desperate need of hope.

Our hearts ache as we look around the world and are devastated by the realities of pain and suffering.

We cry out as we witness war and strife bringing nations to their knees, as violence and poverty cause anxiety and distress, as sin and corruption reinforce injustice.

Even in your church we see divisions threatening our fragile unity and endangering our gospel mission.

This darkness threatens to overcome us. Its horrible weight oppresses us and drives us toward despair.

But you are the God of hope.

You are the one who fills us with all joy and peace because you are the God who keeps his promises.

By the untamable power of the Holy Spirit we are assured that you are making all things new, that you are reconciling the world to yourself, and that one day every tear will be wiped away. One day every head that is currently bowed low in grief will be lifted up to look on the face of our precious Saviour.

Lord, may this great comfort make us bold. May the peace and joy delivered by the Holy Spirit take root in our hearts, that we may stand confidently in the face of despair and deliver the soothing assurance of your salvation to an ailing world.

May your peace quiet our restless hearts, that we may focus solely on the work you have prepared for us to do.

Amen.

Questions for reflection and/or conversation

Can you think of someone in your life who overflows with hope? In what ways does their testimony challenge and inspire you?

Where in your life are you holding on to the God of hope, who brings joy and peace?



LONGING TO BE LIKE CHRIST

Praying to Grow in
Christ-likeness Together

SUNDAY, MAY 14, 2023 - DAY 15

40 Days of Prayer

Theme: Tenderness and Compassion

Suggested Bible Reading: Romans 5:8-10

God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God's wrath through him! For if, while we were God's enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life!

Prayer

By Dan Meinema, pastor at Hebron Community CRC in Renfrew, Ontario

O Lord God, Creator above us, Spirit within us, Lord ahead of us, open us to yourself, that we may become transparent to ourselves. Make us masters of ourselves, that we may be the servants of others.

Your love for us did not demand that we first change anything. Your love did not depend on our repentance. Your love came in your incarnation, your life, your death, and your resurrection. Your love came to us solely at your cost, loving enemies and making them friends and family.

Yet our love can be so conditional. We easily love those who look like us, speak like us, and think like us. We struggle to love with your unconditional love. We keep others at a distance. We love our own above all else.

Forgive our failures to love. Build in us a love for all. Help us to listen to the ones with whom we disagree. Help us to hear your voice and see your face in those we think are against us. Remake us in your image, that we may love all and put the

needs of others above our own. Recreate us into your church, a body that loves all whom you call, all you have created.

Yours is the kingdom, the power, and the glory, now and forever.

Amen.

Questions for reflection and/or conversation

Where are you praying, “Build in us a love for all,” in your life?

What might you need to let go of, or where might you need to kindle a “holy curiosity” in order to grow in your love for all?



LONGING TO BE LIKE CHRIST

Praying to Grow in
Christ-likeness Together

MONDAY, MAY 15, 2023 - DAY 16

40 Days of Prayer

Theme: Tenderness and compassion

Suggested Bible Reading: Galatians 6:10

As we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers.

Prayer (in French)

By Michèle Gyselinck, community supper team member at First CRC in Montreal, Quebec

Notre Père qui es aux cieux,

Je (nous) viens (venons) vers toi aujourd'hui afin de prier pour ceux qui traversent des situations différentes, que ce soit la maladie, la mort d'un proche, un divorce, ou la perte d'un emploi, afin que tu leur montres de la tendresse et de la compassion, et que tu nous rendes sensibles à leurs souffrances.

On sait que les gens sont facilement portés à juger autrui, et à présumer que si les gens sont dans le pétrin, c'est parce qu'ils l'ont mérité, soit parce qu'ils se sont mis eux-mêmes dans cette situation ou parce qu'ils n'ont pas assez de foi pour vivre sans ennuis, comme si c'était possible en ce bas monde, mais cette attitude n'aide personne. Alors, s'il-te-plaît, aide-nous à larguer nos présomptions et à témoigner de la compassion envers ceux qui souffrent, même si c'est en partie leur faute, car savoir qu'on s'est attiré des ennuis ne diminue pas la douleur. Au contraire, non seulement nous devons vivre avec les conséquences, mais en plus on se blâme soi-même d'être dans cette situation.

Aussi, nous devrions nous abstenir de juger ceux qui souffrent et leur tendre la main pour les aider. Nous devrions aussi éviter de nous éloigner d'eux comme si nous craignions que leur malheur soit contagieux et nous affecte aussi. Les malheurs d'autrui ne sont pas une maladie contagieuse, et nous n'avons pas à craindre de

l'attraper, même si ça fait partie de la nature humaine de le craindre. Aide-nous, Père céleste, à surmonter nos tendances naturelles et à aider ceux qui souffrent.

Amen.

English translation:

Our Father in heaven,

I (we) come to you today to pray for all who are struggling with difficult situations, whatever they may be—illness, death, divorce, unemployment, etc.—that you will show them tenderness and compassion and soften the hearts of people around them to do so also.

It is well-known that people tend to be judgmental and assume that those who are in difficult situations deserve it, either because they brought the troubles on themselves or they lack the faith to be trouble free—as if that were possible in this world. But that attitude is not helpful. So please help us to ditch our assumptions and show compassion to people who are suffering, even if they are partly to blame for what happened, because knowing we are partly to blame does not alleviate the pain. In fact, that can make it worse sometimes. Not only do we have to live with difficult circumstances, but we kick ourselves for it.

So we should abstain from passing judgment on suffering people and reach out to help them. We should also abstain from distancing ourselves from them as if we were afraid of some kind of contagion from their misfortune. Other people's misfortune is not a contagious disease, so we should not fear to help them even though it is human nature to think so. Please help us to overcome our natural tendencies and help suffering people.

Amen.

Questions for reflection and/or conversation

For whom can you “ditch [your] assumptions and show compassion” in your life, rather than being distant from them?

When have you experienced compassion from others? Were you entitled to the care and compassion you received? In what way does your experience inform your behavior toward others?



LONGING TO BE LIKE CHRIST

Praying to Grow in
Christ-likeness Together

TUESDAY, MAY 16, 2023 - DAY 17

40 Days of Prayer

Theme: Tenderness and compassion

Suggested Bible Reading: Colossians 3:12

As God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience.

Prayer

By Brenda DeJong, elder at Hope CRC, Port Perry, Ontario

Father God, who created each one of us out of your own great radical love, teach us to love one another. Teach us to listen to one another with hearts of love—the same love that the Holy Spirit pours into us, filling us to overflowing. Help us understand the height and depth of your love, for only then can we truly, radically love others.

Draw us close to you, Lord as we draw close to each other to deliberate and make decisions. Give each person attending synod a heart full of grace and humility as opinions and ideas are expressed that don't align with others. Help each person to listen to understand, with hearts and minds ready to accept, not refute—to listen with humility and grace.

As God's chosen people, guide us to understand more fully what it means to live out of the joy of our salvation in all areas of our lives.

Father God, you have called us to be light in a world that is dark. As church leaders gather together to forge paths forward, help us be mindful of that great calling, not only as a part of your church in the world but also as children of God in our homes, neighbourhoods, and workplaces.

Use us, Lord, as instruments of change, that through your love in us others will see Jesus.

In your holy name, Amen.

Questions for reflection and/or conversation

Where can you grow in having a heart of compassion, tenderness, grace, and humility in your relationships with others?

What makes it hard for you to listen to others with a heart full of love (especially those with whom you disagree)?



LONGING TO BE LIKE CHRIST

Praying to Grow in
Christ-likeness Together

WEDNESDAY, MAY 17, 2023 - DAY 18

40 Days of Prayer

Theme: Tenderness and compassion

Suggested Bible Reading: 2 Corinthians 1:3-5

Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves receive from God. For just as we share abundantly in the sufferings of Christ, so also our comfort abounds through Christ.

