

1. Prayers of Gratitude

Most Gracious God,

We are thankful for the gathering of the 115th Council of the Diocese of West Texas and its 85 congregations. We thank you for the life, fellowship and ministries that we share as the body of Christ in West Texas. We also give thanks for the churches hosting us: St. John's in McAllen, St. Peter and St. Paul in Mission, Trinity in Pharr, St. Matthew's in Edinburgh, and Grace Church in Weslaco.

Lord in Your Mercy,

Hear our prayer.

Most gracious God,

We give thanks for retired Bishops of West Texas, Bishop Jim Folts, who is with us, Bishop John McNaughton who is infirm, and Bishop Gary Lillibridge who is serving as an interim in Houston at this time. We are grateful for retired Bishop Bill Frey of Colorado and Guatemala and offer our love, greetings and prayers to their spouses as well as to our Bishops' widows Nancy Hibbs, Madelyn Hauser and Helen McAllister.

We give thanks for Bishop Daniel Gutierrez of Pennsylvania, Bishop Lloyd Allen of Honduras, and Bishop David Bailey of Navajoland, who has begun a new mission partnership with us. We give thanks for Bishop Benito Juarez-Martinez and his wife and son from the diocese of Southeast Mexico. We are deeply grateful for our Bishop Suffragan, the Rt. Rev. Jennifer Brooke-Davidson and her passion for the Gospel, her energetic creativity and her strong conviction that the Spirit is up to something across the diocese.

We are grateful for guests from outside the diocese and outside the country who help remind us that the body of Christ extends across geography and through time, with much to offer as we walk in love as Christ loves us.

Lord, in your mercy.

Hear our Prayer.

Heavenly Father,

We give thanks for our diocesan staff and are blessed to have them serve and support the mission and ministries of the diocese. We lift up in joy the new staff members who are also called to their work: the Rev. Mike Besson as new Archdeacon; Tatiana Hoecker in World Mission; Emily Kittrell as Director of Marketing and Communication; Laura McGrew as Communications Manager; Caroline Mowen as Canon for Administration and Ministry Support; Haley Bankey as consultant for Congregational Development; Mary Katherine Duffy as Deputy for Episcopal Schools; and the Rev. Scott and Alice Lee Penrod as chaplains to retired clergy, spouses and widows.

We give thanks for the work of Jennifer Wickham, Deputy for Disaster Response and her work to develop a response network across the diocese to be prepared, when a disaster hits.

Lord, in your mercy,
Hear our prayer.

Gracious Lord,

We are grateful for our hard-working clergy who love us and are among the last general practitioners, whose days are often filled with trying to do well things they never thought they'd be doing at all. Enable us to be kind and merciful to them and to show them our grateful hearts as we walk beside them in love.

Lord in your mercy,
Hear our prayer.

2. Prayers for Bible Study

Blessed Lord,

You caused all holy Scriptures to be written for our learning: Teach us to be bold for you and your mission as together we study the Book of Acts, the Gospel of your Holy Spirit. Make us worthy successors of your earliest apostles in passing on the Good News of Jesus Christ. Bring glory to your Name by our learning and our bold action.

Lord In your mercy,

Hear our prayer.

Almighty and ever-living God,

You have revealed yourself to us in your living Word: Lead us to respond to your way, your truth, and your life by continually hearing your holy Scriptures; by reading, marking, learning, and inwardly digesting them; that we act by joining our Lord Jesus Christ in his mission of salvation and reconciliation. We long to see your saving knowledge of your Resurrection poured out upon your world.

Lord, In your mercy,

Hear our prayer.

3. Prayers for the Theme

Heavenly Father,

Thank you for your son Jesus Christ, for the example of his life and ministry, and his unwavering love for us. Lord, we entreat you, give us wisdom to understand that the heart of discipleship is to be prompted by the Word, to get moving, to begin walking, to be called by the living Word that is near to us, and to walk in the way of Jesus.

Truly hearing the Word results in a response. Keep us ever mindful that to hear, read and inwardly digest the Word of God is to be nourished and strengthened so that we may turn outward with a new lens to see the details in the world and our own lives.

Lord, in your mercy,

Hear our prayer.

Holy and Merciful God,

We come with grateful hearts, giving you honor and glory. Guide us in our baptismal calling to “Walk in Love as Christ Loves us,” meaning to walk in the same way and to love in the same way that Jesus loves us.

Lord, in your mercy,

Hear our prayer.

