

Salt City Prayers
Robert Allan Hill

(The Sunday morning prayers collected here were offered at Erwin United Methodist Church in Syracuse NY, 1985-1995.)

*Gracious God, loving and holy and just,
We lift our hearts in thanks and praise this morning.*

*We come to this sanctuary ready again to live as glad hearted women and men.
With glad hearts, curious minds, and eager spirits we offer ourselves in worship.
Bless us, we pray, by thy presence, which we invoke in the name of Jesus Christ our
Lord.*

*Are we as ready to receive the gifts of grace as we should be?
Have we been prepared, in these days, to notice the bountiful goodness by which
Divine Love has touched us?*

*Do we need to confess a little slowness, a little occasional lack of perception,
shortness of spiritual breath, a slight or not so slight disregard for what we have
been given?*

*O Lord, as a people of glad heart, we confess that we have not always been fully a
people of open hands. Open us in these moments of silence, to a new rebirth of
wonder.*

Great art thou, O Lord our God, and fully to be praised, morning by morning.

*We pray for thy blessing in this hour, thy gifts of confidence, certainty and
sureness for the days to come.*

*Help us to receive, with confidence, the many surprising gifts embedded in our
personal lives. Help us to notice the unexpected possibility, the new friend, the
unusual word, the strange connection. Help us to see more than we plan to see,
to receive more than we expect to receive, with the confidence born of obedience.
Teach us to claim some certainty in the midst of uncertainty, as a church and
as a congregation. Teach us we pray the path we best should tread into the
unforeseeable future. Teach us rightly to connect yesterday with tomorrow, in the
light of thy certain love.*

*Shower with cool saving rain and moist power the leaders of this world, with
sureness to seek justice and peace. Help those in the torn out conflicts of our day
to continue daily, surely, to seek the promise of the Prince of peace. Kindle daily in*

the hearts of great leaders an even greater desire for peace, with a sense that surely goodness and mercy shall follow.

Through Jesus Christ our Lord

Dear Lord

We offer a common prayer, a prayer that our families, torn apart by abuse and distrust and anger and jealousy and unkindness, show kindness and pity to one another.

We offer a common prayer, a prayer that our decisions in life about our callings, how we are to use our time and spend our money, how we make a life not just a living, will be illumined by grace and generosity.

We offer a common prayer that, over time, and by hard experience, we may learn that the meaning of a word, a deed, an act is not found in the sentiment or feeling in which it was uttered or offered, but just in what it does for others, not in what we meant by it, but in what it does to others.

We offer a common prayer, a prayer that our grandfathers and mothers, in their age and infirmity, will receive care and kindness that accords with the warning to honor father and mother that you own days be long upon the earth.

We offer a common prayer, a prayer that women—our grandmothers, mothers, sisters, daughters, granddaughters, all—granted suffrage less than 100 years ago, will be spared any and all forms of harassment and abuse, verbal or physical, on college campuses, in homes and families, in offices and bars, in life and work, and long having suffered and now having suffrage, will in our time rise up to be honored, revered, and compensated, without reserve, but with justice and mercy. We offer a common prayer, finally a prayer not of this world, but of this world as a field of formation for another, not just creation but new creation, not just life but eternal life, not just health but salvation, not just heart but soul, not just earth, but heaven.

God of our weary years,

God of our silent tears,

Thou who hast brought us thus far on the way;

Thou who has by Thy might

Led us into the light,

Keep us forever in the path, we pray.

Lest, our feet stray from the places, our God, where we met Thee,

Lest, our hearts, drunk with the wine of the world, we forget Thee,

Shadowed beneath Thy hand, may we forever stand,

True to our God, true to our native land.

*In a season of change, may we embrace what lasts.
In a time of loss, may we hug the new.
In an era of decrease, may we find the unexpected.
In an epoch of debt, may we (sacrificially) endow the future.
In a day of disappointment, may we savor simple gifts.
In a month of worry, may we undress our anxiety.
In a year of decline, may we again see winter's gifts.
In an hour of depression, may we, with effort, accept kindness.
In a moment of fear, may we grasp the gift of faith.
In a morning of acedia, may we enter our prayer closet.
In an afternoon of besetting sin, may we recognize, humbly, our humanity.
In an evening of loneliness, may we experience graceful solitude.
As dusk comes, gracious God, help us walk in newness of life.*

Dear God

*We come now to our weekly moment of common prayer. You are invited to place yourself in a posture that supports and expresses the prayer of the heart—
kneeling, standing, bowing, seated. We enter the prayer through the singing of
our call to prayer, Lead Me Lord*

Gracious God, Holy and Just

Thou from whom we come and unto whom our spirits return

Thou source of Wisdom, fount of Wisdom, well spring of saving Wisdom

Make of us, we pray, an addressable community

That we might listen

That we might hear

That we might understand

That we might listen, hear and understand before we analyze or criticize

Make of us, we pray, an addressable community

Make of us, we pray, a benevolent community

*That we might polish our proclivity for the second thought, the second try, the
second chance*

*That we might expect to uncover a latent goodness, latent in others and in
ourselves and across this great, though troubled, globe*

That we might become good in ways that become the Gospel

*Make of us, we pray, a benevolent community
Make of us, we pray, a soulful community
Alive to spirit, alive to love, alive to grace
Take away from our souls all strain and stress
Let us breathe again, breathe deeply, breathe the soulful breath of life
Make of us, we pray, a soulful community
For we have gathered and bear witness to Jesus, our beacon not our boundary,
who taught us to pray, saying...*

Dear God

Holy and loving

*We pause in this evening hour to offer our thanks and praise.
For the very gifts of life and faith, of community and work, of safe space and
gracious time, we are deeply thankful.
Bless our time together in this place, we pray.
For the daily chances to encourage one another, to give another generation a
place to grow in learning and virtue and piety, we are truly thankful.
Bless our work together on this campus, we pray.
For the example of those honored tonight, whose steady service, valued loyalty,
and hard work we celebrate here, we are happy and thankful.
Bless our life together across this great University, we pray.
Spirit of Life: Thou our source of meaning and hope,
Before we break bread together, we pause to be thankful for bread to break
together, remembering those, far and near, who are in need.
Now on land and sea descending brings the night its peace profound.
Let our vesper prayer be blending with the holy calm around.
We invoke thy blessing in this hour.*

Amen

Dear God

*We pause in prayer to place before you all the past year has taught.
Our learning from this year we present to you. We bundle together what we have
known and the ways we have grown in tasks partly completed, in challenges met,
in losses unexpected and foreseen, in spurts of creative energy, in
disappointments, in surprises, in changed relationships. All this past experience
we give over to your care and keeping.*

Together we seek your blessing for what is yet to be. We seek your blessings of imagination and insight for the learning in the year to come. For keen eyes to sense unexpected opportunity. For faithful ears to hear a call to speak truth. For steady obedience to Christ Jesus, his teaching, his healing, his church, his spirit. For curiosity to discern the odd joys embedded in trials. O Lord, we pray, make of all that will come toward us a pattern of meaningful learning and growth.