Prayer

By Bonny Mulder-Behina, pastor at Rosewood CRC, Bellflower, California

O Lord God,

If only it would suffice to come rushing into your presence,
muttering a quick "Forgive me of all my sins,"
and then move forward to complete the tasks of my day
with a clear conscience.

But insincere confession makes communion with you incomplete,
a mere box to check off on my list,
and my conscience accumulates a growing, gangly mass of guilt that becomes
increasingly heavy to lug around.

My focus shifts to the weight of my sin,
and my head begins to hang rather than to fix my eyes on Christ,
who offers full forgiveness and freedom.

Why do I avoid your gaze?

Do I believe that my disobedience disqualifies me from your love?

Do I sense that my struggles serve to separate me from your holy presence?

Turn my heart toward you.

Search my inner being with your piercing spotlight.
Give me the patience to pause, to lift up my head, and to confess my shortcomings—specifically and comprehensively.
Help me to trust that Jesus' righteousness covers them all.
Free me from the burden of guilt, the heaviness of shame, the tears of disappointment in myself.
You are the author of compassion, the One who knows my sinful thoughts, words, and deeds,
And you still call me your child.
May I savor time just sitting at your feet, learning from you, absorbing your grace, receiving your love.
And, Lord, adjust my eyes to see myself through your eyes,
my heart to love myself with your heart,
my soul to forgive myself with your mercy.
God of all comfort, infuse me with the knowledge that nothing will ever separate me from your love in Christ Jesus,
in whose name I pray.

Amen.

Questions for reflection and/or conversation

Where, or from whom, do you experience God's comfort and compassion tangibly?
What can prevent you from experiencing this comfort?

When have you experienced comfort in your troubles that can help you comfort others in their troubles?



LONGING TO BE LIKE CHRIST

Praying to Grow in
Christ-likeness Together

THURSDAY, MAY 18, 2023 - DAY 19

40 Days of Prayer

Theme: Like-minded, same love, one in spirit and purpose

Suggested Bible Reading: Ephesians 3:14-21

I kneel before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name. I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the Lord's holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.

Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.

Prayer (in Russian)

By Petr Kornilov, pastor at Ocean View CRC in Norfolk, Virginia

Господь наш и Бог наш, пред Тобою мы преклоняем колени. Ты творец всего видимого и невидимого, мы живем, движемся и существуем лишь по Твоей воле и благодати. Милость Твоя неисчерпаема, а любовь безгранична. Беднякам Ты даруешь достаток и наследие, не лишаешь нас благ Твоих. По богатству Твоей славы Ты даровал нам веру в Иисуса Христа и наделил нас Духом Своим Святым, причислил нас к лику святых, укоренил нас в глубинах своей безмерной любви. Мы поражаемся силе Твоей милосердной любви, необъятной и неисчерпаемой.

Мы взываем к Тебе и умоляем: помоги нам еще более понять высоту и глубину любви Христа. Дай жажду душам нашим, углуби нашу нужду в Тебе, открой наши глаза, вразуми нас и воспламени наши остывшие сердца. Мы желаем и далее познавать необъятную любовь Христа, и хотим снова и снова отвечать Тебе взаимностью своей первой любви. Мы стремимся не к обладанию лишь новыми знаниями об Иисусе, а к духовной зрелости, возникающей из постижения любви. Мы алчем назидания от познания Христа, нашего спасителя, который за нас страдал, за нас воскрес и за нас вознесся. Мы хотим быть людьми, преображающимися в новый облик.

Чтобы церковь Твоя внутренне возрастала, обновлялась, укрепи святых Твоих. С уверенностью, что Ты можешь ответить в гораздо большей мере, чем мы просим или даже помышляем, зная, что Ты благ и что Ты нам не откажешь, мы просим, ответь на нашу молитву, Отец наш, во славу имени Христа, кому принадлежит вся слава и честь, теперь и всегда, и во веки веков.

Аминь.

English translation:

Our Lord and our God, before you we bow our knees. You are the creator of all things, visible and invisible; we live and move and have our being merely because of your will and grace. Your mercies are inexhaustible; your love is boundless. The poor receive rich treasures and a great inheritance; no good thing have you withheld from us. Out of your rich glory you have gifted us faith in Jesus Christ, endowed us with your Holy Spirit, counted us among the saints, and planted us in the depths of your vast love. We are astonished by the power of your tender love, incomprehensible and inexhaustible.

We call to you and beg: help us to understand more fully the height and depth of Christ's love. Give thirst to our souls, deepen our need for you, open our eyes, grant us understanding, and rekindle our lukewarm hearts. We want to know more of the incomprehensible love of Christ, and we desire to again and again reciprocate to you our first love. We aspire not to merely gain new knowledge about Jesus, but desire spiritual maturity, which comes from experiencing love. We hunger for edification which comes from knowing Christ, our Savior who for us suffered, for us rose, and for us ascended. We want to be people who are transformed into his likeness.

In order that your church may grow inwardly, strengthen your saints. With confidence, trusting that you will answer in ways immeasurably more than we ask or even imagine, knowing that you are good and that you will not refuse us, we

ask that you answer our prayer, our Father, to the glory of Christ's name, to whom belong all glory and honor, now and forever.

Amen.

Questions for reflection and/or conversation

Do you have this deep longing to know Christ's love? If not, ask the Spirit to lead you to it. If so, continue to pray that you may experience and live in this love.

In what ways have you experienced the Holy Spirit continuing to kindle this deep longing to know Christ's love more fully?



LONGING TO BE LIKE CHRIST

Praying to Grow in
Christ-likeness Together

FRIDAY, MAY 19, 2023 - DAY 20

40 Days of Prayer

Theme: Like-minded, same love, one in spirit and purpose

Suggested Bible Readings: Psalm 105:1-4; Jeremiah 29:13

Give praise to the Lord, proclaim his name; make known among the nations what he has done. Sing to him, sing praise to him; tell of all his wonderful acts. Glory in his holy name; let the hearts of those who seek the Lord rejoice. Look to the Lord and his strength; seek his face always.

“You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart.”

Prayer

By Paula Coldagelli, executive director of ministries at Brookfield (Wis.) CRC

Father,

You call your children in Psalm 105:4 to seek your face always. What a privilege it is to be called into your presence and to look intently at you and your holy character. Yet we know that we often turn from your loving gaze and desire to seek our own face. We look to our own strength with a hope that our face will somehow receive earthly recognition and favor.

Father, forgive us. Help us be a people humbly trusting in you alone, living lives devoted to seeking your presence, your favor, your direction, and your will. May we pursue your presence with our whole being so that like the psalmist we can cry out, saying that our souls thirst for you and our whole bodies long for you. We have seen you in your sanctuary and gazed upon your power and glory.

Even as we seek your face and gaze upon your goodness, may we also be reminded that we will soon be gathered at synod with your imagebearers—those called to

deliberate and discern your will for the sake of your church. May we take time to get to know a new face, to look someone in the eyes and greet them by name. When we do, may we see your loving gaze in their eyes, turn our eyes to heaven, and perhaps even sing:

Turn your eyes upon Jesus,
Look full in His wonderful face,
And the things of earth will grow strangely dim
In the light of His glory and grace.

(Helen H. Lemmel, 1922, P.D.)

Amen.

Questions for reflection and/or conversation

Whom do you need to get to know, remembering that they too are imagebearers of God?

In a tense situation, how do you stay curious, rest in the Lord's presence, and bridge the gap with others with whom you disagree?



LONGING TO BE LIKE CHRIST

Praying to Grow in
Christ-likeness Together

SATURDAY, MAY 20, 2023 - DAY 21

40 Days of Prayer

Theme: Like-minded, same love, one in spirit and purpose

Suggested Bible Reading: Matthew 5:14-17

"You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.

"Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them."

Prayer

By Pamela Matthews, member at All Nations CRC, Halifax, Nova Scotia

O God of eternal love,

We glorify your name in all the earth!

