

LWML Prayer Service 2009
Authored by Reverend Larry Miller

LOOK TO THE HILLS

“Look to the Hills” is the theme of the 2009 LWML Prayer Service. Based on the 2009 Portland LWML Convention theme verses from Psalm 121, this service provides an opportunity for participants to gather together in prayer and praise.

The Reverend Larry Miller, LWML Counselor 2003-2007 and Pastor of First Lutheran Church, Helena, Montana, authored this service to provide our readership the opportunity to be assured that, in all times and all seasons, our gracious God invites us to look to Him for the help we need. Through Word and song and prayer, participants will look to the hills, look to Him and consider the times and seasons of life.

Instructions are included within the body of the prayer service.

The service begins with four vignettes (brief incidents or scenes) that present various situations in life that an individual may experience.

An optional offering may be gathered.

2009 Convention Theme Verses and Goal Statement

- **Psalm 121:1-2** *I lift my eyes to the hills—where does my help come from? My help comes from the LORD, the Maker of heaven and earth.*
- **Isaiah 52:7** *How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of those who bring good news, who proclaim peace, who bring good tidings, who proclaim salvation, who say to Zion, “Your God reigns!”*

Confident that my God reigns as Creator, Redeemer, and Sanctifier, I share His love and peace with others.



+ **Look to the Hills** +
LWML 2009 Prayer Service

“Help!” Vignettes

*(Each of the following scenes may be presented by a different reader
All participants may read the **emboldened** portions throughout the service)*

I’m so afraid! My son just left for the war. We were so proud of him when he enlisted. He wanted to serve his country. But why, now, does he have to go? And why to the most dangerous area of conflict? I lift up my eyes to the hills . . .

All: My help comes from the Lord!

I’m simply overwhelmed! When they asked me to serve on this committee they assured me that they believed I had the gifts, the abilities to do the tasks. I believed it too, then. Now, I’m not so sure. With my work, caring for my family, my other church responsibilities, and now this, it’s just more than I can handle. I lift up my eyes to the hills . . .

All: My help comes from the Lord!

What a joy! I’m so proud of our daughter. I never knew she had such strength. And a beautiful new grandson! My first, you know! What wonderful things God must have in mind for him . . . for him and his family. I lift up my eyes to the hills . . .

All: My help comes from the Lord!

It’s been a long journey! When the doctor walked in the room, I knew the news was not what I was going to want to hear. I could see it on his face. There was nothing they could do. Now, here I am. My world is this house, this room, this bed. What will happen with my husband, my kids, my friends? “It won’t be long now,” the nurse assured. I lift up my eyes to the hills . . .

All: My help comes from the Lord!

Words of Welcome and Introduction

Welcome to this LWML Prayer Service built around Psalm 121. Today we will sing hymns and spiritual songs, listen to Scripture scenes, consider prayer thought-starters, and pray to our loving God who promises to always hear our prayers and answer according to His good will! May He richly bless you through all that we will do to His glory, and all that He will do for our good.

(Other instructions about the service may be given)

Invocation

Leader: In the Name of the Father and of the + Son and of the Holy Spirit.

All: **Amen!**

Responsive Reading of Psalm 121 (NIV)

¹ I lift up my eyes to the hills—

where does my help come from?

² My help comes from the LORD,

the Maker of heaven and earth.

³ He will not let your foot slip—

he who watches over you will not slumber;

⁴ indeed, he who watches over Israel

will neither slumber nor sleep.

⁵ The LORD watches over you—

the LORD is your shade at your right hand;

⁶ the sun will not harm you by day,

nor the moon by night.

⁷ The LORD will keep you from all harm—

he will watch over your life;

⁸ the LORD will watch over your coming and going

both now and forevermore.

Leader: In all times and all seasons, our gracious God invites us to look to Him for the help we need. Today, through Word and song and prayer, let's look to the hills, look to Him as we consider the times and seasons of life.

