

## DAILY DEVOTIONS AND PRAYER

### *For Individuals and Families*

This order of prayer may be used as a guide for daily devotion time and prayer for individuals and families.

In group settings, one person may read the words in regular type and the others may respond with the words in bold type. Prayers that are in bold type are to be prayed by all.

*The sign of the cross † may be made by all in remembrance of their Baptism.*

In the name of the Father and of the † Son and of the Holy Spirit.

**Amen.**

Listen to my prayer, O God, do not ignore my plea;

**hear me and answer me.**

Evening, morning, and noon

**I cry out in distress, and He hears my voice.**

Cast your cares on the Lord and He will sustain you;

**He will never let the righteous fall.**

*Psalm 55:1–2a, 17, 22 NIV*

**Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit;**

**as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.**

*A hymn or psalm may be sung or spoken.*

*A reading from the weekly lectionary is read.*

*The Apostles' Creed is confessed.*

*(The Apostles' Creed, the Lord's Prayer, Luther's Morning and Evening Prayers, and other prayers may be found in the back of this book.)*

*Lord's Prayer*

*Prayers for others and ourselves*

*Concluding prayers:*

Heavenly Father, send Your Holy Spirit into our hearts to direct and rule us according to Your will, to comfort us in all our afflictions, to defend us from all error, and to lead us into all truth; through Jesus Christ our Lord.

**Amen.**

*Luther's Morning or Evening Prayer*

Let us bless the Lord.

*Psalm 103:1*

**Thanks be to God.**



# ENDURING GRACE

A CHURCH YEAR JOURNAL

**YEAR A**




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## HOW TO USE THIS JOURNAL

Dear reader, God’s Word is a precious gift, given to us by God Himself “so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in His name” (John 20:31). In the Divine Service, we receive God’s good gifts through the Word and Sacraments: the strengthening of faith, the forgiveness of our sins, and life everlasting. Through these gifts, the Holy Spirit equips us to live out each week in love and service to Him and to others. The Spirit continues to work in our hearts and lives throughout the week as we spend time in the Word and daily prayer. *Enduring Grace: A Church Year Journal* was created to help you engage more deeply with the weekly lectionary readings through reflection and prayer.

This journal contains the Scripture readings for every Sunday of the Three-Year Lectionary, Year A. You may choose to prepare for the upcoming Sunday by engaging with the readings during the week leading up to each Sunday or review the lessons in the week following to continue reflecting on the Scripture passages you heard in worship. Consider identifying a particular time in your weekly schedule to dedicate to Scripture reading, journaling, and prayer. This will help you form a consistent habit of being in the Word throughout the week.

The following features have been included to enhance and guide your devotional time:

- Order of Prayer
- Suggestions for prayers for a variety of occasions
- Old Testament, Epistle, Gospel, and Psalm readings for each Sunday
- Space for journaling, making notes, and recording prayers
- The Collect and a suggested theme of the readings for each Sunday
- An introduction to each season of the Church Year
- Descriptions of fourteen festivals of the Church Year
- A hymn and reflection on the hymn for each season and festival
- Introduction to the Church Year and the Three-Year Lectionary

## GETTING STARTED

Each Church Year calendar cycle begins with the First Sunday in Advent. If you are beginning this book in Advent, you can simply turn to the first pages. If you are beginning at another time of the year, you can find the correct page by noting which Sunday of the Church Year you last observed at church, by asking your pastor, or by consulting a calendar for Year A of the Three-Year LCMS Lectionary. Note that not all the Sunday readings contained in this journal will be celebrated in a given year. Because the principal celebration of Easter is a movable date, the date of Easter determines much of the Church Year. Ash Wednesday, the first day of Lent, falls in the seventh week before Easter. The Ascension of Our Lord occurs on a Thursday, forty days after Easter Day. The Day of Pentecost is seven weeks, or the fiftieth day, after Easter. An early celebration of Easter will allow for more Sundays after Pentecost. A later Easter means there will be more Sundays after Epiphany.

# INTRODUCTION TO THE CHURCH YEAR AND THE THREE-YEAR LECTIONARY

## WHAT IS THE CHURCH YEAR?

At its heart, the Church Year tells a story—the true story of the life and work of Jesus Christ. It takes us on a journey through His birth, life, death, resurrection, and ascension. The life of the church is centered around the life of Christ. As we celebrate each part of His life, we are reminded of God’s great love for us in Jesus, our Savior.

Celebrating faith events around a calendar isn’t new. In Old Testament times, God commanded the Israelites to celebrate the Passover and other festivals each year as a remembrance and celebration of His gifts, promises, and blessings. Early Christians adapted some of the Jewish festivals, recalling historic events that were important to their faith. Christians also added their own unique celebrations, which revolved around events in the life of Jesus.

Many Christian church bodies today continue to follow the Christian calendar for several reasons:

- The Church Year helps us remember God’s great acts of salvation, the historic events that are important to our faith.
- We use the times, seasons, and celebration days of the Church Year as teaching moments to tell and retell the Good News of salvation in Jesus Christ.
- The Church Year reminds us that this life is not all there is; we eagerly anticipate the day when Christ will come again and establish the new heavens and the new earth.

## WHAT IS A LECTIONARY?

A lectionary is a collection of Scripture readings, or lections, for the Church Year. Early Christians kept the Jewish practice of reading portions of the Pentateuch and the Prophets, adding readings from the Gospel and the Epistles as time went on. Through the years, various patterns of reading Scripture were established in different places. As the Church Year seasons and festivals developed, the patterns shifted from sequential readings of Scripture to readings that aligned more closely with the Church Year.

The readings in this lectionary journal are part of a three-year lectionary that has roots in historic lectionaries and the Revised Common Lectionary. The Gospel readings for each year (A, B, and C) focus on Matthew, Mark, and Luke respectively. The Gospel of John is interspersed throughout. The Gospel sets the theme of the day. The Old Testament Reading often connects with the Gospel and may have a prophetic or Christological import. The Epistle sometimes coordinates with the Gospel and sometimes reads through a letter sequentially. The Psalm complements and is a response to the Old Testament or First Reading.

Historically, lectionaries were beautifully decorated books. The artistry of these books conveyed the incomparable richness of the words of God contained therein. As you read, journal, and pray over the biblical texts in this lectionary, may the Spirit strengthen your faith through our God’s precious, saving Word.

# SUNDAYS AND SEASONS OF THE CHURCH YEAR

## THE TIME OF CHRISTMAS

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### Advent Season

First Sunday in Advent **B/V**

Second Sunday in Advent **B/V**

Third Sunday in Advent **B/V**

Fourth Sunday in Advent **B/V**

### Christmas Season

*The Nativity of Our Lord* **W**

First Sunday after Christmas **W**

Second Sunday after Christmas **W**

### Epiphany Season

*The Epiphany of Our Lord* **W**

*The Baptism of Our Lord* **W**

Second Sunday after the Epiphany **G**

Third Sunday after the Epiphany **G**

Fourth Sunday after the Epiphany **G**

Fifth Sunday after the Epiphany **G**

Sixth Sunday after the Epiphany **G**

Seventh Sunday after the Epiphany **G**

Eighth Sunday after the Epiphany **G**

*The Transfiguration of Our Lord* **W**

## THE TIME OF EASTER

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### Lenten Season

*Ash Wednesday* **V/BK**

First Sunday in Lent **V**

Second Sunday in Lent **V**

Third Sunday in Lent **V**

Fourth Sunday in Lent **V**

Fifth Sunday in Lent **V**

Holy Week

*Palm Sunday/Sunday of the Passion* **V/S**

*Holy Thursday* **W/V/S**

*Good Friday* **BK**

### Easter Season

*The Resurrection of Our Lord* **W/GO**

Second Sunday of Easter **W**

Third Sunday of Easter **W**

Fourth Sunday of Easter **W**

Fifth Sunday of Easter **W**

Sixth Sunday of Easter **W**

*The Ascension of Our Lord* **W**

Seventh Sunday of Easter **W**

*Pentecost* **R**

## THE TIME OF THE CHURCH

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### The Season after Pentecost