We come, grateful for your presence, your love, your mercy, and your grace, which falls on us abundantly each day.

We pray that our passion for you translates into compassion for others in your broken world. May your light shine through us as we minister to those in need.

Help us be bold in glorifying your name, but always with humility and a kind spirit.

Deliver us from self-righteousness and arrogance. Give us Christlike wisdom as we struggle with uncomfortable or unfamiliar situations.

We pray for all who preach your gospel in many corners of your world. May they be safe and successful as they bring glory to your name, a beacon of hope to all.

Thank you for showing us your light in others. Give us eyes to see and acknowledge your light wherever it is shining.

Thank you for Jesus, whose perfect love fulfills the Law and the Prophets.

With each new day, give us many opportunities to do good and to speak graciously so that others may see your light in us and glorify your name.

In Jesus' name we pray.

Amen.

Questions for reflection and/or conversation

Where do you need God's grace and wisdom for challenging situations that God has called you to? Ask him for those gifts.

How have you experienced the light of Christ illuminating a time of isolation and darkness in your own life? How can you be a source of light and extend grace in our diverse community of believers?



LONGING TO BE LIKE CHRIST

Praying to Grow in
Christ-likeness Together

SUNDAY, MAY 21, 2023 - DAY 22

40 Days of Prayer

Theme: Like-minded, same love, one in spirit and purpose

Suggested Bible Reading: 1 Timothy 1:15-17

Here is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance: Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners—of whom I am the worst. But for that very reason I was shown mercy so that in me, the worst of sinners, Christ Jesus might display his immense patience as an example for those who would believe in him and receive eternal life. Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory for ever and ever. Amen.

Prayer (in Spanish)

By Chris Cassis, pastor of The Source Church, Miramar, Florida

Padre,

Gracias por mostrar tu amor al enviar a tu hijo a morir por nosotros. Aunque constantemente nos alejamos de ti, la gracia y el amor que muestras son inconmensurables. Esperas continuamente a que volvamos a ti. Esperas pacientemente a que volvamos a nuestros sentidos. Puedes elegir regresar a este mundo en cualquier momento para traer el cielo aquí en la tierra, pero esperas pacientemente a que más personas escuchen acerca de tu hijo Jesús y reciban salvación. Incluso, mientras estábamos etiquetados como tus enemigos, todavía elegiste sacrificar a tu hijo por nosotros.

Padre, ayúdanos a tener la misma paciencia unos con otros como tú tienes con cada uno de nosotros. Es fácil mostrar perdón y gracia a aquellos a quienes admiramos y respetamos, pero difícil mostrar amor por aquellos que no están de acuerdo con nosotros. Somos rápidos para responder y lentos para escuchar. Danos la paciencia que se necesita para escucharnos unos a otros. Danos la fortaleza para sentarnos

con personas que difieren en nuestra opinión. Ayúdanos a sacrificarnos los unos por los otros de la misma manera que Jesús entregó Su vida en sacrificio por cada uno de nosotros. Cuando estemos estresados, frustrados o molestos con los demás, que el amor de Jesús salga de nosotros y se desborde hacia los demás.

Amén.

English translation:

Father,

Thank you for choosing to show your love by sending your Son to die for us. Although we constantly turn away from you, the grace and love you display is immeasurable. You continually wait for us to repent and come back to you. You patiently wait for us to come to our senses. You could choose to return to this world anytime to bring heaven here on earth, but you wait for people to hear about your Son, Jesus, to receive salvation. Even while we were labeled as your enemies, you still chose to sacrifice your Son for us.

Father, may we have that same patience for one another as you have for each of us. It is easy to display forgiveness and grace for people whom we admire and respect, but it is difficult to show love to those who disagree with us. We are quick to respond and slow to listen. Give us the patience it takes to listen to each other. Give us the fortitude to sit with people whose opinions differ from ours. Help us to sacrifice for one another the same way Jesus sacrificially laid down his life for each of us. When we are stressed, frustrated, or upset with others, may the love of Jesus overflow from within us to others.

Amen.

Questions for reflection and/or conversation

To whom do you quickly show forgiveness and grace? To whom is that difficult? Pray again that God will work in you to reflect his grace toward others.

Who in your life needs to hear the good news of life in Jesus? Ask the Holy Spirit to bring individuals to mind, and pray for each of them by name. Then ask if the Holy Spirit has a role for you in sharing the hope you have in Jesus.



LONGING TO BE LIKE CHRIST

Praying to Grow in
Christ-likeness Together

MONDAY, MAY 22, 2023 - DAY 23

40 Days of Prayer

Theme: Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit

Suggested Bible Reading: Psalm 139:23-24

Search me, God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.

Prayer

By Justin Kroeze, grade 11 student attending youth group at Faith CRC, New Brighton, Minnesota

Dear Lord,

Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God almighty. We know that you are a holy God. Your desire is for your people to be holy and righteous. We can't comprehend your greatness. You're more holy than anything we could possibly imagine, yet you still call us out of our lives of sin into a new life of righteousness with you.

Please come to us and reveal our sins and shortcomings to us. So often we lie to ourselves about our sin. We try to make ourselves feel like we're better than others, or we compare and weigh our sins against others. Lord, you know all of our hearts. Search them and reveal our sins. You know everything we've ever done: the times we've intentionally sinned and when we've sinned without even knowing it.

Please help us not to be apathetic toward our sins. Instead, lead us to repentance and turn us away from sin and toward eternal life. Let us pray as David did in Psalm 139:23-24: "Search me, God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting."

Lead us in the world to live as you want us to live. Lead us not into temptation. Lead us to everlasting life in heaven with Jesus, and help us to lead others on that path as well.

Amen.

Questions for reflection and/or conversation

Take a few minutes of silence, asking the Holy Spirit to reveal to you areas of your life that are offensive to God. Ask for forgiveness, and ask God to lead you in the way everlasting.

In what ways have you acted out of selfish ambition in the past 24 hours? Ask the Spirit to transform your selfish ambition into selfless service to the people in your life today.



LONGING TO BE LIKE CHRIST

Praying to Grow in
Christ-likeness Together

TUESDAY, MAY 23, 2023 - DAY 24

40 Days of Prayer

Theme: Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit

Suggested Bible Reading: James 4:13-17

Listen, you who say, “Today or tomorrow we will go to this or that city, spend a year there, carry on business and make money.” . . . Instead, you ought to say, “If it is the Lord’s will, we will live and do this or that.” As it is, you boast in your arrogant schemes. All such boasting is evil. If anyone, then, knows the good they ought to do and doesn’t do it, it is sin for them.

Prayer

By Adrian de Lange, pastor of River City CRC, Calgary, Alberta

God, we so easily call you “Father” and then run from you or resent you. We reenact the habits of our childish flesh instead of basking in your wisdom, strength, and goodness. When we stand in leadership roles great and small—in our churches and jobs, at our schools, among our friends and families, in our communities, or even only with one other person—we confidently make plans and expect others to join us, to praise our wisdom and strength, and to trust our goodness.

In so much of what we do, Lord, we claim to fight evil or to stand for truth or even to improve society. Yet we confess that our confidence is far too much in ourselves and far too little in you. We confess that our words and actions are too large a part of our own plans rather than your will. We confess that we have not desired to sit at your feet like little children who long to be with our Father, to hear your words, and to feel the beam of your smile. Instead we have focused on the parts of you that are most accessible or sensical to us; so we have used you for our own advantage, our own glory, and our own name. We are not worthy to be called your children.

Revive us again because of your profound love; renew us again by your Spirit's incomparable power; and refocus our wayward hearts and minds with your strength and your will. Because you are greater than us, remind us that we can only know you more fully as a diverse community—and so break in us the pride that assumes we can do it all ourselves.

In Jesus' name we pray.

Amen.

