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Oct

Rejoice in the Lord!

Pressing On

TWENTIETH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST, YEAR A

Joy gives us sustenance to maintain life, hope, resilience, and perseverance, even in the most impossible circumstances. Joy isn't an escape.

REFERENCES

Exodus 32:1-14

Psalms 106:1-6, 19-23

Philippians 4:1-9

Matthew 22:1-14

COLORS

Green

Liturgical Resources

CALL TO WORSHIP

Beloved, God's never-ending love spills out all around us, drawing us together in beloved community with God, neighbor, and all creation.

Rejoice in the Lord always, and again we say, rejoice!

God's always-present grace surrounds us, enlivening us to love ourselves and our neighbors just as Christ loves us.

Rejoice in the Lord always, and again we say, rejoice!

God's persistent peace sweeps through us, guarding our hearts and empowering us to live as agents of God's mercy and justice wherever we go.

Rejoice in the Lord always, and again we say, rejoice!

May our rejoicing overflow into our families, neighborhoods, and the whole earth that through our living, working, resting, and playing, God may be glorified.

Rejoice in the Lord always, and again we say, rejoice!

Written by Dr. Lisa Hancock, Discipleship Ministries, July 2026.

PRAYER OF INTERCESSION

God, we come into Your presence
with praise and thanksgiving for Your faithful love.
Your love never fails—not even when we turn away from You:
when we ignore Your invitation,
or desert You for gods of our own making.
Even then, You do not abandon us,
but reach out—again and again—
inviting us back into relationship once more.

As You welcome us, so You welcome our prayers.
We bring them to You with confidence,
knowing that You will hear and answer.

We pray for the world You created and the people who share it with us:
– for countries caught up in war or violent conflict,
– for those whose homes and lives are threatened by natural disaster;
For these and all the other areas in our world where there is need and despair,
Lord, hear our prayer.

We pray for our country and for its people:
– for our government leaders, federal and local,
– for our judicial system, police forces, and military,
– for our cities, towns, and rural communities,
– for employers and employees, for young and old,
For all who are part of this great country,
Lord, hear our prayer.

We pray for our local community—the people of this city/town,

- for those who are unemployed,
- for those in prison
- for those who are hungry,
- for those who are alone and afraid,

For all our neighbors, both known and unknown to us,

Lord, hear our prayer.

We pray for this congregation—our siblings in Christ,

- for those who are ill or whose loved ones are ill,
- for those who are anxious about the future,
- for those struggling with their faith,
- for those who minister among us,

For all Your people in this place,

Lord, hear our prayer.

Pour out Your Spirit on us!

Fix our hearts and minds on what is true and honourable and right.

Give us the joy and peace that comes from knowing and doing Your will.

Keep us faithful to the call we have received in Christ Jesus, our Lord,
extending Your loving invitation to the world around us.

In Jesus' name. **Amen.**

Adapted from Christine Longhurst, posted on the re:Worship blog at <https://re-worship.blogspot.com/2011/09/prayers-of-people-october-9-2011.html>.

PRAYER OF CONFESSION

God pours blessings upon us, even as we choose to go our own way.

God is present and seeks to bring healing and wholeness to all.

Therefore,

I invite you to confess all that would separate you from God or one another.

Let us pray.

When we have fashioned idols of our own desire
or worshiped the temples of our own tradition,

Lord, have mercy.

Time for personal reflection and confession.

When we have denied your invitation to the banquet of love and justice,
or failed to extend the invitation to others,
Christ, have mercy.

Time for personal reflection and confession.

When we have adorned ourselves with worry rather than joy
or failed to be gentle, knowing you are near,
Lord, have mercy.

Time for personal reflection and confession.

ASSURANCE OF PARDON

Praise be to God, our sins are forgiven.
God's steadfast love endures forever.
Praise God!

From *Standing in the Gap*, written by Rev. Dr. Bob Gross, OCC, pastor at Lake Avenue United Church of Christ, Elyria, OH, and posted on the United Church of Christ website. Reposted on the re:Worship blog at <https://re-worship.blogspot.com/2011/09/confession-of-sin-proper-23a.html>.

BENEDICTION

Beloved, as you go from this place, may the peace of God that surpasses all understanding surround you, centering your minds on whatever is true, honorable, just, pure, pleasing, commendable, excellent, and worthy of praise and empowering you to press on toward the prize of the heavenly call of God in Christ Jesus. Amen.

Written by Dr. Lisa Hancock, Discipleship Ministries, July 2026.

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