*The Holy Trinity* **W**

Second through Twenty-Seventh

Sundays after Pentecost **G**

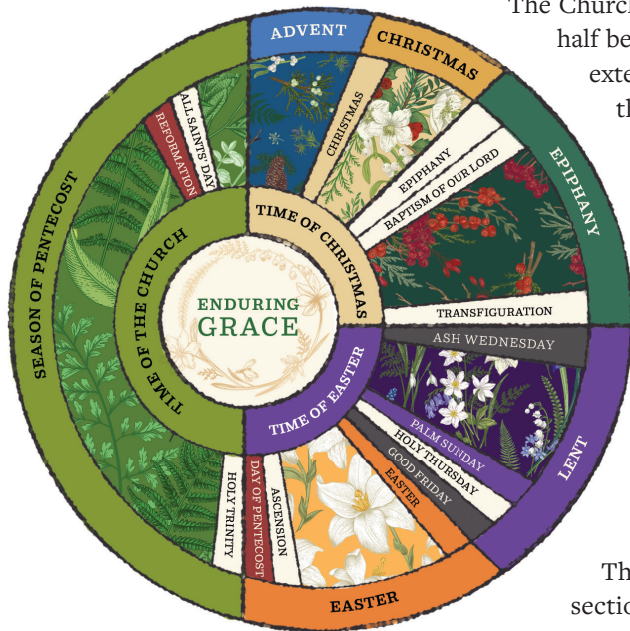
*Reformation Day* **R**

*All Saints' Day* **W**

The letters indicate the suggested colors:

B = blue, BK = black, G = green, GO = gold, R = red, S = scarlet,  
V = violet, W = white

# THE CHURCH YEAR CALENDAR



The Church Year calendar has two halves. The first half begins with the First Sunday in Advent and extends through the Day of Pentecost. We call this the “festival” half, since during this time we celebrate the festivals that commemorate important events in the life of Christ. Throughout this half of the year, we are reminded of what God the Father has done and continues to do for us through His Son. The “nonfestival” half of the year begins on Trinity Sunday and continues through the Last Sunday of the Church Year. The second half of the year focuses on the life of the church as it is strengthened daily by the Holy Spirit through the Word.

The Church Year is also divided into three sections: the Time of Christmas, the Time of Easter, and the Time of the Church. Each “time” includes smaller units called “seasons.” Within each season, we celebrate special days called “feasts” or “festivals,” such as Christmas, Epiphany, Easter, and Pentecost.

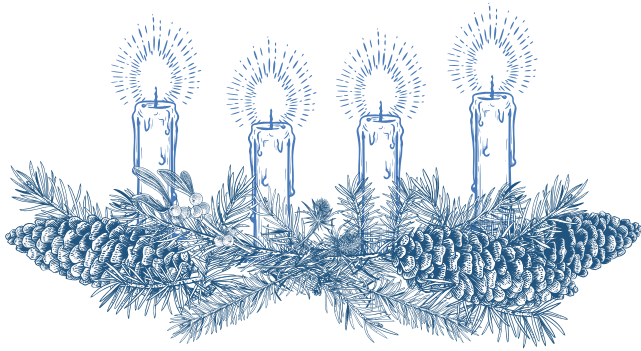
The Time of Christmas includes the seasons of Advent, Christmas, and Epiphany. The Time of Easter includes the Lent and Easter seasons. And the Time of the Church includes the Season after Pentecost. These three Times illustrate the work of the Holy Trinity. And though the three persons of the Trinity do not work separate from one another, it can be helpful to think in the following way: In the Time of Christmas, we remember how the Father sent His Son, Jesus, into the world. The Time of Easter focuses on Jesus’ Passion, His sacrificial death, and His glorious resurrection. The Time of the Church, the season after Pentecost, proclaims the ongoing work of the Holy Spirit in the church.

For centuries, the church has used colors and symbols to help teach about the seasons and festivals of the Church Year. The cycle of colors and customs associated with each season and festival helps proclaim the message of the readings and events in the Church Year.

A companion book, *Enduring Grace: A Church Year Journal for Kids, Year A*, is available for families to use alongside this journal. Reflections on lectionary readings, discussion prompts, Bible illustrations to color, and space for journaling will help kids and families connect and interact with God’s Word as they encourage one another in the faith.

For more on the Church Year and the lectionary, see “The Church Year,” pages 181–262, in *Lutheran Service Book: Companion to the Services* © 2022 Concordia Publishing House.

# THE ADVENT SEASON



Advent marks the beginning of the Christian Church Year. Advent begins the fourth Sunday before Christmas, or the Sunday closest to the Festival of St. Andrew (November 30), and ends with midday prayer on December 24. During the time of Advent, many churches add midweek evening services that focus on reflection and preparation to receive God's promise of a Savior.



The word *Advent* comes from the Latin *adventus*, which means “coming.” The four weeks of Advent are a time of reflective preparation for Christ’s first coming as a baby in the manger at Bethlehem. But we also look ahead to Christ’s second coming, when He will return in glory and take all believers to be with Him forever.

During the Advent season, we prepare to receive Jesus, the hope of the world. The color of Advent is violet or blue. Violet represents royalty and repentance, and blue symbolizes anticipation and hope.

Many congregations use the custom of the Advent wreath to mark the progress of the four Sundays leading to the celebration of Christmas. An Advent wreath has four candles—three violet or blue and one pink—one for each week in Advent. Each week an additional candle is lit, and our anticipation grows as we look forward to Jesus’ coming.

## HARK THE GLAD SOUND

Hark the glad sound! The Savior comes,  
The Savior promised long;  
Let ev'ry heart prepare a throne  
And ev'ry voice a song.

He comes the pris'ners to release,  
In Satan's bondage held.  
The gates of brass before Him burst,  
The iron fetters yield.

He comes the broken heart to bind,  
The bleeding soul to cure,  
And with the treasures of His grace  
To enrich the humble poor.

Our glad hosannas, Prince of Peace,  
Thy welcome shall proclaim,  
And heav'n's eternal arches ring  
With Thy belovèd name.

## REFLECTION ON THE HYMN

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Philip Doddridge wrote this hymn for his congregation to sing during Christmastime, based on a sermon he wrote (which was his common practice). In this hymn of originally seven stanzas, Doddridge references Luke 4, in which Jesus reads Isaiah 61 and tells those in His hometown synagogue that He is the fulfillment of the prophecy. Because of this theme, the hymn is often sung as an Advent hymn, focusing on Jesus' coming to rescue, heal, and bless His people. This joyful text focuses on why Christ comes: "the pris'ners to release," "the broken heart to bind," "the bleeding soul to cure," and "to enrich the humble poor." As we consider all that Jesus did for us during His first coming and all that He promises to do in His second, we join "ev'ry heart" to "prepare a throne" for the Messiah to reign in us now and forever.

## REFLECTION & NOTES

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# FIRST SUNDAY IN ADVENT

## OLD TESTAMENT READING

ISAIAH 2:1-5

The word that Isaiah the son of Amoz saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem.

It shall come to pass in the latter days  
that the mountain of the house of the LORD  
shall be established as the highest of the mountains,  
and shall be lifted up above the hills;  
and all the nations shall flow to it,  
and many peoples shall come, and say:  
“Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD,  
to the house of the God of Jacob,  
that he may teach us his ways  
and that we may walk in his paths.”