Questions for reflection and/or conversation

In what areas of your life is your confidence more in yourself than in God? How might you grow in having a change of heart about this?

How do you work on disproving your own presumptions about another person? Ask the Lord to help you see past your fears and emotions to humbly embody the love and grace of Christ reflected in your brother or sister in Christ.



LONGING TO BE LIKE CHRIST

Praying to Grow in
Christ-likeness Together

WEDNESDAY, MAY 24, 2023 - DAY 25

40 Days of Prayer

Theme: Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit

Suggested Bible Reading: Romans 12:3

By the grace given me I say to every one of you: Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the faith God has distributed to each of you.

Prayer

By Femke Visser-Elenbaas, chaplain at Hamilton Health Sciences, Hamilton, Ontario

As a hospital chaplain, I almost daily meet people in crisis, dealing with the impacts of their health issues on every area of their life. Listening to what someone shares with me, I also seek to understand what sustains them (or not) in the present moment, what they hold as sacred, what familiar spiritual and religious resources they are already drawing from or perhaps could draw from in search of comfort, meaning, encouragement, or whatever it is they need. I do so because I trust deeply that our sovereign God has been at work in this person's life all along in ways unknown to me. I'm simply there to bear witness to that reality and to hopefully be a channel of God's grace. In a similar spirit I'd like to invite us as members of a church in challenging times to join in this prayer of confession, using words adapted from our contemporary testimony *Our World Belongs to God* (para. 40):

Jesus Christ, I grieve that your church,
which shares one Spirit, one faith, one hope,
and spans all time, place, race, and language,
has become a broken communion in a broken world.

God, when I struggle
for the truth of the gospel
and for the righteousness you demand,
I pray for wisdom and courage.
When my pride or blindness
hinders the unity of your household,
I seek forgiveness.

Holy Spirit, I marvel that you gather the broken pieces
to do your work
and that you bless us still
with joy, new members,
and surprising evidences of unity.

God, I commit myself to seeking and expressing
the oneness of all who follow Jesus,
and I pray for brothers and sisters
who suffer for the faith.

In Jesus' name, Amen.

Questions for reflection and/or conversation

Ask God to show you where your pride or blindness hinders unity in the church. And then seek forgiveness and live in repentance.

Think about a time when you received undeserved mercy, grace, and forgiveness rather than being harshly criticized or ridiculed while you were in a situation of distress or regret. What did you experience in that forgiveness? How can you extend similar mercy, grace, and forgiveness to your brother or sister in Christ?



LONGING TO BE LIKE CHRIST

Praying to Grow in
Christ-likeness Together

THURSDAY, MAY 25, 2023 - DAY 26

40 Days of Prayer

Theme: Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit

Suggested Bible Reading: 2 Corinthians 3:17-18

Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. And we all, who with unveiled faces contemplate the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his image with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.

Prayer (in Samoan)

By Fatu Auau, pastor at Emanuel Church in Santa Ana, California

O se mea ua sili ona taua o le “Aua nei faia se mea e tasi ma le finau vale” (Filipi 2:3) ia mautinoa le galuega o le faafouina e maua i le faatasi mai o le Agaga Paia. 2Korinito 3:17-18 says, “O le Alii foi o le Agaga ia, o le mea o i ai le Agaga o le Alii, o i ai le saolotoga. A o i tatou uma, o loo vaavaai i tatou i le pupula o le Alii ma o tatou mata, e le ufitia, ua liua ai i tatou ua foliga i ai nai le pupula e oo i le pupula, faapei ona maua ai mai le Alii, o ia o le Agaga.

Tatou tatalo mo le faateleina pea le mautinoa o le Atua ia te i tatou.

Le Atua le Tama, le Alo ma le Agaga Sa. Faafetai i lou alofa ua faatumulia i le alofa ma le alofa tunoa. Faafetai le Alii e, i lou auina mai mo i matou le Agaga Paia o le upu moni na te faasino i matou i mea moni. Aoao i matou ia matou usiusitai ia te oe ma ia e fausia i o matou loto le manao ma le galala ia pei o Iesu Keriso. E le mafai ona matou faia se mea e tasi e aunoa ma oe Agaga Paia i o matou olaga, matou te faalagolago i lau faasino tonu ma le faatuatua i le maliu o lo matou Alii o Iesu Keriso i le satauro. E iai taimi matou te le mau tali ai pe a luitauina i matou i faalavelave ma puapuaga o lenei olaga, ona matou saili atu lea ia te oe Agaga Paia ma ua e aumaia le faulai o lou agalelei e tusa o le ole atu ia te oe, pei ona ta'u mai e Efeso 3:20 “O

lenei, ia ia te ia o le na te mafaia ona faia o mea uma e faasilisili lava i mea tatou te ole atu ai ma mafau fau i ai, e tusa ma le mana o loo matua galue i totonu ia te i tatou” Agaga Paia e, foaina i lau Ekalesia le poto ma le atamai e faaauau ai pea le fesootaiga ma atunuu ma malo pei ona molimau le Tusi Paia Galuega 10:35 “a e peitai o le mata’u ia te ia i nuu uma lava, ma fai le amiotonu, ua talia i latou e ia”. Afio mai tatou feoi i taimi uma.

E ala ia Iesu Keriso,
Amene.

English translation:

A big part of laying aside “selfish ambition” and “vain conceit” (Phil. 2:3) is recognizing the transforming work of the Holy Spirit within us. As 2 Corinthians 3:17-18 says, “Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. And we all, who with unveiled faces contemplate the Lord’s glory, are being transformed into his image with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.”

Can we pray today for a growing recognition of God’s presence within?

God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit:

Thank you for your love full of mercy and grace. Lord Jesus, thank you for giving us the Holy Spirit of truth to guide us to all truth. Teach us, Holy Spirit, how to listen to you. Create in our heart the longing and desire to have the same mindset as Christ Jesus. We cannot do anything without you, Holy Spirit, in our life. We rely on your guidance and direction as we move forward with faith in the death of our Lord Jesus Christ on the cross. There are times when we struggle to find answers to the crises and problems confronting us. Yet as we ask you, Holy Spirit, to help us, you provide the answer more than what we need. As your Word in Ephesians 3:20 says, “Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us,” Holy Spirit, give our denomination wisdom and knowledge to continue to reach out to all cultures and nations as your Word assures us in Acts 10:34-35: “God does not show favoritism but accepts from every nation the one who fears him and does what is right.” Come and walk with us daily.

Amen.

Questions for reflection and/or conversation

Where are you praying in your life: “Create in my heart the longing and desire to have the same mindset as Christ Jesus.”

Where in your life do you need freedom from fear, conceit, and selfish ambition?
What would freedom give evidence of in your life?



LONGING TO BE LIKE CHRIST

Praying to Grow in
Christ-likeness Together

FRIDAY, MAY 26, 2023 - DAY 27

40 Days of Prayer

Theme: Humility

Suggested Bible Reading: Philippians 2:5-6

In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus: Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage. . . .

Prayer

By Brian Ochsner, pastor of Faith CRC, Pella, Iowa

Heavenly Father,

We stand amazed at how all through your Word you show us that your throne room is a place of glory, worship, and knees bent in humble praise. We praise you for your majesty, your power, your wisdom, and your beauty.

We ask for a faith that may better know how Christ, when he took on flesh, set this all aside so that we may experience your grace and be transformed in the way we live. Isaiah said that Christ had no beauty to attract us to him. Luke said he grew up like any other child learning from his parents. Matthew said he was seen riding on a donkey, not a horse. John said that he took off his outer garment and knelt before his disciples.

Father, deepen our understanding that Christ set aside every advantage of being God so that we may experience grace. Beauty became marred; wisdom became a child; power became a servant; and the one before whom every knee will bow knelt down to wash our feet.

