INTRODUCTION TO DAILY PRAISE AND PRAYER

From the earliest days of the Church, Christian worshipers saw the rising of the sun and lighting of the evening lamps as symbolic of Christ's victory over death. Additional hours of the day were also designated as significant moments of celebrating Christ's presence in the world. The following Orders of Daily Praise and Prayer enable United Methodists to celebrate daily and throughout each day the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

These services, following an ancient pattern of congregational prayer, focus upon the praise of God and prayer for God's creation rather than the proclaiming of the Word. Therefore, preaching and other devotional talks are inappropriate in these services. When scripture is used, passages should be chosen that will encourage the community in its praise and prayer.

Each order reflects a simple yet flexible pattern. The openings, hymns, songs of praise, responses to prayers, and Lord's Prayer may all be sung, with or without accompaniment; the more singing, the stronger the service. Scripture and Silence are optional, as indicated by brackets.

Each order is to be celebrated in a community of Christians at various occasions in their life together. Daily prayer may begin in the already existing gatherings of persons in the congregation. Rather than starting a prayer group for using these services, encourage persons who already gather for the work of the church to use these orders, choosing the order most fitting the time of day.

Typically, morning prayer would be used in hours near or just after sunrise. Mid-day prayer may be offered around noon or “lunchtime.” Evening prayer, or “vespers,” is appropriate for the time around sunset, before it is completely dark. Night prayer may be used after dark or as the final communal act of prayer before persons retire for the night.

The desire is for every gathering of every group in a congregation to pray together. Families may also choose to adapt these services for use throughout the day in homes. These orders may be used on any occasion when Christians gather, but they are not adequate substitutes for the full Sunday Service of Word and Table.

As in the early church, when Christians worshiped in homes rather than in church buildings, the services are appropriate in any setting, including classroom, fellowship hall, garden, or home. The communal quality of prayer is emphasized when the people stand or sit in a circle or other arrangement facing one another.

The visible objects or signs are symbols pointing beyond themselves to spiritual reality. They are important, but secondary. A single candle, evening lamp, or simple oil lamp may be a powerful sign of the light of Christ illumining the darkness. Leaders may use a lectern or reading desk.

Laity are encouraged to lead these services. Different parts of the service may be led by different people.

**Keywords**: Daily Prayer, Morning Prayer, Mid-Day Prayer, Evening Prayer, Compline, Night Prayer, introduction
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