*For all that has been, we offer Thanks
For all that will be, we say Yes.
Through the same Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen*

*Gracious God
Our Heavenly Father
Source of life, maker of all things, sole judge of all people
To Thee we raise our hearts.
We ask your blessing for the holiday season.
As the days darken, spur us to shine with the light of love and truth.
As the pace quickens, gentles us to pause, pray, listen and help.
As our joy abounds, point us toward joyless spots, shivering souls, addicted
brothers, abusive behavior
And help us share with others.
As we bask in the comforts of life,
Hold before us the Cross of Christ,
In whose service we find
Meaning for life
Light in Darkness
Joy in December
And words of prayer.*

*For life and breath and this good earth
We give Thee thanks O Lord.
For people of kind hearts and generous spirits
We give Thee Thanks O Lord.
For skillful craftsmen whose work praises Thee
We give Thee thanks O Lord.
For the cross of Christ, that reminds us of thy presence,*

*Even in the darkest hour
We give Thee thanks O Lord.
For the promise of heaven, for thy love beyond death,
We give Thee thanks O Lord.
For the life in our communion of saints
We give Thee thanks O Lord.
The world around us we see changing
With frightening speed
Peace where once there was cold war
Tension and armament where once, there was order
Nation rises against nation and
We are more open to your Word for us.
Random hurt has touched us, as a nation and a church
Pleasant afternoon hour gives way to injury
An evening of quiet—to a phone call with bad news
A medical visit has included a disturbing portent for the future.
Our life has been touched by random hurt
And we are open to your healing word.
The shadow of heaven has again fallen upon
Our patch of green earth
To you we release another soul.
Even in Christ, O Lord, we lack
The tongue and the heart
To face death.
So, we are open to your word of grace.
In this season of returning
As we return to home and school and church
We are open to Thee
Restore and rekindle our faith, we ask
Through Christ our Lord.
We do pray to Thee today
In earnest, in serious reflection
All our life is open to You
Our good deeds
Our burning hungers
Our mistakes
Our bad habits*

Our thinking

There it is

We lift our baggage to you

Lord hear our prayer

Hear us we beseech Thee O Lord

(Silence)

Today we intercede for the needs of the world

We pray that the hungry will be fed

We pray that our nation will become just

We pray that our children will stay clean

We pray that our President will be healthy

We pray that our Bishop will be healthy

We pray that love will grow here

We pray that others will know Jesus through us

We pray that we will not fear our enemies

We pray that we will become more generous

Hear us we beseech Thee O Lord

(Silence)

We take the name of Jesus, the Outcast, and pray

O Lord

Our lives are circled by forces beyond our control.

Hear our prayer.

An uncertain future awaits our world as nation wars with nation. We pray for peace, for a forestalling of bloodshed, for leaders with wisdom that makes peace. The poor of the earth cry out for our help, and we hear the cry, though a long way off. May our ears be pricked that some peace will grow from a new justice in the world.

Life races past us, and our days disappear before even we have held them close.

Abiding hurts clutter our minds and hearts.

A weariness befalls us.

Lord, we hear your call to us, your calling for us to follow Jesus. Give us grace to pick up our cross and follow along.

Temper our anger, we pray.

Kindle our hope, we pray.

Inspire our outlook, we pray.

Quicken our imagination, we pray.

*Open our mind, we pray.
Make us liberal folks, slow to judge, quick to give, eager to help, trusting in
forgiveness that abounds beyond our willingness to believe it.*

Dear Lord

*We reach up our hearts to Thee out of all the confusion of this week.
Bowed and quiet, now, warmed and cheerful, here, we stretch out our souls to
Thee.*

*As your people, the sheep of your pasture, we turn again to Thee.
We pray to Thee. Claiming no big win. Hiding, from ourselves, no sin, big or small.
Promising no new resolution, yet. Conceiving no masterpiece of our own. Not
trusting our own selves right now, but praying to Thee.
O Holy God, so far off and somehow yet so near, like light, like hope, to Thee we
do now pray.*

Lord hear our prayer.

*We pray that paths of friendship will up between warring camps, whether on the
River Jordan or on Meadowbrook.*

*We pray that wise men and women will receive mantels of authority, in time,
whether in Washington or in Cicero.*

*We pray that our willingness to criticize others will not humorously our reluctance
to look at ourselves.*

*We pray that we will not fall in love with what hurts us—depression, addiction,
cynicism, stoicism, eroticism.*

We pray for a new rebirth of wonder at your Word.

We pray for clean winter quiet in our hearts.

*We pray for our preacher this day, for our neighbor in need, for children
everywhere, for those imprisoned in nursing homes, for one who is sagging, for
another who is bloated, for another who is empty, for another who is full.*

O Lord

Thy silent presence bids us pray.

In thy presence we are thankful and joyful and hopeful.

We bow before Thee.

*Bowing our heads in reverence for Love, we make our common prayer.
In the stillness of this sanctuary, we are free to pray, to bow before Thee, to seek
again a quiet center.
Speak to us, we ask.*

*Speak in silence, without words, speak of new life, and love.
Speak in the quiet center, in the heart.
We bow before Thee.
Our bowing shows our intent to love Thee.
Help us to follow through.
Help us to carry through on our intention to love Thee.
We have meant to think kindly of those who criticize us behind our backs.
We have meant to look for good in those who find fault in us.
We have meant to live your Good News by speaking well of those who speak ill of
us.
We have meant to smile at those who frown at us.
We have meant to forgive, firmly, those who knowingly have hurt us.
We have meant even to bear witness to Love by bearing quietly the injustice of
this world, and the ignorant libel of those with a worldly agenda.
We have meant truly to be your people.
And yet, dear Lord, now in this luminescent quiet, realize the fragility of our intent.
It is not easy for us to walk out on this water.
It is not easy for us to stay awake in this garden.
It is not easy for us to stand out plainly and pay up personally.
We have meant to love our neighbor. We have meant to love our enemy.
Lord help us!
Help us Lord we pray!
Help us to follow through.*

*Bless us O Lord, we ask:
With the material of your grace
With happiness
With friends to understand
With a church to absorb our extra pain
With a love of learning
With a hand stretched out to the stranger and traveler
With tunes in the soul
With a willingness to change
With resolve not to fear overmuch what we cannot see
With acceptance when we cannot change
With forgiveness first of our own foibles
With a faithful memory*

*With the material of your grace
Bless us we ask.*

We pray to Thee.

Lift us by your Spirit, we ask.

Help us to lay aside all that depresses us and angers others.

Help us to lay aside all ill will, all cunning, all guile, all hypocrisy, all envy.

Shut our mouths when we would speak ill of another.

Raise us to new life.

Help us to make camp around the fire of your love.

*Give us the desire of newborn babes for the milk of sincerity, the milk of your
word, that we may grow thereby.*

Lord, days past have we tasted your kindness, but we forget and go hungry again.

Feed us now we ask.

Our hearts are tuned to the music of your church.

Kindle our imaginations too.

*Show us escape routes, and underground railroads, and trojan horses, and
discoveries of the Spirit, and new occasions for new duties, that our heads might
be more than hat racks, and that with our minds we might love Thee.*

*We thank you for the mothers of our church...and all those whose faithful
mothering lives in our bodies and in our worship today.*

We pray for the mothers of the new age. In their activity may still there be peace.

*In their work, a sense of playful abandon. In their exhaustion, a reminder of
eternity. In their anxiety over roles changed, rearranged, reversed, remade, may
still they cling to love as the reason for life.*

*We praise your holiness and love for those who have shared a maternal love with
others' children. Not only those who have children but also those who raise, teach
and love children are dear to Thee.*

*We pray for this nation as it struggles over another decade to settle the politics of
the womb.*

We pray for those in the springtime of life who are taking a new step toward love.

Thy life is within our souls but our selfishness has not helped you.

Master us by your love we ask.

*This day we gather as baptized and believing Christian people, a people called
Methodist, whose task it is to set forth a disciplined example of Christian service.*

About us we see neighbors in need.

*One is tripped up by her own self-concern
Set her free!*
*Another is the prisoner of old and empty dreams that need replacement
Set him free!*
*Another fears the future and dreads change
Set her free!*
*Someone is lonely and growing bitter in her loneliness
Set her free!*
*One cannot cut free from a web of frustrating relations
Set him free!*
*Another has forgotten the promise of eternal life and so puts all his hope in this
world
Set him free!*
*Another does too much and will not rest
Set her free!*
*Lord let us soon sing a song of utter freedom to Thee
'For our hearts are restless until they find their rest in Thee'.*

Eternal Spirit

*All our words are inadequate before Thee, empty unless Thou fillest them,
misdirected unless they be caught up by Thee.*

Eternal Presence

*How odd it is that we so easily pass by the greatest gift of thy grace to us; we
forget that you have made us and not we ourselves. That we are meant to be thy
people, the sheep of thy pasture. Help us to wake each morning, be we young or
old, rejoicing to be given the chance to praise thy name while we yet have breath.*

Eternal Love

*As we look about us this day, we praise the loyalty of men and women who have
made sacrifices on behalf of thy kingdom. They have given up the freedom of
solitude and joined together in marriage. Others have chosen to raise children in a
Christian fashion, teaching them to live simply so that others may simply live.
They have given hour after hour after hour in thy service in the community. All of
them we pin with flowers and brush with kisses and praise this day, for in them we
see some loyalty to the cross of Christ, which bids us dump out ourselves and drink
deeply of others.*

Eternal Christ

Help us to realize this day that now there are many sizes and shapes and kinds of families in this great land. Help us to remember the word of Jesus, how he rebuked those who would make the family a kind of God in itself, saying "You must leave Father and Mother." Help us to remember that the unnoticed and unthanked and unmentioned and unremarked work of teaching children is what gives us the future.

Amen.

*Almighty God our Heavenly Father
Mysterious, Anonymous, Beyond All Thought
We rest before Thee this day
Stopping in this sanctuary for just a few moments
We come here hoping to see friends.
We come here expecting refreshment in familiar surroundings.
We come here aware, vaguely, of our need of Thee.
We come here in Christ's name.
Shake us free of disappointment without our own blunders.
Stand by us to confirm our faith in you.
Cripple our self-indulgence, we pray.
Blind us to the blandishments of this world, we pray.
Regard us with that mercy which we cannot earn yet can and do trust.
We have faith in thy love.
Give us confidence when faith falls short.*

*Heavenly Father
In this season of light and darkness,
We bow our heads before Thee our maker,
Our forgiver, our sustainer
And we forget our own needs for this moment.
Open us we pray to the cares of our brothers.
Remind us in this season of celebration that all is not yet joy.
Prepare us to handle the unexpected emotions
And surprising encounters of the holidays.
Free us to take a moment of this Advent to do something
For someone who can give us nothing in return.
We pray for families who have lost loved ones.
We pray for new families*

*Who are celebrating their first Christmas together.
We pray for our young people that through all the tinsel
They may yet catch a glimpse of thy pardoning love.
Do we know Father that we need to be forgiven?
Help us at least to know that we need forgiveness.
We pray for men who stray
From the Gospel that they once knew.
Bring them back dear God.*

*How great Thou art
These days past, busy with ourselves
Our homes, our health
Our worries for loved ones
Our uncertainty over the future
In his cluttered world
Lawns to mow
Weddings to plan
Driveways to seal
Funerals to attend
Irregular verbs to parse
Letters to write
Gardens to weed
Books to read
We have been tied up lately with
Our lives and our ways of love.
Now it is Sunday and we stop to worship Thee.
We read O Lord that by your word we are made clean.
Speak to us now and cleanse us.
We want to become better people
And a better nation
Than we are.
We are eager to listen for your loving word, and to heed.
We want to love our neighbor as ourselves.
Send thy love to cleanse us, like rain and red ground.
Clean us by your word.*

Dear God

*Although You are too great and wonderful for
Our minds to comprehend
Still we pray this and every night
We invoke your blessing for this church
And her many members and friends
In the midst of uncertainty and worry
We invoke your blessing
To give us some certainty in the midst
Of uncertainty
And some assurance in the midst of worry
We invoke your blessing
In the midst of the careless days
That somehow, divinely,
We might be healed of our propensity
To hurt and to forget.
In the midst of greed and permissiveness
We pray for a measure of discipline
In the autumn of the year
In the autumn of life
Help us trust that there is splendor
In loss, decay, and decline
Help us to live splendid lives
While the chill winds blow
Make us colorful children
Orange leaves in the November of time.
We do invoke your blessing Lord.*

Lord

*My eyes have been too much this week resting on things that perish.
My ears have been tuned to top forty tunes and not to the music of the spheres.
My lips have bent toward frowns and not sent out smiling rays of love.
My voice has scolded when it could have sung.
My heart has wallowed in doubt and fear.
My mind has drifted to cheap entertainments when I could have contemplated the
good and the true and the lovely.
I want to follow Jesus, but I need help.
Take my hand.*

*Cleanse my heart.
Make me laugh with love for all to see.*

Dear God

*Thank you for everyone in this sanctuary, for their reverence and for their faith.
We pray your blessing for us. We have learned, some soon and some later, that
we need your Love in every hour.*

So we have come to your sanctuary to worship.

We remember before you our beloved nation in its hour of planning and decision.

Guide us toward a gentler and kinder culture.

Deliver us from our neglect of the needy.

Take our minds off what we can do and put them on what we ought to do.

Give us the resolve to sacrifice for a better tomorrow.

We ask your help for our church.

Lord we have hopes for our life together.

We hope to expand our ministry and to prepare for the future.

We hope to help children, the elderly, families, singles, the poor a long way off.

We need your Spirit to empower us.

Are you running with us Lord?

*We thank you God for gracious people, humble and sensitive souls who make life
fun.*

Maybe you can bring out the best in all of us this week.

Dear God

Our prayers go out

For the brother in Christ who is feeling low

Doubting his own worth and your own love

Comfort him we pray

For the sister in Christ who is sick

Comfort her we pray

For the brother who has lost his way

Who has gone off to a far country and wasted himself

Comfort him we pray

For the sister who worries and cannot seem to stop

Though she knows and trusts Thee

Comfort her we pray

For the brother who loses heart

*Who is easily discouraged because his hopes are so high
Comfort him we pray
For the sister who loses herself in running
And running and endless hectic activity
Comfort her we pray*

Heavenly Father

*In all our hope and in all our brokenness we stand naked before you
Who knowest the inner workings of our minds and hearts.
We give thanks that in the name of Jesus we have caught a glimpse of you,
And that in the grace of Christ we have caught a glimpse of ourselves,
As we should, might and can be.
For blessed men and women, now dead
Who have been directed toward Thee
And who have been defined (named!)
By that inward inclination*

We give thanks

*For Quakers who taught us to quake and tremble before the word of God.
For Methodists who taught us that self-discipline is a mark of discipleship.
For Baptists who told us, out right, to choose between good and evil.*

*For Catholics who have kept to the One Church,
In the hope that one day we will all be one again.*

*These saints would not listen patiently to lies, to gossip, to hurtful words.
They did not walk with evil.*

*Nor did they take delight in scoffing:
How easy it is to scoff!*

*They grew and bore fruit like giant willow trees,
Planted by streams of water.*

*To know the difference between good and evil
Helpful and harmful, what builds up and what tears down.*

This is our prayer.

*For in the good we are and become familiar with Thee,
And the other,*

You are not familiar with the other.

May thy grace be upon us!

*The gift of the cross of the Lord Jesus,
In whose name we pray.*

*Blessed Jesus at thy word
We are gathered all to hear Thee.
Let our hearts and souls be stirred
Now to seek and love and fear Thee
Thou alone to God canst win us
Thou can work all good within us
We would be grateful Lord
As grateful as the young woman who receives her husband on the day of her
marriage
As grateful as the child receiving his parents' affection
As grateful as the whimsy and wisdom of old age
Lord, we would be grateful
We would be grateful too for what you call us to be and do
We pray that our church will grow
We pray that new people will find
Through the witness of this congregation
A foretaste of thy love.
We pray that lives will be mended, souls surrendered, and spirits healed.
We pray that our congregation will grow.
We await in the darkness and anger of our time
We await a quickening of thy spirit
Lord, we need Thee every hour
We await the time foretold by the prophet Joel
When our young men will dream dreams
And our old men will dream dreams
When dreams will live
When thy people will not fear
Lord we pray that this church will grow
Lord we pray to be made grateful
We pray too for an endowment of dreams from on high
In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost.
Amen.*

*Before You we are silent
God
We are not fit to utter your name, so Holy are you and so twisted we are*

In truth we cannot bear the weight of your Presence. To speak of You and to You surpasses our strength.

We are not angels but men

Men of flesh and bone and twisted tongues

*Our help is in your Name, Thou maker of heaven and earth, Tremendous, Awful,
Mighty, Everlasting, Holy
God*

In Christ we come together

In Christ we hazard our prayer

In Christ, in Him alone, we have confidence to pray as your children

Lord, we beseech Thee, hear our prayer

Hear our confession of sin. We are not ever who we seem, nor who we desire to be. We waste our best selves, our most precious hours, our talents, our money.

Wasters all, we confess our sin. We make little room in our hearts for real outsiders. Ours are closed kitchens and dens. Saving ourselves we lose our souls. Loners all, we confess our sin. Daily we die a thousand fearful deaths, anticipating the worst, lacking the faith we profess. Doubters all, we confess our sin.

Lord have mercy upon us. Christ have mercy upon us. Lord have mercy upon us.

Thanks and praise to Thee for allowing us this cleansing! By love, yours, we are free to try again! Undeserved acceptance we receive even now! Thanks and

Praise and Honor and Glory! In Christ we again feel free to taste another bittersweet day. For this we have come to worship. Dear God we thank you and praise you. In prayer we again come to faith.

In faith we ask your intercession for those we see hurting and alone. For the young woman in the hospital. For the mother, impatient and tired, feeling unappreciated and inept. For the worker whose job is on the line. For those who are moving soon. For the widow near death. For struggling schools. For the teenager caught with cocaine. For the husband whose wife may be ill. For one who wonders if there is a purpose in a quiet, retired life. For the man who has faith but lacks assurance. For the ministers of the church. For all your church, human and frail.

Intercede we pray.

Thanks we give

Confession we render.

Adoration we utter.

Lord hear our prayer.

*Eternal God
Holy and Loving
For what we have in common we give you thanks.
For this fragile planet, our common home.
For this great and troubled nation, our common project.
For this community, our common business.
For the chance together to speak and hear the truth, which moment by moment
sets us free.
For the simple grace of this common meal, our fellowship today.*

*Eternal God
Holy and Loving
Now for what we have in common we give you thanks.
Bless this food to our use, and us in thy service.
(*Invocation for the Luncheon with Billy Graham, Dewitt Rotary, 4/24/89)*

*I will give thanks with my whole heart, soul, mind, strength
With everything that is in me
Here in the congregation gathered to the people of God
How great are thy works, dear Lord!
Those who study thy creation:
Biologists, Chemists, Physicists, Boy Scouts, Campfire Girls
The elderly who take the time to stroll
Take pleasure in thy works
They remember and tell the wonder of thy creation
A sign to us that Thou art gracious, merciful.
Forever mindful of your
Commitment, loyalty, abiding care
For thy disturbed creatures.
Teach us, teach us
Compel us to grasp hold of the cross of Jesus
There is your commitment, loyalty, abiding care
Compel us to trust this Messiah
Who knew the most hateful, the darkest things in life
Who was raised up
Who lives in the heart
Even Jesus Christ
Redemption!*

*A commitment forever!
The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.*

*Father
Forgive us whatever we have done
Knowingly or not, that hurts others
Forgive us our haughtiness
That makes us think that we can get along alone
By ourselves, without others, and without Thee
Forgive us unkind words spoken in haste:
Remind us that to speak is good, to think is better
Forgive our foolishness
Our neglect of true love
And the things that make for love
Prepare us—whatever it takes—
To partake of thy glory
Remind us that though we tarry here awhile
Still we are going home.*

*For children
Lord hear our prayer
For hands that feed, for minds that teach
For arms that embrace, for wise counsel, for careful guidance
That our children might love these abundantly
Lord hear our prayer
For those of us gathered here
That we might reach true adulthood as children of God
Lord hear our prayer*

*Church...excitement and hope...triumph...serene joy of Eastertide...
Terror torn world...nation and state in a time of decision...
Leaders...no judges in the land...wisdom of Solomon...
Compassion, vision of a common good...
Joy of spring, flowers and sun...Father we are hounded by cares beyond our
control...these we lay before thee:
The illness of a beloved partner
A friend and wife suddenly hospitalized*

*An unexpected success
An engagement broken
A project with little fruit
A disagreement over something that really counts
Discovery of a past deep hurt
The return of a friend
The courage to change one's mind
A period of emptiness
A business loss
Worries about a drug-ridden country
Our fears we lay at your feet
In praise of Thee we remember our joys!*

*Our Heavenly Father
The joys of springtime again make us joyful
The simple pleasures of warmth and light and growth
Your morning has broken upon us again, like the first morning
In Eden's garden, and so we praise You with elation!
Our sin—our rapacity, our conceit, our slowness to sense the suffering of others—
our sin deflates this spring of joy.
Forgive our doubt.
Forgive our ignorance.
Restore us from death to Christ our Savior.
Lord, Holy Spirit, our Life—
Draw us again into the fray.
Help us to do battle with the God of this world.
Today we pray for college graduates. Give them we ask...
The maturity, the patience, the perspective, the forbearance, the character.
Give them personal maturity.
Today we pray for those whose family lives are less than perfect—
That is, all of us.
Remind them Lord of
The squabbles in Jesus' family.
The jealousy of James.
The conflict with Mary.
The sayings about hatred of brother and sister.
Jesus knew family trouble.*

*Help us to remember.
Today we pray for our leaders.
Help them in their votes to preserve peace
But also to promote a kind of justice that will be a foundation for lasting peace.
Father, in prayer today, we lift up the joy of spring, the darkness of sin, and the
power of your Spirit.*

*I am being driven forward
Into an unknown land
The pass grows steeper
The air colder and sharper
A wind from my known goal
Stirs the strings of expectation
Come let us adore Him.*

*Our Father
We listen in this hour for your words of challenge and help today
Touch us in listening and waiting
In worrying and helping
Teach us to pray
Help us as we rise each morning to meet the day
And shower and shave and comb and press
Also...to bathe ourselves in a moment of silence before Thee.
Help us as we pause to be fed each morning—noon—night
Also...to ask to be fed by grace
Help us, when night has fallen, and we cover ourselves in the warmth and comfort
of bed clothes
Also...to cover ourselves in a simple remembrance of thy love
Teach us that weeping may tarry for the night
But joy comes with the morning
Teach us that we too can sing some songs in the night*

*Eternal, Mysterious, Holy God
In these moments of quiet and in this place of sanctuary
We praise you
Our bodies praise you*

*Standing, bowing, kneeling, still
Our voices praise you
In song and word
Our minds praise you
In thought and questioning
Our spirits praise you because we gather together
Laying our relationships before you
We confess our sin
We have spoken ill of our neighbor
We have misused our freedom
We have doubted in unfaithful ways
We have kept silence from cowardice
We have tuned out the cries of the truly needy
We have settled for slipshod judgments
We have been overgrown by the cares of this world
Forgive us we pray
Gird us up we pray
Ennoble our minds and set us on paths of truth and peace
Lift us up we pray
Inspire our hearts for a time that we might learn again the joy of giving
Hold us up we pray
To be authentic witnesses that others can trust and understand
Hold us together we pray
Give us keen feeling for the hurt of another
Eager longing to help another
Wise judgment to avoid harming another
This day, this week, this season.*

*Heavenly Father
This Easter morning
As we stand illumined and warmed by the resurrection light
We pray thy blessing upon thy people
Bless us with a desire to walk always with thee
Hand in hand, day by day
Bless us with an unquenchable outrage at the injustice in this world
Empower us to find strong, honest ways of helping to alleviate that injustice
In our roles as citizens, family members, disciples of Jesus Christ*

*Bless us with the courage to give away what we do not need
And to seed the connection between our prosperity and another's degradation
Bless us with a single purpose in life: to love Thee
So that our many little loyalties do not crowd out our one great loyalty
To the truth that alone sets us free
In Christ's name we pray, saying...*

*Heavenly Father
We confess our sin before Thee
We confess our misuse of privilege and possessions and positions
We have used what we should love and
We have loved what we should use
We have used people
We have loved machines
We have neglected thy Word for us as it is found in the Bible
We have not pursued peace with all our might
Forgive us we pray
Through Jesus Christ our Lord
Amen*

*For our neighbor in need
For our future
For our church
For peace in our time
For grateful hearts
For a willingness to risk
For cleansing*

*Give us the lessons of salvation
To begin to float in faith
To test intermediate strokes
To achieve the rank of swimmer
To be life savers of and for others*

*Dear God
With praise for your power
With thanks for your love*

*With reverence before the mysterious grace
In which we are held
We kneel before Thee
Fall upon our disordered lives we pray
Banish our tolerance of injustice
Banish our tolerance of indifference
Banish our undisciplined anxiety
Banish our fear
Banish our sin
We confess that we have been foolish, faithless, heartless, ruthless
Forgive us we pray
Raise us again to a disciplined life
We remember before Thee the stark and horrible defects of this life
Innocent victims
Helpless neighbors
Accidents
The savage effects of illness, war and loneliness
Heal and restore, according to your will*

*Heavenly Father
Whatever is true
Whatever is honorable
Whatever is just
Whatever is pure
Whatever is lovely
Whatever is gracious
Whatever is excellent
Whatever is praiseworthy
Whatever is peace-worthy
Center our minds on these things
So, we might know thy peace
Renew us dear God in the Spirit of our minds*

*Almighty God
Lord of life and death
Free us we pray from the things we wrongly fear
Free us from superstition*

*Free us from an unfaithful dread of death
Free us from worry over the past
We know that we cannot free ourselves
Thou must save and Thou alone
Make us courageous people we pray
Free us from every destructive impulse
Free us from greed and sloth
Free us from envying our brother
Free us from overindulging
Free us from fear of the future
Free us to serve Thee
In Jesus name
Amen*

*I invite you to seek the truth
In our speaking and listening this morning
We gather together to give thanks
To hear the Word of God
To remember that in this life we live before God
God is Spirit
They that worship Him must worship in spirit and in truth*

*Dear God
Before your watchful gaze we stop today
Within earshot of your attentive care we bow down to worship
Adorned in youth
Adorned in maturity
Adorned with knowledge
Adorned with faith
Adorned with wealth
Adorned with struggle
Adorned with piety
Adorned with effort
Adorned with commitment
Before you we bow down today
We are naked before you
Forgive us we pray*

*Will your spirit stop our mouths, quicken our minds, tickle our eardrums?
Will we wonder, cry, pray, hope, doubt, worry, attentive to your Spirit this week?*

Help us listen for you we pray

To listen for You as we reckon with bitter and sweet memories

To listen for you as we look backward upon wrong choices

To listen as we ponder tests yet to come

To listen as we await the end of our days

To listen as we risk and work for a new and better tomorrow

Will we listen this week?

Everlasting and Gracious God our Father

We praise thy name this day

We sing thanksgiving for many blessings

We shout for joy at the remembrance of Thee

We jump and dance and celebrate thy goodness

Lord, help the struggling hearts here present

Lord, free us from fear of the future

Lord, when Satan afflicts us and we are hurt

Save us from bitterness

Lord, keep us from the Evil One

Keep our children safe, safe as can be

Lord we stand in dire need of Thee every hour

But in thy light and love we begin to see

Lord grace those who are changing their lives

So that the changes will be good ones

Lord care for our wills so that we may learn

To be hard where we should be hard

And soft where we should be soft

And not the other way around

Give us insight to see the frailty and the worth of thy church

And to give our hearts, souls, minds and strengths to its upbuilding

Help us to get up and try again

Through Jesus Christ our Lord

Amen

Almighty God

Hidden from us. Merciful to us. Judge over us.

*Give us grace, we ask, to attend upon the voice of truth which calls to us
We hear of the deaths of 1,000,000 Arabs in Persia this past year: it is more than
rumor of war. We pause and are frightened.*

Call us again to faith, to service, to strive for peace.

We hear of misjudgment and bad faith and pride in high places.

But what one of us practices no cover up?

Call us again to an ability to admit that we are more human than anything else

Call us first to appreciate the good and then only to judge the bad in others

We hear from the words of Scripture of a promise of heaven and a threat of hell

In our dreams, in the late-night hours, in the loneliness that the cage of our life

can cause, we overhear the rumbling sentences of they love

And if we are honest and alert, then we are afraid

Call us to thyself, that where Thou art, we might be also

Father

Today we pray, urgently, for deliverance from evil

About us rancor abounds

This season of holidays

And of lights

Surprises us with

Unexpected emotions

One is anger

Another is vengeance

A third is hatred

Another is remorse

Amid the turkey and the dressing

Tinsel and holly

There is seething rancor

Deliver us from the evil of family life

We pray

Gracious God

Holy, Loving, source of light and truth, goodness and beauty, honor and justice

We bow this day to lift our hearts in praise and thanksgiving

At this time we offer thanks for the excitement of discovery and the courage of

explorers

For those who have charted new lands

*For those who have found cures
For those who have produced awesome new energies
For those who have had the courage to think with minds transformed by grace
For all in whose work we have glimpsed again thine image, we sing thy praise
O Lord we lament too that amid exploration and discovery we have made idols of
our own works*

*We have gloried in our own power to make and to destroy
We have celebrated our own hazy goodness
We have mistaken creature and creation for Creator
We have been too impressed by human progress and too little impressed by divine
judgment*

*O Lord we earnestly pray, deliver us from the evil we have forged in our time, with
our hands, in our power, by our own hazy goodness
From the threat of thermonuclear holocaust
From the threat of technological imprisonment
From the threat of environmental collapse
From the threat of comfort induced amnesia
And turn us again, repentant, back upon the pure light of thy mercy*

*Heavenly Father
Hear our prayer for those in need today
For the hungry and the war torn
For those facing difficult choices
For families grieving in the hour of death
For newlyweds now walking a new path
For travelers
For the ill*

*Heavenly Father!
This is a rich land we inhabit
Its skies are filled with the birds of the air
Its waters teem with fish
Its forests and fields bring forth abundance and shelter much life
If in our praying we could make it so
We would want to become ourselves
--To thy glory—
As rich as this land
Rich in self-giving*

*Rich in fullness of faith
Rich in joy
Rich in a capacity for wonder
Heavenly Father
Turn us toward Thee in this hour*

*Heavenly Father!
Come and rule in our hearts this day!
We come here to worship Thee and to wonder what Thou would have us*

Do

Think

Say

Be

We gather

Some with burning questions

Some with painful choices before us

Some with illness close at hand

Some captured by fear:

Fear of death

Fear of life

Fear of not making it

Fear brought on by boredom and loneliness

Set us free to serve Thee, and to have done with lesser things!

Great unknown of suffering

Make us sensitive, not to trample

Only one art, telling the truth

Imaginative

Give us strength to give up what must be given up before we may 'come home'

May thy love be shed abroad in our hearts for all the world to see

But for the grace of God

We would not be

But for the grace of God

We could not love

But for the grace of God

We should not speak

But by thy grace

*We live and love and speak
By this grace we are saved
Alleluia*

*O Lord
Our Lord*

*How majestic is thy name in all the earth!
Open our ears to hear your voice
In the rush of great waters
We overhear your call
In the clash of thunder
We overhear your justice
In the bustle of the city
We overhear your voice
In the quiet of the evening
We overhear your mercy*

*O Lord
Quicken our devotion to Christ!
Enliven our attention to Thee!
Embolden our service to others!*

*Gracious God our Heavenly Father
By whose providential will
The nations of the earth are guided
Today we thank Thee for blessings
Past, and present and future
How blest we have been in days past
With wise and careful leaders
Who, like Joseph in Egypt,
Have kept us from famine and distress
How blest we are today
With leaders who help us to struggle
Like Jacob on the river Jabbok
To meet human need and divine command
How greatly we implore thy blessing
For days to come!
Give us leaders who*

Like Jeremiah

*Challenge us to commit ourselves
To the common good
Guide our peoples we pray
With malice toward none
That with charity for all
With firmness in the right
As Thou dost give us to see the right
We may pursue the cause of liberty
Ever prizing that freedom
For which Christ has set us free*

Eternal Spirit

*Rest we pray upon the souls here gathered
Our birth and our growth, our decay and our death
Lie beneath the gusts of your movement
We are aware of our ultimate and absolute dependence
Hear our prayer for the penultimate needs of the world
Some there are who struggle to breath the very breath of life
Quicken them we pray
Some there are who gasp to take in the oxygen of liberty
Suffocating as they are in broken relationship, in imprisonment, in slavery, in exile
Some there are who lack even a touch of the Spirit of eternity
Who are material agents, in a material world
Make us all rather agents of your love and destiny
Some there are who choke on the misdeeds of others
Grant them recovery we pray
Hear our prayers for the penultimate needs of this life:
May we live as if surrounded by buoyed by swept along by
Your Spirit
In Christ's name*

Father

*We are thankful today
For the inspiration we feel here
Here we are reminded of our faithful fathers and mothers
Here we recall the days of our youth*

*When with keener minds and purer hearts we sang thy praise
Here we get recharged by sharing the hand
And feeling the closeness of our brothers in Christ
Here we see the cross
Father
We open our hearts to Thee
One comes to worship
In physical discomfort and the torment of the flesh
Another comes to worship
Tired from a week of much motion and little progress
Another comes wondering
If Thou art with us at all
Another comes
With a difficult decision looming
Another comes frightened
For he has seen, spoken and done evil
Another comes needing
To make a decision for Christ
Pour out thy spirit upon us!
Forgive us and makes us know we are forgiven
And help us to forgive others.
Amen*

*Heavenly Father
Who can stand in your presence?
Which one of us is fit for your everlasting love?
In the searching, searing light of your Care we dare to present ourselves this
morning
How shall we deny your illumination of the darkened rooms in our sould?
We are dependent upon your forgiveness, love, guidance, help
Without you we are helpless, like sheep without a shepherd
Tend to our waywardness we pray
Today we pray for those of your flock in this land who are graduating from school,
from college, from one living to another. In their hearts and hands lie some of the
destiny of this world. In their hour of triumph give them the sources of future love.
Give them gratitude. Give them compunction. Make them grateful to have been
spared the physical misery of hunger, of war, of homelessness, of the crushing*

effects of poverty. Make them aware, too, we pray, of the contribution which each personal selfishness makes to the ongoing horror of this world. May they have the courage as well as the intellect, the moral accountability as well as the bank accounts, a desire to please God as well as a desire to please parent, spouse, and self. We pray for another generation of graduates, in cap and gown, pushed forward on the relentless wave of time, into an earthly tomorrow, but toward a heavenly home.

And may the love in this congregation also catch fire from the smoldering gratitude and compunction left for us in the cross of Christ.

Dear Lord

*Accept our offering, of praise and thanksgiving, this day
We gather as a congregation of thy people
In our weakness, and in our strength, we pause before Thee
Father, you have cursed our blindness and we have not seen
You have decried our passivity and pacifism and we have not struggled
You have judged our deafness and still we do not hear
Give us grace to turn around and stop our pollution
Make us graceful to watch for thy love
Lord hear our prayer
Make us graceful to fight for thy love
Lord hear our prayer
Make us graceful to pray for thy love
Lord hear our prayer
For without Thee we are fouler than anything
And worse than nothing
Save us from our sin we pray*

Heavenly Father

Gracious God

Our creator, our redeemer, our preserver

May we draw nearer to Thee

This evening

In our thoughts

In our speaking

In our listening

May we see Thee in things that please and refresh us

May we hear Thee behind and beyond things that perplex us

May we draw nearer to Thee

This evening

With thanks for

Nourishment

Fellowship

Relaxation

We pray thy blessing our time together

Forgives us all our sins, for Christ's sake

Amen

Heavenly Father

What thanks we give Thee for the gift of another day

The chance to live faithfully, to be thy children

And to purge ourselves of impatience, of jealousy, and doubt

And what anger we still harbor against our neighbor and against Thee

We struggle with the lower nature

We ask for willpower to cast off the tempting advice of the flesh

We have begun with the spirit, we would not end with the flesh

We look for peace of mind, Lord

And sometimes we don't find it

Past tragedy haunts us like a ghost

Help us to know that the past is forgiven!

We look for peace in our heart of hearts

Grant us such peace

We pray that the fragile peace of this world will be maintained

Before Thee we remember the trouble in the South Atlantic

And the Middle East and behind the Iron Curtain

Give us strong, wise, compassionate and humble leaders

Who will keep a just and lasting peace

We pray for our brothers and sisters in Quebec, French and English

That they might find a fair compromise

With all the saints alive and dead, and in heaven and on earth

We pray in thy name O Lord

Amen

Father!

