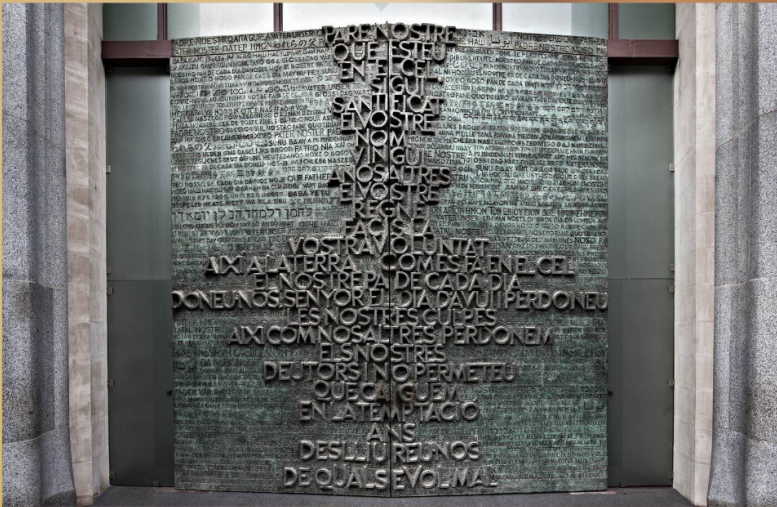




Words We Know By Heart

A Six-Week Study of The Lord's Prayer

August 30 - October 4, 2026

St. Andrew Presbyterian Church, Iowa City

Words We Know By Heart: A Study of The Lord's Prayer

There are some words we know so well that we almost stop hearing them.

For many of us, the Lord's Prayer is like that. We learned it as children. We have prayed it in sanctuaries and hospital rooms, at weddings and funerals, around tables and beside beds. Someone says, "Our Father..." and the rest is already there.

Over the years, we've also wrestled with these words. We've tried different translations and different ways of naming God. Those experiments have reminded us that no single English version can capture everything Jesus taught his disciples to pray. They've also reminded us that there is something powerful about praying familiar words together, words held in memory and shared across generations.

So, rather than simply changing the words, we're going to spend six weeks listening to them.

What do we mean when we call God "Our Father"? Whose will are we asking to be done? Who is included in our daily bread? What do debts have to do with forgiveness? Why do we ask God not to lead us into temptation? And what are we claiming when we say the kingdom, power and glory belong to God?

This booklet is simply an introduction, a way to get us thinking about the prayer before we gather each week. Each page includes the image we'll use in worship, a short reflection connecting that image with the week's words and Scripture passages, and space for you to jot down your own questions, insights and wonderings. Bring those with you into worship.

We may discover that Christians have heard these phrases differently across centuries, cultures and traditions. That doesn't diminish the prayer. It makes it worth hearing again.

— August 24, 2026

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STEWARDSHIP 2026



Aug. 30, 2026

"OUR FATHER ..."

Matthew 6:5-15

*"Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name."*

Before Jesus teaches us to ask for bread, forgiveness or deliverance, he teaches us something about the God to whom we pray. We begin with relationship: Our Father. And that little word our matters. This is not simply my God or your God, but the God who draws us into a family much larger than ourselves.

Frank Wesley's *Forgiving Father* gives us one way to imagine that relationship. The Indian Christian artist depicts the father of Jesus' parable welcoming home the child who had been lost, not with judgment, but with an embrace. As we begin with words many of us know by heart, Wesley invites us to consider the God we imagine on the other side of our prayer. What changes when Our Father begins here, in welcome, embrace and grace?

*Image: Frank Wesley (1923–2002),
Forgiving Father. From Art in the
Christian Tradition, a project of the
Vanderbilt University Divinity Library,
Nashville, Tennessee. Original source:
Estate of Frank Wesley.*



REFLECTIONS & QUESTIONS:

Sept. 6, 2026

“WHOSE WILL
BE DONE?”

Colossians 1:9-14
Revelation 21:1-5

*“Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on
earth as it is in heaven.”*

We pray these words easily. Living them is something else. Whose will are we really asking to be done? Revelation offers a glimpse of what God desires: God dwelling among us, tears wiped away, death and mourning no more, all things made new. The prayer asks us not simply to wait for that world, but to place our own lives within God’s work of bringing it about.

Keith Haring’s *Moses and the Burning Bush* pulses with the energy of such an interruption. Moses encounters a God who does not simply offer him reassurance, but calls and sends him. Perhaps “thy will be done” is a dangerous prayer in much the same way. What if God answers by asking us to become part of the answer?

The image was suggested by Helen Bryce, who encountered the painting with Broderick during a visit to Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art in Bentonville, Arkansas.

Image: Keith Haring, Moses and the Burning Bush (1985), Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art, Bentonville, Arkansas.