Most Gracious God,

Keep us mindful that faith in Jesus begins with trust. Trust begins with footsteps, with finding the grace and the courage to take the first steps. And then another. Keep us on the right path, we beseech thee, as we take comfort in knowing that “Jesus is the Way, the Truth and the Life.” He is transforming the dead ends and obstacles, divisions and forces of wickedness that separate us.

Lord, we follow knowing that our destination lights the road we are on, and this great adventure of following Jesus.

Lord, in your mercy,

Hear our prayer.

4. Prayers for the Church Planting Initiative

Lord of Creation,

Help us follow the great commission and great commandment to “Go, baptize and make disciples” and to “Love God, love our neighbors as we love ourselves.” Give us strength and courage to walk beyond our own places and our own churches in the Church Plant initiative. Help us to remember we are all part of church planting, no matter how close or far we are from the actual site.

Help us reclaim our missionary heritage as we support Beth and Jeremy Wyndham in their new ministry along Highway 281, north of San Antonio and near Bulverde. We are thankful for Beth’s passion for the Gospel, her skills and gifts for ministry and her love for you, dear Lord.

We give thanks to the Church Planting Initiative group over the past three years, and we will continue to pray for the Wyndams and lift up this holy adventure.

Lord in your mercy,

Hear our prayer.

5. Prayers for Stewardship

Gracious Creator, Savior, Sustainer and Provider,

Thank you for making us in your image, an image of sacrifice, creation and renewal. An image of your abundant love showered on us with reckless abandon. As we seek to walk your way of love, we ask that you knit our wills with your will, so that our lives become mirrors of your light and love. As we walk in love, we ask that you guide our hearts to most reflect your generous love for us. We ask that you deepen our commitment to self-giving.

We ask that you strengthen our resolve to have giving hearts. We ask that you lead us in the way of generosity. Let these prayers be our reminder that we are called to live sacrificial lives, lives of sharing, lives of giving, lives of devotion. Help us to see stewardship as a spiritual discipline, a discipline that shows us where our hearts truly lie, a discipline that brings us joy.

Lord in your mercy,

Hear our prayer.

6. Prayers for the Budget

Almighty God,

We thank you for the material resources you have reposed so abundantly in the Episcopal Diocese of West Texas. We beseech your Spirit of wisdom to guide our yearly discipline of preparing the Diocesan budget. Give us the courage to allocate our resources so that we see the truth: that the Church is the Body of Your Son, Jesus Christ, reflected back to us even in the banalities of spread sheets and dollar signs.

Likewise, give us the humility to keep before us always the truth that at the same time, the Church is the community from whom Christ stands apart as Judge and Lord, and that therefore our money is not ours, but yours alone. Keep us ever mindful that where our treasure is, there our hearts may be also, and that if our hearts would be in the undivided presence of Christ, then our treasure must be with Him and undivided also.

Lord, in your mercy

Hear our prayer.

7. Prayers for Immigration

Gracious God, Heavenly Father,

You sent your Son that we might know peace. Rain your love upon us as we wrestle with the seemingly intractable dilemma of immigration. Just miles from our diocesan gathering, a drama is being played out that has roiled our nation's consciousness and sown divisiveness among us.

Lord, help us to heed the words of Paul's letter to the Ephesians that we might rise above the fray and avoid the incessant villainizing and blaming that so dominates our discourse. Help us to move away from instinctive condemnation and towards intentional appreciation for the sanctity of each human being, including those with whom we disagree or do not understand.

Above all, Lord, help us to focus our will and our energy on what we can do to alleviate the suffering of our brothers and sisters caught in the middle of this cruel drama. We are your hands and feet, Lord, and you have already equipped us to be messengers of peace and grace in our communities. We pray you to continue the good work already begun in our churches and this diocese on both sides of the border.

May this gathering strengthen and encourage us "to walk in love as Christ loved us", that we might do the work you have given us to do.

Lord in your mercy,

Hear our prayer.

Wonderful, Merciful Savior,

Prepare our hearts for a fresh new adventure as we return to our home churches and communities. Prompt us to look with fresh eyes at our companions at church, in our homes and communities. Give us strength and courage to be examples of God's love in the world. May we "Walk in love as Christ loved us and gave himself for us, as an offering and sacrifice to God."

Lord, in your mercy,

Hear our prayer.

8. A Final Prayer of Gratitude

Heavenly father,

We thank you for our beloved Bishop David. We are grateful for his love for us, his courage, his wisdom, his vision and leadership. We ask your blessings on him all the days of his life, as he walks in your love.

Lord, in your mercy,

Hear our prayer.