God, shape in us this attitude of Christ, that all we are and all we have been asked to steward is not used for our advantage but for the sake of making you and your grace known. We ask for a faith that may better respond to Christ, who calls us to offer our lives as a living sacrifice of praise. Father, teach us how to join with Paul and say that “whatever were gains to me I now consider loss for the sake of Christ” (Phil. 3:7).

As we wait in silence, Father, teach us what is getting in the way of having this attitude of Christ. We surrender it to you so that you and your grace may be made known.

In Jesus’ name, Amen.

Questions for reflection and/or conversation

Sit in silence for a few minutes, listening to the Spirit’s still, quiet voice, teaching you what is getting in the way of having this attitude of Christ.

Jesus set aside his own claim to the privileges of divinity for our sake. Reflect on what this cost Jesus. What is the significance for you that Jesus laid aside his majesty?



LONGING TO BE LIKE CHRIST

Praying to Grow in
Christ-likeness Together

SATURDAY, MAY 27, 2023 - DAY 28

40 Days of Prayer

Theme: Humility

Suggested Bible Reading: Philippians 2:7

He made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness.

Prayer

By Jana Vander Laan, copastor at Sahali Fellowship CRC in Kamloops, British Columbia

Lord Jesus Christ, our Servant King:

You willingly set aside the rich comforts of a heavenly home to be among us on this humble earth.

As you walked through the village streets, you did not assume you got a roof over your head and food on your table because you deserved it. Rather you replied, “Foxes have dens and birds have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay his head” (Luke 9:58).

Yet when we walk through a given day, we expect to have our needs met—and more. We think the recliner in our living room and the pillows on our bed are there because we earned them. The indulgence we picked up along the way is ours because we wanted it. Forgive us for selfish entitlements like these. Remind us that we’ve been given what we’ve been given and we are where we are so that we can serve more.

May our churches be places where we practice relaxing our clenched fists and setting aside our entitled expectations. May we together learn to open ourselves more and more to the gift of your sacrificial love and then follow your love through joyful service to others. For it is in our simple and everyday acts of service—in

giving, helping, tending, and visiting—that we will meet you and find our lives to the full.

In your name we pray.

Amen.

Questions for reflection and/or conversation

In what area of your life can you grow in joyful service and generosity toward others?

Spend some time allowing the Spirit to minister to you, being filled with the love of Christ. What spiritual discipline(s) can you practice this week to open yourself more fully to the gift of Christ's sacrificial love?



LONGING TO BE LIKE CHRIST

Praying to Grow in
Christ-likeness Together

SUNDAY, MAY 28, 2023 - DAY 29

40 Days of Prayer

Theme: Humility

Suggested Bible Reading: Philippians 2:5-8

In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus: Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death—even death on a cross!

Prayer

By Richard Jones, pastor of Bridgeway Community CRC, Haledon, New Jersey

Many of us are familiar with these words written by the apostle Paul. We immediately see the stark contrast between Jesus and us. As the New Living Translation puts it, Jesus willingly gave up his divine privileges by taking on the humble position of a slave and even humbling himself in obedience to God and dying a criminal's death on a cross. The word that comes to mind is sacrifice. He willingly gave up everything for us. In doing so, Jesus models for us the essence of what it means to truly love someone—being willing to sacrifice everything for them.

Sadly, we are looking out for ourselves and how we can be number one. This passage reorients our perspective on how believers should live their lives.

Father God,

As I reflect on the words contained in Scripture and the sacrifice of Jesus, unfortunately I find that I focus more on myself and less on others. There are times, if I am honest, that I seek to gratify myself and live oblivious to the wants and needs of others. Forgive me for being selfish. Forgive me for not seeking to follow the example of Jesus. Forgive me for desiring glory but not being willing to embrace

suffering. Help me to live a life that ultimately glorifies God and edifies others. Help me to make sacrifices and demonstrate agape love like Jesus.

Amen.

Questions for reflection and/or conversation

What might God be calling you to give up in order to truly love others?

C.S. Lewis wrote, "Humility isn't thinking less of yourself but thinking of yourself less." What's the difference? In which relationships do you think about yourself a lot? Ask God to reveal how to put your trust in him rather than in the relationship.

LONGING TO BE LIKE CHRIST

Praying to Grow in
Christ-likeness Together

MONDAY, MAY 29, 2023 - DAY 30

40 Days of Prayer

Theme: Humility

Suggested Bible Reading: Philippians 2:5-7

In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus: Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness.

Prayer (in Farsi)

By Mahkam Sadjadi, deacon at Willowdale CRC in North York, Ontario

ی‌باخت‌نا، باخت‌نا نی‌ا هک منک یم فارت‌عا و ما هدرک باخت‌نا ار وت نم، ینام‌س‌آ ردپ‌ا
رد زور کی‌ی‌لو و تشاد دهاوخ دوجو ی‌ی‌ا هب‌ی‌شن و زارف ری‌سم نی‌ا رد مناد یم، تس‌ا ه‌نا‌هاگ‌آ
رد و ندوب ناریرش هدی‌ش‌ک ک‌لف ه‌ب‌رس ی‌ا ه‌خ‌اک رد زور ناراز‌ه‌ا زار‌ت‌ه‌ب، ندوب وت رانک
تس‌ا ندشن تف‌ای رگی‌د و ندش م‌گ‌ای‌ند.

و مینک کرد یت‌س‌رد ه‌ب‌ار وت لال‌ج و تم‌ظ‌ع‌ات نک اط‌ع‌نا وار‌ف‌کرد و ش‌ن‌ی‌ب‌ام ه‌ب‌ادن‌وا‌د‌خ
م‌یری‌گ‌ب‌دای‌لد و نا‌ج‌ق‌م‌ع‌اب‌ار وت ه‌نا‌ن‌ت‌ور‌ف‌ندرک تب‌ح‌م‌هو‌ح‌ن.

م‌یش‌اب‌ن‌ی‌مز‌ی‌ور رب وت مان لال‌ج و یدون‌ش‌خ‌هی‌ام ه‌ک‌زاس‌ب‌ی‌نادر‌گ‌اش و نار‌ی‌فس‌ام‌زا

نم‌س‌پ، دنک یم ش‌نادر‌گ‌اش ی‌ا‌هاپ‌نت‌س‌ش‌ه‌ب‌م‌اد‌قا و دنز‌ی‌م‌وناز دن‌وا‌د‌خ‌رس‌پ‌یت‌ق‌و
و ه‌نا‌صل‌لا‌خ‌ن‌ی‌ن‌چ‌نی‌ا ار اد‌خ‌قل‌خ‌ه‌ب‌تم‌د‌خ‌ه‌ک‌مناد یم م‌زال‌مد‌وخ‌رب، م‌ت‌س‌ه‌وا دن‌ز‌رف‌ه‌ک
م‌هد‌ما‌ج‌نا ه‌نا‌ن‌ت‌ور‌ف.

ص‌ول‌خ‌ی‌ور‌زا الم‌اک‌منک یم تم‌د‌خ‌وت قل‌خ‌ه‌ب‌ه‌کی‌نام‌ز‌ات ه‌د‌ب‌ت‌ق‌ای‌ل‌نم ه‌ب‌ادن‌وا‌د‌خ
د‌وش‌ن‌رب‌خ‌اب‌م‌پ‌چ‌ت‌س‌د‌زا م‌ت‌س‌ار‌ت‌س‌د‌و د‌ش‌اب‌یت‌ش‌اد‌م‌ش‌چ‌چی‌ه‌ن‌ود‌ب‌و ت‌ی‌ن.