+ Look to the Hills ... in the Daytime +

***The LORD watches over you—the LORD is your shade at your right hand;
The sun will not harm you by day... He will not let your foot slip ...
The LORD will keep you from all harm ... he will watch over your life ...***

“With the Lord Begin Your Task” LSB 869 (Stanzas 1-2); LW 483; TLH 540

(Alternate Hymn – “O Blessed, Holy Trinity” LSB 876; LW 479; TLH 541)

(You may want to choose only a couple of the stanzas of longer hymns throughout the service)

Scripture Scene John 21:1-12 ***The Miraculous Catch of Fish***

(Scripture Scene offered in the sections should be read aloud)

Prayer Starters & Requests

(Prayer Starters for each section may be read aloud by a leader or meditated on silently. Prayer Requests may be accepted and petitions for specific needs prayed aloud or silently. Time for silent prayer may be allowed before spoken prayers in each section.)

- When you wake up, is your response, “Good Morning, Lord!” or “Good Lord, it’s morning?”
- What work has God given you to do?
- Is your work reason for groans? Or cries for help? Or praise?
- What special needs do you have to aid you in carrying out the work God has given you?
- In Psalm 121 God promises to give divine sun-block from things that would harm your body. What threatens to give you sun-stroke as you live out your days?
- Who comes into your life throughout your day that might need God’s answers to your prayers?
- Jesus’ work with the disciples certainly brought them blessings as they fished (for fish and for men). What blessings has God given you for your work in the daytime?

Prayer *(Throughout the service, prayers may be read entirely by a leader or responsively with all participants praying the **emboldened** parts)*

Good morning, Lord, and “Good Lord, its morning.” **You have made the day for work!** According to Your wisdom and grace, You have given us tasks to do **at home, in Your Church, in the marketplace, in the world. Thank You, gracious God!** Please bless me and mine and all Your people with health and strength and vigor **to do what You have appointed us to do.** Please enable those who cannot work, if it is Your will, **with the ability and opportunity to do so in the days to come.** Lord, as You blessed Your disciples with a miraculous catch of fish, **please prosper our efforts, according to Your pleasure,** that all that we do may be for the good of others and to Your glory! **In Jesus’ blessed Name. Amen.**

+ When You Have Fallen Short +
“If we confess our sins”

“I Lay My Sins on Jesus” *LSB 606; LW 366; TLH 652*
 (Alternate Hymn – “Jesus Sinners Doth Receive” *LSB 609; LW 229; TLH 324*)

Scripture Scene Luke 15:11-32 *The Prodigal*

Prayer Starters & Requests

- What “short-falls” do you have to confess at the foot of Jesus’ cross?
- What have you done or not done that moves you to cry out for God’s forgiveness and mercy?
- Who is in need of your forgiveness and your forgetfulness for things they have done to you?
- In response to God’s forgiveness poured out to you, what can you do?

Prayer of Confession

Gathered together at the foot of our Savior’s cross, let us confess our sins to our heavenly Father, assured of His forgiveness because of the redemptive work that Jesus has done . . . for us!

(Silence for reflection and self-examination)

Merciful Father, **I confess that I have fallen short of all that You expect of me, Your child. I have not loved You or Your other children as I should in what I think and say and do. Please do not give me what I deserve for all my sins, those I cannot remember and those I cannot forget. But in Your mercy, please forgive me, I pray. In Your Name. Amen.**

Words of Absolution

Good News! All our sins are forgiven. Because of Jesus' perfect life, His suffering and His death in our place, we are set free from the destructive burden of sin and guilt to live for Him and for each other. In response to His forgiving love, let's share His peace. The peace of the Lord be with you!

(All may share the peace)

+ When You Need Help +
"Call on the Lord"

"On Eagles' Wings" *LSB 727*

(Alternate Hymn – "O God, Our Help in Ages Past" *LSB 733*)

Scripture Scene 2 Kings 4:1-7 *The Widow's Oil*

Prayer Starters & Requests

- Corrie Ten Boom reportedly said this: "Look around and be distressed. Look inside and be depressed. Look at Jesus and be at rest." For what do you need to look to Jesus for help?
- When life puts us flat on our back, where should we look?
- God filled the widow's jars, every one of them, to the full. How has God helped fill you to the full in the past?
- How can you now (and in the future) respond to that help?