For out of Zion shall go the law,  
and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.  
He shall judge between the nations,  
and shall decide disputes for many peoples;  
and they shall beat their swords into plowshares,  
and their spears into pruning hooks;  
nation shall not lift up sword against nation,  
neither shall they learn war anymore.

O house of Jacob,  
come, let us walk  
in the light of the LORD.

## EPISTLE

ROMANS 13:11-14

Besides this you know the time, that the hour has come for you to wake from sleep. For salvation is nearer to us now than when we first believed. The night is far gone; the day is at hand. So then let us cast off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light. Let us walk properly as in the

daytime, not in orgies and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and sensuality, not in quarreling and jealousy. But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires.

## GOSPEL

MATTHEW 21:1-11

Now when they drew near to Jerusalem and came to Bethphage, to the Mount of Olives, then Jesus sent two disciples, saying to them, “Go into the village in front of you, and immediately you will find a donkey tied, and a colt with her. Untie them and bring them to me. If anyone says anything to you, you shall say, ‘The Lord needs them,’ and he will send them at once.” This took place to fulfill what was spoken by the prophet, saying,

“Say to the daughter of Zion,  
Behold, your king is coming to you,  
humble, and mounted on a donkey,  
and on a colt, the foal of a beast of burden.”

The disciples went and did as Jesus had directed them. They brought the donkey and the colt and put on them their cloaks, and he sat on them. Most of the crowd spread their cloaks on the road, and others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road. And the crowds that went before him and that followed him were shouting, “Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!” And when he entered Jerusalem, the whole city was stirred up, saying, “Who is this?” And the crowds said, “This is the prophet Jesus, from Nazareth of Galilee.”

## PSALM

PSALM 122

I was glad when they said to me,  
“Let us go to the house of the LORD!”  
Our feet have been standing  
within your gates, O Jerusalem!  
Jerusalem—built as a city  
that is bound firmly together,

to which the tribes go up,  
the tribes of the LORD,  
as was decreed for Israel,  
to give thanks to the name of the LORD.  
There thrones for judgment were set,  
the thrones of the house of David.

Pray for the peace of Jerusalem!  
“May they be secure who love you!  
Peace be within your walls  
and security within your towers!”  
For my brothers and companions’ sake  
I will say, “Peace be within you!”  
For the sake of the house of the LORD our God,  
I will seek your good.

## THE COLLECT

Stir up Your power, O Lord, and come, that by Your protection we may be rescued from the threatening perils of our sins and saved by Your mighty deliverance; for You live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.



## THEME OF THE READINGS

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Behold, the Messiah comes to fulfill the Law and the Prophets, and it shall be proclaimed in all of Jerusalem: “This is the prophet Jesus!” From Mount Sinai to Calvary, the Lord reveals His edicts, His decrees, and Jesus is the very fulfillment of them all. Christ is faithful in the midst of faithlessness; humble in the midst of arrogance. He alone is the rightful Prophet, Priest, and King. Hosanna in the highest!

## REFLECTION ON GOD’S WORD

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## PRAYERS

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PRAISE & THANKSGIVING | REQUESTS & INTERCESSIONS

# SECOND SUNDAY IN ADVENT

## OLD TESTAMENT READING

ISAIAH 11:1-10

There shall come forth a shoot from the stump of Jesse,  
and a branch from his roots shall bear fruit.  
And the Spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him,  
the Spirit of wisdom and understanding,  
the Spirit of counsel and might,  
the Spirit of knowledge and the fear of the LORD.  
And his delight shall be in the fear of the LORD.  
He shall not judge by what his eyes see,  
or decide disputes by what his ears hear,  
but with righteousness he shall judge the poor,  
and decide with equity for the meek of the earth;  
and he shall strike the earth with the rod of his mouth,  
and with the breath of his lips he shall kill the wicked.  
Righteousness shall be the belt of his waist,  
and faithfulness the belt of his loins.  
The wolf shall dwell with the lamb,  
and the leopard shall lie down with the young goat,  
and the calf and the lion and the fattened calf together;  
and a little child shall lead them.  
The cow and the bear shall graze;  
their young shall lie down together;  
and the lion shall eat straw like the ox.  
The nursing child shall play over the hole of the cobra,  
and the weaned child shall put his hand on the adder's den.  
They shall not hurt or destroy  
in all my holy mountain;  
for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD  
as the waters cover the sea.

