

The Kyrie

After the congregation confesses its sins and receives Christ's forgiveness, then shares Christ's peace with one another, then sings praise to God with the Entrance Hymn, and is greeted by the pastor with the Apostolic Greeting, the congregation prays an ancient prayer for all Christians who are not physically with them in their worship.

This ancient prayer is called the Kyrie (pronounced "KEER – ee – ay").

This prayer dates back to the 200's AD when most Christians in the Roman Empire worshiped in the Greek language. Greek was the international language of commerce during the first half of the Roman Empire's history.

After each petition of the prayer, the congregation responded with the Greek phrase, "*kyrie eleison*" (meaning "O Lord have mercy").

'Kyrie is pronounced 'KEER- ee-ay'

'eleison' is pronounced 'ee-LAY-soan'

In 383 AD, Christianity became the state religion of the Roman Empire. From this time forward the worship service was spoken in Latin (the language of Rome). However, the response to this prayer was kept in Greek even though the petitions of the prayer were spoken in Latin because this prayer was so well known and loved in the original Greek language.

This prayer has always been traditionally chanted. It originated in monasteries, prayed by monks on a daily basis. It eventually was adopted as part of the regular church's Sunday worship.

Originally this prayer lasted about 45 minutes. It was typically chanted by a choir while the general public gathered to worship. As people gathered in the sanctuary of the church, they would hear a choir singing like the angels in heaven in praise of God and for the well-being (or peace) of all creation.

Eventually this prayer was shortened to a 15 minute prayer sung by the congregation. Today, we call this version of this prayer the Great Litany. It is found in the ELW as Hymn #238.

And then this prayer was shortened even further and called the Kyrie Eleison. And eventually shortened even further and now called simply the Kyrie.

The present form of the Kyrie is comprised of 5 petitions in prayer where the congregation responds, “Lord have mercy/”

1. We pray for God’s peace to come to us.
2. We pray for the fullness of God’s peace that comes from heaven that is revealed in Christ’s salvation to be made known to us on earth.
3. We pray for the peace for all Christians throughout the world across denominational lines.
4. We pray for peace for our own congregation and especially for our fellow congregational members who are not present with us at the time of worship.
5. We conclude by asking God to help, save, comfort, and defend us – thereby bringing God’s peace into our lives.

Read 1 Corinthians 1:4-9.

Read 1 Thessalonians 1:2-5.

Read James 5:13-15.

Conclude with praying the Kyrie:

In peace let us pray to the Lord.

Lord, have mercy.

For the peace from above, and for our salvation, let us pray to the Lord.

Lord, have mercy.

For the peace of the whole world, for the well-being of the church of God, and for the unity of all, let us pray to the Lord.

Lord, have mercy.

For this holy house, and for all who offer here their worship and praise, we pray to the Lord.

Lord, have mercy.

Help, save, comfort, and defend us, gracious Lord.

Amen.

(Evangelical Lutheran Worship, 2006L Augsburg Fortress)