Prayer

O God, our Help, our Hope, our awesome, majestic God, You created the universe and everything in it, **yet in Your love and compassion You take a personal interest in every one of us!** We, Your children, need Your help, **Your healing,** Your comfort, **Your presence,** Your providence, **Your care.** We need so much more than we deserve, **yet when we call to You, by Your grace You fill us up to overflowing!** Thank You, Lord, for Your undeserved goodness! **In Jesus' Name. Amen.**

+ In Love and Care for Others +
"Be kind to one another"

"O God of Mercy, God of Might" *LSB 852 (Stanzas 3-5); LW 397; TLH 439*

(Alternate Hymn – "Lord, Whose Love through Humble Service" *LSB 848*)

Scripture Scene Mark 2:1-12 *The Paralytic and His Friends*

Prayer Starters & Requests

- The friends of the paralytic in our Scripture story went the distance (and even beyond) for their friend. Whose stretcher can you help bear for the sake of someone you know?
- How can God use you as His hands, feet, voice, or heart for the good of others?
- Sometimes our care for others shows us the need to confront them for their good (remember Nathan and David and Bathsheba?). Out of heartfelt care, how can God help you to lovingly confront someone you know for his or her good?
- With whom can you rejoice in their rejoicing?

Prayer

Compassionate Lord, **what excellent friends the paralytic had!** In love and care for him, they humbled themselves and helped carry his burden to You, **that You might lift him up, help him and heal him.** Give us that same compassion for others **that moved You to humble Yourself for us and for our salvation.** Let our hearts be broken when we see the needs of others **and move us into action for them so that You, through us, might bless them.** Use us to help others, **that they may help others,** and so on, **and so on,** and so on. **In Your care-giving Name. Amen!**

+ When You are Called to Serve +
"Serve the Lord with gladness"

"Serve the Lord with Gladness"

(Alternate Hymn – "Hark, the Voice of Jesus Crying" *LSB* 826; *LW* 318; *TLH* 496)

Scripture Scene Luke 1:26-38 *The Calling of Mary*

Prayer Starters & Requests

- Using the gifts and talents and abilities that God has given you, how would you like to serve Him and others?
- What service are you now providing that has become a burden which you need to have lifted from your "to do" list?
- How can God help you to say "no" to an opportunity to serve when you know that "no" is the best answer, but cannot bring yourself to say it?
- What burden can you lift from someone as God uses you in service in the days to come?
- Mary was certainly surprised and then grateful to be chosen to be put into service by God for His great task. What service do you render for which you would like to thank God and show your appreciation to those who enlisted you in service?

Prayer

Calling God, You invite us to join You **in marvelous service to You and to others in Your kingdom.** What an honor! **What a privilege!** What an opportunity! **What a joy!** When You call, **equip us, we pray, with talents and gifts and abilities**

sufficient for the task to which You call us. Remind us that even when we serve, perhaps especially when we serve, **You are with us, You will never leave or forsake us.** Give us joy in our work, in response to Your love, **that we may serve You with heart-felt gladness, even when the tasks may get tough.** May all the glory, **all the honor, all the praise be poured out to You** for any and every effort **that You choose to call us to do.** In the Name of Jesus, **who lovingly served us by saving us. Amen!**

+ Look to the Hills ... at Night +

***The moon (will not harm you) by night.
He who watches over you will not slumber;
indeed, he who watches over Israel will neither slumber nor sleep.***

“Now the Light Has Gone Away” *LSB 887; LW 503; TLH 653*

(Alternate Hymn – “Now Rest Beneath Night’s Shadow” *LSB 880; LW 485; TLH 554*)

Scripture Scene Genesis 28:10-17 ***Jacob’s Dream***

Prayer Starters & Requests

- Just as God keeps us from sunstroke in our body by day, He will not allow us to be moon-struck in our mind or soul by night (have you ever heard of a lunatic, a term that comes from lunar for moon?). What concerns of mind or soul can you bring before God?
- God doesn’t slumber or sleep so that we can. As He sent His angels from heaven to care for Jacob and to take Jacob’s needs back to Him in heaven, He sends His angels for us. From what do you need God’s gift of rest?
- For what blessings of the day can you give God thanks as you lie down to rest in sweet repose for the night?