“Whose Will Be Done”

9:30 a.m. | Sept. 6, 2026

St. Andrew Presbyterian Church, Iowa City

REFLECTIONS & QUESTIONS:

Sept. 13, 2026
Celebrating All Abilities Sunday

"OUR DAILY
BREAD"

Exodus 16:11-27
John 6:3-13

“Give us this day our daily bread.”

There is a deceptively small word at the heart of this petition: us. Not “give me,” but “give us.” In Exodus, manna cannot be hoarded. In John, a few loaves and fish become enough for a hungry crowd. Both stories ask us to imagine abundance differently: not as having everything we might want, but as a community in which everyone has enough.

On Celebrating All Abilities Sunday, that us takes on particular meaning. Josep Maria Subirachs' great door at Barcelona's Sagrada Familia carries the Lord's Prayer in languages from around the world. The prayer itself becomes a doorway into a community wider than any one language, culture, ability or experience. When we ask God for our daily bread, who is included in our us?

Image: Josep Maria Subirachs, Eucharist Door with Lord's Prayer, Sagrada Familia, Barcelona, ca. 1987–2000. From Art in the Christian Tradition, Vanderbilt University Divinity Library.

Sept. 20, 2026

“FORGIVE...
AS WE FORGIVE”

Genesis 50:15-21
Matthew 18:21-35

*“Forgive us our debts,
as we forgive our debtors.”*

Of all the familiar words in the Lord’s Prayer, these may be among the most demanding. Joseph stands before the brothers who betrayed him. Peter wants Jesus to put a reasonable limit on forgiveness. Jesus refuses. And the prayer itself binds together two things we might prefer to keep separate: receiving forgiveness and extending it.

An anonymous 2011 art installation created during Occupy Portland takes the Presbyterian language of the prayer startlingly literally: [forgive us our] Debt! In the middle of a movement concerned with economic inequality, a familiar spiritual petition suddenly becomes economic, social and public. The image leaves us with uncomfortable questions worth sitting with: What do we owe one another? What are we holding onto? What might we need to release? And just how seriously do we mean as we forgive?

Image: Anonymous, [forgive us our] Debt! (2011). From Art in the Christian Tradition, a project of the Vanderbilt University Divinity Library, Nashville, Tennessee. Original photograph via Wikimedia Commons.



"Forgive ... as We Forgive"

9:30 a.m. | Sept. 20, 2026

St. Andrew Presbyterian Church, Iowa City

REFLECTIONS & QUESTIONS:

Sept. 27, 2026

"AND LEAD US..."

Psalms 71:1-5; James 1:2-5, 12-18

*"And lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil."*

These may be the words in the prayer
that give us the most trouble. Does
God lead us into temptation? What are
we asking God to spare us from?

Psalms 71 names God as refuge and
deliverer. James insists that temptation
does not come from God, while
promising wisdom to those trying to
find their way through trials.

The familiar petition becomes less an
explanation of how temptation works
than a confession of how much we
need God to guide us through it.

The Lord's Prayer rendered in Arabic
calligraphy lets us see familiar words
without immediately reading past
them. For those of us who cannot read
Arabic, words we may have recited
thousands of times become unfamiliar
shapes, asking us simply to look.
Perhaps that is a useful exercise. Can
we encounter these words again
instead of rushing through what we
already think we know?

*Image: Anonymous, Lord's Prayer in Arabic
Calligraphy. From Art in the Christian Tradition,
Vanderbilt University Divinity Library.*



"And Lead Us ..."

9:30 a.m. | Sept. 27, 2026

St. Andrew Presbyterian Church, Iowa City

REFLECTIONS & QUESTIONS:

Oct. 4, 2026
World Communion Sunday

“FOR THINE IS...”

Psalm 145:1-21
1 Chronicles 29:10-13

*“For thine is the kingdom and the power
and the glory forever. Amen.”*

The Lord’s Prayer ends by turning our attention back to God. After praying about the world we hope for, the bread we need, the forgiveness we seek and the evil from which we long to be delivered, we finish with praise: the kingdom is God’s. The power is God’s. The glory is God’s. Psalm 145 and David’s prayer in 1 Chronicles echo that same confession.

Roman Sabatini’s *Power of the Lord’s Prayer* brings a contemporary digital medium to these ancient words. On World Communion Sunday, it also reminds us that this prayer never belongs to us alone. Around the world, Christians speak it in different languages, with different rhythms and even different words. Yet together we come to Christ’s Table and entrust ourselves to the same God. After six weeks of slowing down over a prayer we know by heart, perhaps the most important word is the last one: Amen. May it be so.

Image: Roman Sabatini, Power of the Lord’s Prayer (2007). From Art in the Christian Tradition, Vanderbilt University Divinity Library.



“For Thine Is”

9:30 a.m. | Oct. 4, 2026

St. Andrew Presbyterian Church, Iowa City

REFLECTIONS & QUESTIONS:
