

PRAYERS FOR THE OPENING
OF A COURT

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[NOTE: The writer was recently approached by a Moderator of Presbytery who had been invited to offer prayer at the opening session of the High Court. Concern was expressed at the absence of readily available material in authorised service-books, and due request was made for a series of possible devotions appropriate to the occasion. On acknowledgment, it was subtly suggested that these might be made available in liturgical literature to assist other clergy in similar circumstances. The following prayers are paradigms of what may be used at the opening of any Court, into which the pertinent themes of justice, judgement, law and grace are carefully woven.]

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Eternal God, the judge of all men,
through whose power the law of our land is ably administered:
bless with your Spirit
this High Court of Justice;
that those who occupy earthly assizes
may, in your faith, in your favour and in your fear,
discern the truth, uphold the law
and in all matters judge rightly;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Almighty God, Judge eternal, and most merciful Saviour: we seek your blessing upon this Court, and upon all who administer justice here; that those who sit in counsel to clear the innocent and convict the guilty, may pass judgement only with insight and understanding; and that by doing justice, loving mercy, and walking humbly with you, our heavenly Father, we may all uphold the cause of truth, and seek the true prosperity of our nation; through Jesus Christ our Lord.

O God, the King of righteousness and Judge of mankind:
we pray this day for those called
to minister justice, to convict the guilty,
to clear the innocent,
and especially those of this Court
from whom is sought wise counsel and sound judgement.
Give to its officers
integrity of character,
fairness of mind,
understanding of truth,
compassion in spirit,
impartiality of verdict,
prudence in sentence;
that without favour and without fear,
they may fulfil their duties as in your sight,
to the glory of your name
and to the creation of a stable society
both peaceful and perfect;
for the honour of Jesus Christ our Lord.

O God, the Fountain of justice,
from whom all authority comes, and to whom all homage is due:
send down your blessing, we pray, upon this high and honourable Court;
that those who administer justice here may be guided by wisdom and
understanding;
that those who receive justice here may be reformed and restored to
society;
and that the law as interpreted here may be upheld fairly and without
prejudice
knowing that at all times you are Judge of all men;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Almighty and everliving God,
Father of wisdom, Fountain of truth,
by whose grace a civil Court
is convened within this place:
give insight and strength, we pray,
to all who do business here;
to judge and jury,
to clerk and counsel;
that each in his vocation
may uphold our laws with prudence and precision,
and interpret them with common-sense and compassion.

Judge eternal, throned in splendour,
you have warned us that one day we must all come to judgement.
Teach us day by day
to do justice, to love mercy
and to walk ever humbly with you,
our heavenly Father,
that when we stand before the final assize,
we may pass from law into grace,
from trial into triumph
and from death into everlasting life;
through the power, pardon and peace
of Jesus Christ our Lord,
who lives and reigns, is worshipped and glorified
with you, Father, and the Holy Spirit,
one God, world without end.