نم، ی‌هاگ‌آ‌ام‌لام‌عا و راک‌فا‌مام‌ت‌ه‌ب‌و یت‌س‌ه‌ام‌رانک رد ه‌ظ‌ح‌ل‌ره‌وت ه‌ک‌مراد‌نی‌قی‌نم
ار‌ت‌نادن‌ز‌رف‌ام‌ی‌زور، یناس‌ر‌یم‌ار‌ه‌ان‌پ‌ی‌ب‌و ک‌چ‌وک‌نا‌گ‌دن‌ر‌پ‌ی‌زور ه‌ک‌رو‌ط‌ن‌ام‌ه‌مراد‌رواب

وت هب اهناسنا ام هک تسى فاک طقف ،دناسر رى هاوخ مىتسه وت تاقولخم فرشا هک مه
مىراپسب وت رهم رپ ناتسد هب ار نلم تشونرس و نامدوخ و مىشاب هت شادى بلى نامى

مدرک اعد حىسم سى ع لال ج رپ مان هب

نىم آ

English translation:

Heavenly Father, I have chosen to follow you, and I admit that this choice is a conscious choice. I know that there will be ups and downs on this path, but one day by your side is better than thousands of days in empty palaces of the wicked, being lost in the world, and never being found again.

O Lord, give us broad insight and knowledge so that we can deeply understand your greatness and glory and learn how to humbly love you from the depths of our hearts and souls. Make us ambassadors who glorify your name on earth, and make us disciples in whom you delight.

When the Son of God kneels down and washes the feet of his disciples, then I, who am his child, consider it necessary to serve God's people in such sincere and humble ways.

Dear Lord, grant me humbleness so that when I serve your people, it will be completely out of pure and sincere intentions, without any expectations and without even my right hand knowing what my left hand is doing.

I trust that you are with us every moment and that you know all our thoughts and actions. I believe that just as you provide for small and helpless birds, so will you provide for your children, who are the crown of your creation. We need only to put our faith and trust in you and to commit ourselves and our future to your loving hands.

I pray all this in the glorious name of Jesus Christ.

Amen.

Questions for reflection and/or conversation

How does understanding God's greatness and glory lead to humility in your life?

Reflect on your interactions with others over the past couple of days. How have they reflected the attitude of Christ? In what ways does the attitude of Christ shape your own posture as a parent, employer, ministry leader, spouse, or friend?



LONGING TO BE LIKE CHRIST

Praying to Grow in
Christ-likeness Together

TUESDAY, MAY 30, 2023 - DAY 31

40 Days of Prayer

Theme: Look to the interests of others

Suggested Bible Reading: 1 Peter 4:8-9

Above all, love each other deeply, because love covers over a multitude of sins.
Offer hospitality to one another without grumbling.

Prayer

By Daudi Mbuta, council president at African Community Fellowship Church, Kentwood, Michigan

Our heavenly Father,

We thank you for the love you have shown us. You are the loving God who gave his only begotten Son, Jesus, to die on the cross for our sins to be forgiven. Through this love we are forgiven our sins. As you loved us when we were sinners, we pray that you will give us a loving heart for others. As your followers, we pray that we will love others. Help us to love our neighbors, those who are different from us, and those from other parts of this world.

Jesus, your love has no boundaries. When you were in this world, you did what was good, and you showed love to the people you met. Your word tells us to offer hospitality to one another without grumbling. We pray that you will give us a heart that accepts new ways to engage others.

You created all people, and you love us all without discrimination. Remove from us anything that would stand in the way of radiating your presence. Lord, lead us to engage with others and invite them into your kingdom. Stir our hearts to move out of our comfort zones and engage with others. Where we disagree, give us the wisdom to reach others and share your Word. Lord, you are a God of hospitality. Lord Jesus, you welcomed all who came into your presence. There is none like you

who invite all to come. May we reflect that same spirit in our denomination through this ministry of hospitality. May your light shine in our hearts this day. Speak to us now!

In Jesus name,

Amen.

Questions for reflection and/or conversation

Where do you need to show the same gracious hospitality that Christ showed to you?

Hospitality is rooted in respect—valuing another as an imagebearer of God who deserves our love, care, and attention. How does considering each human being as an imagebearer of God affect the way you treat them? What gets in the way of showing others respect and love?



LONGING TO BE LIKE CHRIST

Praying to Grow in
Christ-likeness Together

WEDNESDAY, MAY 31, 2023 - DAY 32

40 Days of Prayer

Theme: Look to the interests of others

Suggested Bible Reading: Galatians 6:2

Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ.

Prayer

By Jonathan Averill, U.S. Army chaplain serving in Belgium

With the words of Galatians 6:2, Paul commands us as Christians to help each other in our Christian walk. After serving three years in Belgium, I have received orders to return to the United States. My position is now changing from one of independence and setting my own schedule to one of dependence and intense connection with other chaplains. This change is one I am looking forward to. It was hard being separated from a community of fellow workers. With hearts attuned to the guidance of the Holy Spirit, we can support, and be supported, in true community.

Dear Lord,

Soften our hearts and souls to hear your voice as we walk the new paths you have designed for us. Use us to be a channel in which you can pour out your grace to help others. Expand our hearts so that only Christ is seen in our lives as we walk along with our brothers and sisters in Christ.

Healing Spirit, renew our confidence in your power and in the power of love to change our lives, and give us courage to fully follow you as we are challenged to do. We ask this, knowing that only through your strength can we flourish spiritually.

Assist us, heavenly Father, in living hopefully and bearing one another's burdens day by day. Help us to set our petty, present fears aside and to look instead to a future

full of potential. Be with us as we remember past joys, and keep us focused on the heavenly delights that await us.

All this we ask in the name of our resurrected Savior who died for us, Jesus Christ.

Amen.

Questions for reflection and/or conversation

Where have you seen God lead you into new paths? How has God prepared you for those unseen turns in your life?

In what areas of life have you traded dependence on God for self-reliance? Ask the Holy Spirit to search you and to reveal to you what you might not see.



LONGING TO BE LIKE CHRIST

Praying to Grow in
Christ-likeness Together

THURSDAY, JUNE 1, 2023 - DAY 33

40 Days of Prayer

Theme: Look to the interests of others

Suggested Bible Reading: 1 Corinthians 13

If I speak in the tongues of men or of angels, but do not have love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal. If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. If I give all I possess to the poor and give over my body to hardship that I may boast, but do not have love, I gain nothing.

Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.

Love never fails. But where there are prophecies, they will cease; where there are tongues, they will be stilled; where there is knowledge, it will pass away. For we know in part and we prophesy in part, but when completeness comes, what is in part disappears. When I was a child, I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I put the ways of childhood behind me. For now we see only a reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known.

And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love.

Prayer (in Dutch)

By Syd Hielema, regional pastor for Classis Hamilton, Ontario

Lieve Heer,

Uw liefde, uw agape, strekt zich uit zo ver als het oosten is van het westen, zo ver als de hemel is boven/van de aarde (PS 103). We kunnen de hoogte, de breedte, de diepte en de lengte niet bevatten (EPH 3). We hebben gezien hoe de grootste liefde, Jezus, zijn leven gaf voor de hele wereld (Johannes 15).

We verlangen ernaar onze ogen op Jezus te richten (Heb 12), omdat we zo vaak alleen een wazig beeld zien dat wordt weerspiegeld in een slechte spiegel. De afgelopen drie jaar waren zo chaotisch, zo verwarrend en hebben ons met zoveel angst achtergelaten. Help!) We verlangen naar zekerheid, we verlangen naar duidelijkheid, we verlangen naar een einde aan conflicten in de kerk. We verlangen naar de vrede die ons verstand te boven gaat (Fil. 4).

Schenk ons de genade om Jezus met ons te zien wandelen in de storm (Hebr. 2). Schenk ons de genade om ons angstige verlangen los te laten om standvastig te staan in de liefde van Christus (Fil 4). Schenk ons de genade om afstand te doen van onze eigen dreunende gongen en schellende cimbale om instrumenten van Jezus' liefde te zijn: geduldig, vriendelijk, niet snel boos, volhardend.

Vernieuw ons met dat wat blijvend is: geloof, hoop en liefde.

Amen.