In that day the root of Jesse, who shall stand as a signal for the peoples—  
of him shall the nations inquire, and his resting place shall be glorious.

**EPISTLE**      ROMANS 15:4-13

Whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, that through endurance and through the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope. May the God of endurance and encouragement grant you to live in such harmony with one another, in accord with Christ Jesus, that together you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore welcome one another as Christ has welcomed you, for the glory of God.

For I tell you that Christ became a servant to the circumcised to show God's truthfulness, in order to confirm the promises given to the patriarchs, and in order that the Gentiles might glorify God for his mercy. As it is written,

“Therefore I will praise you among  
the Gentiles,  
and sing to your name.”

And again it is said,

“Rejoice, O Gentiles, with his  
people.”

And again,

“Praise the Lord, all you  
Gentiles, and let all the peo-  
ples extol him.”

And again Isaiah says,

“The root of Jesse will come,  
even he who arises to rule  
the Gentiles;  
in him will the Gentiles hope.”

May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope.

**GOSPEL**      MATTHEW 3:1-12

In those days John the Baptist came preaching in the wilderness of Judea, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.” For this is he who was spoken of by the prophet Isaiah when he said, “The voice of one crying in the wilderness:

‘Prepare the way of the Lord;  
make his paths straight.’”

Now John wore a garment of camel's hair and a leather belt around his waist, and his food was locusts and wild honey. Then Jerusalem and all Judea and all the region about the Jordan were going out to him, and they were baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins.

But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming for baptism, he said to them, “You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bear fruit in keeping with repentance. And do not presume to say to yourselves, ‘We have Abraham as our father,’ for I tell you, God is able from these stones to raise up children for Abraham. Even now the axe is laid to the root of the trees. Every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.

“I baptize you with water for repentance, but he who is coming after me is mightier than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire. His winnowing fork is in his hand, and he will clear his threshing floor and gather his wheat into the barn, but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire.”

**PSALM**                      **PSALM 72:1-7**

Give the king your justice, O  
God,  
and your righteousness to  
the royal son!  
May he judge your people with  
righteousness,  
and your poor with justice!  
Let the mountains bear pros-  
perity for the people,  
and the hills, in  
righteousness!  
May he defend the cause of the  
poor of the people,

give deliverance to the  
children of the needy,  
and crush the oppressor!

May they fear you while the  
sun endures,  
and as long as the  
moon, throughout all  
generations!  
May he be like rain that falls on  
the mown grass,  
like showers that water the  
earth!  
In his days may the righ-  
teous flourish,  
and peace abound, till the  
moon be no more!

**THE COLLECT**

Stir up our hearts, O Lord, to make ready the way of Your only-begotten Son, that by His coming we may be enabled to serve You with pure minds; through the same Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.



## THEME OF THE READINGS

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Wisdom, understanding, counsel, and might are unveiled in Jesus of Nazareth. In his letter to the Romans, Paul unwraps the complete truth—Jesus embraces even Gentile nations with divine hope, joy, and peace. John the Baptist, with his abrasive appearance and unexpected rhetoric, forcefully proclaims both judgment against arrogant Pharisees and the need for repentance. Ultimately, Jesus alone casts final judgment on the fate of unbelievers and eternally claims salvation for repentant sinners.

## REFLECTION ON GOD'S WORD

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## PRAYERS

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PRAISE & THANKSGIVING | REQUESTS & INTERCESSIONS