*We have called out to You
We have watched our children grow and become adults
We have worried and hoped and cried and laughed
Over what they did and did not do
We have been angry
Still we are puzzled by some things
Still we are not sure of some things
Still we worry about our children
Your love has dawned in our hearts
We see a little better in the light of the cross
The light of Jesus Raised shining out from the dark cross
We see a little better
We want our children to be happy
But more we want them to know Thee
To know thy care
To know thy demand for resolute living
Thy demand for obedience
We want them to have a calling in life
We want them to have direction
To have work
And to follow their fellow men and Thee
Pull us free from our vices
Even the ones we most enjoy!
Mostly we would pass on to our young what we believe
We know whom we can trust
Father!*

*Psalm 100
Eternal God
Shrouded in Mercy
We invoke your blessing this evening
Before you we lay our common project, the work of this Boy Scout Council
We pray for guidance for its leaders, your care for its supporters, your providence
for its future
Father especially we pray for our young men
Give them brave hearts for the hard choices ahead*

*Give them reverent hearts so that as they grow in stature they may also grow in
the knowledge and love of Thee*

Tonight, we are anxious for the well-being of our nation and our countrymen

We pray for our leaders

Give them the wisdom and patience that these difficult days require

O Lord as we break bread together

May our fellowship and our conversation be acceptable in thy sight

O Thou who are our rock and our redeemer

Amen

(Syracuse, Carrier Dome, Boy Power Dinner, 4/15/86, Howard Cosell, speaker)

Lord

Speak to us we pray

Speak in a voice clear and strong

To remind us through our willful deafness

Of thy love, thy will, thy judgment

Speak in somber tones

To brace us against all that makes life cheap and shallow and hateful

Speak in winsome soft sounds

To bear us up when we are weak

Speak in silence

Speak thy peace

Speak to us of thy salvation

Speak in shouts and a cry of command

To call us to obedience and belief

Lord!

Speak to us we pray!

Through Christ our Lord

Amen

Good morning

In this hour we are asked

To think about the will of God

In this hour we are invited

To remember God's care for his creation

In this hour we are lifted up

By the power of the spirit of God in our midst!

Heavenly Father

*We remember the crucifixion of thy anointed One
And we gladly gather celebrating his resurrection*

Praying that:

*This raising of Jesus will truly mean for us
Forgiveness of what is past
Even that we might forgive ourselves
And so, lighten our daily burden*

Praying that:

*This raising of Jesus will truly mean for us
Acceptance of what is present
For we fear the anxious spirit
That forever belittles what is present
In favor of what has gone by or what is to come
Help us to accept what the present has to offer us*

Praying that:

*This raising of Jesus will truly mean for us
That the future is open, thine
Made in the image of thy Son
Beyond death Thou art guiding us
In this life Thou art guiding us
May Jesus' resurrection mean for us
A forgiven past
An accepted present
An open future
In Christ's name
Amen*

*This is a time of meditation
It is a time to measure the past
To recall past goodness
It is a time to ponder the future
To estimate the distance and the drama ahead
It is an hour and a moment of refreshment
The light shines in the darkness
For I am sure that neither life, nor death*

*Nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present
Nor things to come
Nor powers, nor height
Nor depth, nor anything else in all creation
Will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord
(Romans 8:38)
This is a time of meditation*

*For the need of our world
That it may be filled by thy grace
And by human obedience
Lord hear our prayer
For peace
Lord hear our prayer
For patience among rich and poor
Lord hear our prayer
For wisdom
Lord hear our prayer
For giving
Lord hear our prayer
For healing: body, mind, spirit
Lord hear our prayer
For courage
Lord hear our prayer
For prosperity
Lord hear our prayer
For fellow feeling and community love
Lord hear our prayer
For young learning
Lord hear our prayer
For the lonely
Lord hear our prayer*

*Heavenly Father
We wait upon Thee in this hour
Seeing ourselves
And our world in a new light*

*A Christmas light, a light of different force and direction
One that measures us against the birth
Of a poor child in a dark cave in a foreign land
We pray for what we need
Yet knowing that Thou knowest our every thought
Even before it is formed on our lips into words
Give us the vision of Joseph
Who, by the help of an angel,
Saw more than mere betrayal and shame in Mary's condition
But in it sensed thy will
And so did not fear to take a wife, already pregnant
Did not fear
But trusted in thy presence and purpose
We lack a vision of how to live together on this earth
In trust and not fear
Help us to see beyond the balance of power
Beyond the glorification of achievement
Beyond the wisdom of men and nations
Which is pure folly
To a vision of life together
On earth as it is already in heaven
We need the vision of Joseph
Give us the constancy of Mary
Who knew Thee not in the sphere of success
But upon the field of failure and low estate
Who bore Thee, in the foulness of a manger
And there saw the exaltation of the poor, those of low degree
Mary had the power to see things through
This we lack
For we want immediate, visible, tangible proof
Of thy ways and purpose
And immediate return on our investment in Thee
(So we say)
We haven't the patience to be with Thee in the manger
Remind us that haste is always of the devil
And put some steel in our spines
And give us the patience and long-suffering of the mother of God*

*We need the constancy of Mary
We need again to hope in Jesus
For we have wandered off, hoping in so many othe things
Placing our trust, like gamblers on a roulette wheel
On things that do not pay off
Confiding in the ruler of this world
The prince of darkness
Who proffers us comfort but not security
Who tempts us to exchange
Our greatest hopes and dreams for poverty of spirit
We need again to hope in Jesus, and not in our own prowess
This Christmas
We ask for vision, constancy, and hope
Amen*

*O Lord, Our Lord
How majestic is thy name, in all the earth
Hear our prayers as we lay them before Thee
For in our hands no price we bring; simply to the cross we cling
For order and purpose in a world of turmoil
The cacophonous chaos of our days
Lord, hear our prayer
For moments to rest
To lie down angry and tired and disheartened
But to rise up again walking with Thee
Lord, hear our prayer
For protection when others act like wolves and we feel sheepish
And for restraint when history makes us into wolves and we are hungry
Lord, hear our prayer
For the courage to face (and trust) what most frightens us
Be it new life, death at hand, our work, even Thee
Lord, hear our prayer
For the grace to forgive ourselves, following your example
Lord, hear our prayer
For the gift of mirth that keeps us sober
Lord, hear our prayer*

O God
We thank you for Christmas Time
And for all that it means to us
We thank You that when Jesus came into this world, he came into a humble home
We thank you that he had to grow up and to learn like any other boy
We thank You that he did a good day's work as a carpenter in a village shop in
Nazareth
We thank you that he was tempted and tired, and hungry and sad, just as we are
We thank You that he was one with us in all things, sharing our life with its
struggles and toils, its sorrows and joys
We thank you for the service of his life, the love in his death, and the power of his
resurrection
Grant O God that when he comes to us he may find room in our hearts for him
For your love's sake
Amen

In hours of quiet
In wintertime
We turn again upon you
Almighty and Everlasting spirit of forgiveness
In hours of quiet
We remember what we need
In quiet hours, we await deliverance at hand
Change our gloom to gaiety!
Shame us for our listless boredom and excite us about life and love!
Break the shackles of fear (why do we fear such little things?)
And set us free to hope again
In hours of quiet
In the winter
While nature pauses and kneels to pray and remember Thee
While the field lies fallow
While the river lies quiet in ice
While the air hangs cold and crystal and clean with winter
While all nature pauses to pray
May we too have courage
To listen
To lie fallow