Prayer

“I thank You, my heavenly Father, through Jesus Christ, Your dear Son, that You have graciously kept me this day; and I pray that You would forgive me all my sins where I have done wrong, and graciously keep me this night. For into Your hands I commend myself, my body and soul, and all things. Let Your holy angel be with me, that the evil foe may have no power over me. Amen.” (Luther’s Evening Prayer, *LSB 266*).

+ Look to the Hills ... at Last! +

***The LORD will watch over your coming and going
both now and forevermore.***

“Lord, Take My Hand and Lead Me” *LSB 722 (Stanza 3); LW 512*

(Alternate Hymn – “Abide with Me, Fast Falls the Eventide” *LSB 878; LW 490; TLH 552*)

Scripture Scene John 11:38-44 **Jesus Raises Lazarus**

Prayer Starters & Requests

- Every day we walk through the valley of the shadow of death: our death and the death of those we love. What do you need from God as you walk this valley?
- What fears arise in your heart as you look forward to your last day(s)?
- As Jesus ruined Lazarus' funeral, and every other funeral He ever attended (including His own), so He will someday ruin yours! How can you today respond to what He will do at your funeral someday?
- Jesus commanded those at Lazarus' tomb to "let him go!" What do you need to be "let go" to do on this side of the tomb?

Prayer

***Lord, let at last Thine angels come,
To Abr'ham's bosom bear me home, That I may die unfearing;
And in its narrow chamber keep
My body safe in peaceful sleep until Thy reappearing.
And then from death awaken me That these mine eyes
with joy may see,
O Son of God, Thy glorious face, my Savior and my fount of grace.
Lord Jesus Christ, my prayer attend, my prayer attend,
And I will praise Thee without end.***

[*Lord, Thee I Love with All My Heart LSB 708:3*]

+ Look to the Hills ... and Sing Praise! +

My help comes from the LORD, the Maker of heaven and earth.

"Alabare" LSB 799 or 800

(Alternate Hymn – "How Great Thou Art" LSB 801; LW 519)

Scripture Scene Revelation 7:9-17 **The Great Multitude in White Robes**

Prayer Starters & Requests

- When we consider all that God has done for us, especially in sending Jesus His Son to be our Savior, what help do you need in praising Him? How can you "sing" to Him with more than your voice?
- How can your life here and now be a song of praise to our God? What lyrics from your life would you like others to hear as you sing?
- Won't it be a great day when we finally join the great multitude in white robes before the throne of the Lamb where our God reigns? What favorite songs of praise do you hope you will sing then to our God?

Prayer

Glorious God, **Maker of heaven and earth**, For the marvelous world You created for us, **we sing Your praise!** For life and love and all the gifts You have given us, **we sing Your praise!** For Your gift of Your Son for us and for our salvation, **we sing**

Your praise! For the Holy Spirit and His work through Word and Sacrament, **we sing Your praise!** For Your holy Church, its pastors and teachers and other workers and leaders, **we sing Your praise!** For the Lutheran Women’s Missionary League and the work You do through her, **we sing Your praise!** Finally, for the sure hope of life with You and all the saints in the glories of heaven, **we sing Your praise: *praise and glory and wisdom and thanks and honor and power and strength be to our God for ever and ever. Amen!***

Lord’s Prayer

Blessing

Now may the Lord our God, our Help, our Hope,
Bless us and keep us by day and by night!

May He who made the earth and heavens,
Make His face shine upon us and be gracious unto us!

May He who never slumbers nor sleeps,
Look upon us with His favor and grant us His peace!

**In the Name of the Father and of the + Son and of the Holy Spirit!
Amen!**

“Psalm 121 Sung” (Tune: “Diademata SMD”, LSB 525; LW 278; TLH 341)
(*Leader SPEAKS the non-emboldened lines. Group SINGS those **emboldened.***)

I lift up my eyes to the hills—
where does my help come from?

**Our help comes from the Lord,
Who made the earth and sky.**

He will not let your foot slip—
he who watches over you will not slumber;

**He watches o’er us day and night
He’s always standing by.**

The LORD watches over you—
the LORD is your shade at your right hand;

**No force of night or day
Can soul or body bend.**

The LORD will keep you from all harm—
he will watch over your life;

**The Lord, our Help, will guide our way
Now and until the end!**