English translation:

Dear Lord,

Your love, your agape, stretches as far as the east is from the west, as far as the heavens are from the earth (Ps. 103). We cannot grasp its height, its width, its depth, nor its length (Eph. 3). We have seen the greatest love, Jesus, giving his life for all the world (John 15).

We long to fix our eyes on Jesus (Heb. 12), because so often we see only a blurry image reflected in a poor mirror. The past three years have been so chaotic, so confusing, and have left us with so much anxiety. Help! We long for certainty, we long for clarity, we long for conflict in the church to end. We long for the peace that passes understanding (Phil. 4).

Grant us grace to see Jesus walking with us in the storm (Heb. 2). Grant us grace to release our anxious longings to stand firm in the love of Christ (Phil. 4). Grant us grace to relinquish our own resounding gongs and clanging cymbals to be instruments of Jesus' love: patient, kind, not easily angered, persevering.

Renew us with those things that remain: faith, hope, and love.

Amen.

Questions for reflection and/or conversation

Where do you need to show love in your conversations and relationships so that you are not a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal?

Agape love is described as pure, sacrificial love that intentionally desires another's highest good. How does the agape love of God help to frame the current challenges we are facing?



LONGING TO BE LIKE CHRIST

Praying to Grow in
Christ-likeness Together

FRIDAY, JUNE 2, 2023 - DAY 34

40 Days of Prayer

Theme: Look to the interests of others

Suggested Bible Reading: John 13:34-35

“A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.”

Prayer

By Sheila Holmes, pastor of Northside Community CRC, Paterson, New Jersey

Heavenly Father,

Thank you for your lovingkindness, grace, and mercy in not only showing us how to love but also commanding us throughout Scripture to love. As you commanded us to love our neighbor as ourselves, we continue to fail to show the agape love you desire. Please forgive us for allowing the sins of pride, selfishness, and worldly influence to distort and harm others in the name of love.

Thank you for your gift of grace and mercy through the blood of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. You showed your sacrificial love by giving us new life in Christ. Your new command to “love one another” calls us to love the way Jesus gave all of himself for us, even to death on a cross.

We cannot follow this new command in our own strength but through the power of your Spirit, who dwells in every believer. The fruit of your Spirit enables us to express love for one another in many ways:

- accepting one another amid diversity
- bearing one another's burdens as we grow in relationship

- loving one another sincerely
- greeting one another
- forgiving one another as you have forgiven us
- serving one another with humility
- encouraging one another by building one another up
- being kind and compassionate to one another
- speaking the truth to one another in love
- comforting one another

As we submit ourselves to the love and guidance of your Spirit, help us to see that we are the body of Christ and need each other. May others know we are Christians truly by our love.

In Jesus' name, Amen.

Questions for reflection and/or conversation

Where is God possibly revealing your need for others, especially people who may differ from you? And how can you be the body of Christ to them?

What does it mean to love others? How do we love people with whom we disagree?



LONGING TO BE LIKE CHRIST

Praying to Grow in
Christ-likeness Together

SATURDAY, JUNE 3, 2023 - DAY 35

40 Days of Prayer

Theme: Taking the very nature of a servant

Suggested Bible Reading: Matthew 20:26-28

“Whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be your slave—just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.”

Prayer

By Cecil van Niejenhuis, retired pastor attending West End CRC, Edmonton, Alberta

Gracious God,

We marvel at the persistent way you pour yourself into our well-being.
How fully you emptied yourself, Jesus, when you became flesh-and-blood human.
You became not only one of us, but our Servant:
focused on our needs, our deliverance, our life.

How utterly unselfish you are, dear Lord:
your heart overflows with love for others, longing and leading toward our shalom.
And the cost!
What you suffered—because of us, and for us!

We pray to you on this day, O Lord, aware, as ever, that we are people made in your image.
How overwhelmingly wonderful that is.
And how daunting.

May the presence of your Holy Spirit be fruitful in us and through us. May your Spirit empower us to follow Jesus in the way of serving:
eyes that recognize the worth of every other,

ears that listen for another's heart,
and a holy, lasered focus on the well-being of those around us.

Forgive us for imagining we have it all sorted out.
And even more, Lord, forgive us our reluctance to take on the servant role,
and our instinctive inclination to assert ourselves with more confidence
than is fitting.

We turn to you, the Lord and Giver of life, and we see how you use all that you are
for the sake of others.

We long for that same pattern to describe our way with each other—
when we speak of each other,
when we speak to each other,
and when we act toward each other.

In the name of Jesus, and for the sake of Jesus, we long to serve.
Humble us, gracious God, so that we may look like—
and live like—our eldest brother.

Amen.

Questions for reflection and/or conversation

How might you grow in living for the sake of others in speech and action?

Can you think of a person in your life who exemplifies this type of servant heart?
Reflect on which of their characteristics and behaviours inspire you.



LONGING TO BE LIKE CHRIST

Praying to Grow in
Christ-likeness Together

SUNDAY, JUNE 4, 2023 - DAY 36

40 Days of Prayer

Theme: Taking the very nature of a servant

Suggested Bible Reading: 1 Peter 4:10

Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God's grace in its various forms.

Prayer

By Jill Hamming of Charlottetown CRC on Epekwitk (Prince Edward Island)

Oh, Lord God,
I want to glorify you.
You came as Jesus, a gift to us all.
You gave every bit of yourself to us.
I want to share the gifts you have given me—wholeheartedly, without holding back,
humbly, secretly when possible.

Oh, Jesus, you spoke with wisdom and grace and love.
I want my words to be your words—
to speak kindly, to be encouraging—yet to listen well also,
when teaching, and to study well—to listen for your voice and to teach with grace
and love.

Oh, Jesus, you served us!
You served with all your mighty strength.
You served with humility.
You served us with love!
I want to serve others as you did—as you still do—
and yet in all these—sharing, speaking, serving, loving—I find it so hard to do well.
My self gets in the way—my need to control, my pride, my ignorance.

I am sorry; please forgive me.
Please help me to keep on coming back to you—
to learn your ways, to share, to speak, to serve, to love others—
to be filled over and over again
so that I can give you out—well, really, so that you can give out through me.

Thank you, Holy Spirit, that you will answer this.
Thank you, Holy Spirit, that you are always teaching me.
Thank you, Holy Spirit, that you let us be part of your work.
I praise you, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Amen.

Questions for reflection and/or conversation

What part of Jesus' character or one of his actions could you imitate today?

Where do you get in the way? What do you need to confess that keeps you from serving others?



LONGING TO BE LIKE CHRIST

Praying to Grow in
Christ-likeness Together

MONDAY, JUNE 5, 2023 - DAY 37

40 Days of Prayer

Theme: Taking the very nature of a servant

Suggested Bible Reading: John 12:25-26

“Anyone who loves their life will lose it, while anyone who hates their life in this world will keep it for eternal life. Whoever serves me must follow me; and where I am, my servant also will be. My Father will honor the one who serves me.”

Prayer (in Vietnamese)

By Matthew Le, pastor at Little Saigon CRC, Westminster, California

Lạy Chúa Ba Ngôi là Chúa từ ái của con. Ngài là Đấng Cứu Rỗi linh hồn và thể xác con. Ngài cũng là Người Bạn đồng hành với con. Cảm ơn Ngài đã chọn con, kêu gọi con, khích lệ con, và giúp đỡ con trong cuộc sống phục vụ Ngài. Giờ đây xin nghe lời cầu nguyện phát xuất từ tận đáy lòng của con trong tâm tình phục vụ Chúa Giê Su Christ.

Lạy Chúa! Xin dựng nên trong con một lòng trong sạch và làm mới lại trong con một thần linh ngay thẳng để con phục vụ Ngài qua đức tin đơn sơ của con, thông qua những công việc hàng ngày của con. Xin dạy con yêu Ngài với tất cả tấm lòng của con và vì Ngài mà phục vụ những người lân cận. Xin mở mắt thuộc linh của con để con nhận ra điều nào trong con chưa vâng phục trong sự hầu việc Ngài. Xin cho con biết những điều nào trong con mà Ngài chưa làm chủ. Xin dạy con biết từ bỏ những điều mà con đã vì sự sống mình mà không vâng phục Ngài. Xin Chúa Thánh Linh hướng dẫn con từ nay trở đi luôn phục vụ Chúa với lòng tin cậy hoàn toàn vào Ngài.

Lạy Chúa! Xin giúp con nhận ra những thái độ, suy nghĩ, ý kiến, lòng kiên định nào trong con mà không đến từ Ngài. Xin cho con phân biệt được những ước mơ, động cơ, kế hoạch và tham vọng đi ngược lại mục đích của Ngài trong đời sống còn lại của con.

Lạy Chúa! Xin cho con có lòng phục vụ Đấng Christ theo sự dạy dỗ của Ngài với một niềm tin chắc chắn vào lời hứa của Ngài về việc được Đức Chúa Cha tôn trọng trong đời này và đời sau, để con có sự bình an hầu việc Ngài. Con cầu nguyện trong Danh Chúa Giê Su Christ. Amen.

English translation:

O blessed Trinity, my loving Lord, you are the Savior of my soul and body. You are also my companion. Thank you for choosing me, calling me, encouraging me, and helping me to serve you in my life. Now hear the prayer from the bottom of my heart about my motivation to serve Jesus Christ.

O Lord! Please create in me a pure heart and renew in me an upright spirit so that I can serve you with my simple faith through my daily activities. Teach me to love you with all my heart and to serve you through serving my neighbors. Open the eyes of my heart so that I can see in what ways I have not obeyed you in my service. Show me what things in my life I have tried to keep away from you. Teach me to give up the things I have done in disobedience to you. May the Holy Spirit guide me from now on to serve you with complete trust in you.

O Lord! Help me to recognize my attitudes, my thoughts, my opinions, and the steadfastness of my heart that do not come from you. Let me discern dreams, motives, plans, and ambitions that go against your purpose for my whole life.

O Lord! Please give me the heart to serve Christ according to his teachings, with a firm faith in his promise to be honored by the Father in this life and the next life so that I may have peace to serve him.

I pray in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

Questions for reflection and/or conversation

Consider what you're planning to do in the next two hours. . . . What activities or interactions can be brought into greater obedience to Jesus?

What attitudes, thoughts, and opinions do you hold that may need to come more in alignment with God's heart?



LONGING TO BE LIKE CHRIST

Praying to Grow in
Christ-likeness Together

TUESDAY, JUNE 6, 2023 - DAY 38

40 Days of Prayer

Theme: Taking the very nature of a servant

Suggested Bible Reading: Galatians 5:13-14

You, my brothers and sisters, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the flesh; rather, serve one another humbly in love. For the entire law is fulfilled in keeping this one command: "Love your neighbor as yourself."

Prayer

By Ken Lee, young adult leadership developer for Resonate in Matsudo, Japan

Father God in heaven,

We praise and exalt you that we are children of the living God. You left your heavenly throne to come and lower yourself to serve your people. Through your service, you have liberated us from shackles of slavery to sin and granted us freedom and salvation.

Lord, thank you for the freedom we have in Christ. Through your Word you have cautioned us to use our liberty, not disobeying the law, which weakens our soul to fall prey to sins of lust, but to grow in the Spirit and overcome the temptations of the flesh. Lord, help us to live in holiness and righteousness to your praise and glory. Remind us day by day that you came from heaven not to be served but to serve your children. Help us, Lord, to lower ourselves daily and follow your footsteps, using this gospel to serve our neighbors through Christ's love, which only comes as we continue to abide in you and you in us.

Lord, forgive us for not loving and caring for all people, not living like Christ. As we look around us, we see that so many people are in need of your love, yet oftentimes we overlook them or turn our heads. Help us to open our spiritual eyes and ears to see and hear what you are doing in this world so that we can take part in your

ministry. Bind us and unite us as one body in Christ, and use us to reveal your love to those who are suffering and in need of your love, that we will bring glory to you and your kingdom. Grant us your wisdom and empower us to make decisions that are in accord with your heart.

Through Jesus Christ, our Lord, Amen.

Questions for reflection and/or conversation

The prayer calls us to “lower ourselves daily and follow your footsteps.” Where do you need to lower yourself to follow Jesus?

What are some of the ways we can “indulge the flesh”? For which of these do you need to ask God’s forgiveness and strength as you use your freedom to serve others?



LONGING TO BE LIKE CHRIST

Praying to Grow in
Christ-likeness Together

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 7, 2023 - DAY 39

40 Days of Prayer

Theme: Same Attitude as Christ

Suggested Bible Reading: Philippians 4:8-9

Whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things. Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me—put it into practice. And the God of peace will be with you.

Prayer

By Loise Githinji, associate director of Donor Relations for World Renew, Canada - Oakville, Ontario

Dear God,

I long to see and respond to what happens around me in the way that you do—in my family, in the work that you've called me to, in my community, in my country and the world. I long to live my life experiencing the reality of your beautiful promise—that you, the God who is the source of peace and well-being, will be with me. That sounds so inviting. I want that, Lord.

I know that you do not ask me to do anything that you will not give me the power to accomplish. So here I am. I'm weak, but I'm willing. Forgive me for the times I have neglected to obey you. Times when I have centered my mind on the opposite of what you desire for and of me.

By your Holy Spirit, give me the ability and the discipline to think continually on what is honourable and worthy of respect, what is right and confirmed by your Word, what is pure and wholesome. Things that are lovely and bring peace, and things that are worthy of praise, admirable, and of good repute. Help me to develop

habits that strengthen my capacity to see things from your perspective. Transform my mind and attitude and make me more like Jesus.

Help me to develop the discipline to practice what I learn through your Word and through the people you have sent into my life to sharpen me. I thank you for working in me, loving me, and showing me the ways that lead to the abundant life that you paid for me to have.

I love you Father.

Amen.

Questions for reflection and/or conversation

How does responding the way God does, as the source of peace and well-being, sound inviting to you?

What are two things you have learned or received or heard from God that you can put into practice this week?



LONGING TO BE LIKE CHRIST

Praying to Grow in
Christ-likeness Together

THURSDAY, JUNE 8, 2023 - DAY 40

40 Days of Prayer

Theme: Same Attitude as Christ

Suggested Bible Reading: Philippians 4:8-9

Whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things. Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me—put it into practice. And the God of peace will be with you.

Prayer

By Zach King, general secretary of the CRCNA, Grand Rapids, Michigan

Lord Jesus, gracious Savior, faithful God, we come before you on this day before the beginning of synod, thankful that you have heard our prayers over the past forty days.

You heard the prayers of your people Israel as they wandered for forty years.
You heard the prayers of your Son, Jesus, as he was tested for forty days.
You heard our prayers during the forty days of Lent as we remembered your passion.

Now we hear your words: **“Whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable . . . excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things.”**

Lord, let us think and speak truthfully, submitting our agendas to yours.
Lord, let us think and speak nobly, seeking to witness to your grace and love in us.
Lord, let us think and speak rightly, aligned with your Word and Spirit and not our fears.
Lord, let us think and speak lovingly, showing care and respect for those you have claimed.

Lord, let us think and speak admirably, witnessing to the world that we have the Spirit of Christ.

Lord, let us think excellently, giving praise to you, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, with the voices you have created in us.

Lord God, Holy Father, give us the mind of Christ, that in the coming week all may see that it is not us, but Christ in us, who animates our words and thoughts.

In Jesus' name, Amen.

Questions for reflection and/or conversation

In what specific area of your life do you need to pray, "Give me the mind of Christ so that others may see Christ in me?"

Which is more difficult for you—aligning your thoughts with God's will, or how you speak to others? Explain.