*To lie quiet in ice
To hear Thee
Restore us!
Fit us again for spiritual combat!
Place us again on the battle line!
Draft us into the army of forgiveness!*

*Dear Sister God
You held me at my birth
You sang my name, were glad to see my face
You are my sky, my shining sun
And in your love, there is always room
To be and grow yet find a home
A settled place*

*O Lord Our Lord
How majestic is thy name in all the earth
The splendor of your creation resounds all about this day
Teeming color, raucous sound, thrills of taste and touch
The glory of this new day
How majestic is thy name O Lord
Before you we lay the burden of the past week
Before your gaze we unpack the satchel of our days past
This week: its achievements, its sacrifices, its humor, its deadness, its worry, its
work, its height and breadth and depth
We lay it all before You
It is our hope to be in love with our brother and our neighbor
We sit here today hoping that within these walls and
Among these souls we will find our salvation
Teach us to live for one another we pray
We have neglected thy word and ordinances and now in this season we turn again
to you
Jesus Christ has claimed us as his own
We are trying to live with that truth
Defend us we pray*

Our heavenly Father

*How happy we are to be in your presence this holy day
This place is a sanctuary for us
These brothers and sisters in the faith are our real family
This time of quiet and thought, confession and pardon
Helps us with our life before Thee
It is good to be here
Our hearts are full today
This world is very much with us
Concern for captors and captives around the globe
Concern for the leaders of nations
Concern for the great city of Syracuse in this election time
Concern for our University, its Chapel, and the gospel ministry it is meant to
promote
Concern for those who once were two and now are one
Who walk alone, that is, alone with you
Concern for those who mourn
Those whom you promise to comfort
Concern for the lost and troubled in our neighborhood
Concern for the young woman somewhere nearby who has left her newborn on
the doorstep of our parish
Concern for those who like Lot's wife cannot resist the temptation to dwell upon
the past
Concern for these days of September and our calling in this time
Our hearts are full today
Many are our concerns
Are they Your concerns as well?*

Luke 10:25-37

Heavenly Father!

*How thankful are we for life and breath and sense to speak of Thee
We have no ability for Christian life, except what Thou givest us when through thy
spirit Thou touchest us
We gather here and now to be reminded that
In the hardest spots we are asked to witness to Christ
When we are angry—and have good cause to be
May we live Christ
When we are tired—and rest seems a ways off*

*May we live Christ
When the body hungers—after what does not nourish
May we live Christ
When we are green with envy—and there is no help for it
May we live Christ
When our buttons pop with pride—and we are justly proud
May we live Christ
When the joys and comforts of this world consume us
May we live Christ
We gather to be reminded that our neighbors lie bleeding on the roadside, and we
can help
Heavenly Father!
Help us to live as Christians this week*

*God of peace
Grant us peace as thy power for honest love
We have isolated ourselves from that peace
In hour of rancor and days of worry and nights of foreboding
We have closed our ears to thy command of peace
Still: Thou are our refuge and our strength
Our fortitude and our hiding place
Our reason for rising in the morning
The closing off of the blackness of the past
The cleansing of our warlike ways
Grant us peace we pray
Peace in our hearts as we start another day
Peace for sharing with those we meet
Peace in our work
Peace down deep to help us take on
Tough tasks, anxious people, uncertain hours
Peace through the time of sickness and of trial
God of peace: grant us thy peace as a power for honest love*

*Heavenly Father
Our hearts sing to Thee this day
Amid all the craziness of our earthly days
In the midst of walls to paint and cars to repair*

*And dishes to do and children to raise
And parents to care for and trips to take
And meetings to attend and diaper to change
And medicine to give and medicine to take
And taxes to pay and promises to keep
In the midst of our broken, hectic, lonely and confusing days
Our hearts sing to Thee
O Lord how majestic is thy name in all the earth
We pray that the crisis of our times
Will usher in a time of peace for our children
A time of patience and forgiveness
A time of cooperation
A time of forbearance and self-control
A time when a man will lay down his life for his friends
A time of peace*

Eternal God

*Give us pause we pray at the utterance of thy name!
O Thou who art as close as our next breath
And yet as far from us
As the morning and the evening stars
To Thee we raise our voices and lift our hearts
Before Thee we lay down our burdens of guilt and hate and fear and distrust
And they are heavy burdens
Will you teach us again to take upon yourselves the yoke which is easy and the
burden which is light?
Will you make of us a joyful people?
Will you make of us a happy people?
Will you make of us a prayerful people?
We pray for those of our company who struggle with the darkness of life
For one the path ahead has become impassable and another road must be sought
Teach us thy presence
For another the solitary journey becomes less like solitude and more like loneliness
Teach us thy presence
For another the frightful acrimony of family conflict overwhelms and destroys
Teach us thy peace*

*For another the need to succeed at any price warps mind and heart
Teach us thy peace
For another the weakness of the flesh, its frailty, its decay, its tyranny produces
madness
Teach us thy patience
For another the shadows along the valley of death lengthen
Teach us thy patience
Amen*

*Father
Help us to confess our awkwardness, waywardness, selfishness, and sin before
Thee*

*While the word of the world is therapy, let our word be forgiveness
While the word of the world is analysis, let our word be pardon
Help us to confess our sin
Help us to face our past
Wash us today we pray
Send over us the rush of mighty waters
Send over us the cold pure water of thy love
Send over us the dew and moisture of thy lavish grace
That we might confess
That we might have the courage to confess
That we might have the courage and insight to confess our sin
Prepare us to meet the truth of thy word in all its rigor, harshness, wonder and
power
Prepare us for thy presence we pray
We confess our sin
Through Jesus Christ our Lord
Amen*

*Father
We pray
Be with the sick, the tired, the lost, the crippled
Be with the hungry and the homeless
Be with the spenders and the spent
Be with the troubled and those of restless heart
Give them the courage again to take up their struggle refreshed*

*Be with the healthy
That they might know of and pity and relieve the ick
Be with the strong
That they might offer their strength to the weak
Be with the well fed
That they might share their bounty with the undernourished
Be with those of our church and community
Now hospitalized, shut in, cut off from the natural flow of life
Be especially with those persons
Whom we each name in our hearts
As needy of your presence and peace
In Christ's name we pray*

*Most Gracious Heavenly Father
Who has safely brought us to the beginning of this day
Defend us this day by thy power
Grant that we fall into no sin, nor run into any danger
And that all our doings may be ordered by thy governance
To do always that which is acceptable in thy sight
Through Jesus Christ our Lord
Amen*

*Heavenly Father!
Thou hast caused us to hear the good news of saving grace
Brought to us on the cross and by the empty tomb
And we stand in awe and perplexity, and wonder and disbelief
Before a love that shatters even the barrier of death
How can these things be and how can we be worthy of them?
We have sinned
We have thought ourselves to be the center of the universe
We have scoffed at our utter need of Thee
We have treated our neighbor and even our loved ones with callousness
We are unfit for heaven and we are making the earth unfit as well
Heavenly Father!!
What wondrous love is this that speaks to us from the cross?
Grant us grace to live in an abiding memory of they care
So we will be ever ready to care for those about us*

*Make us mindful we pray of those who suffer
Those who are physically ill
Those who are mentally tormented
Those who are hopelessly poor
Those who have lost loved ones
Those who are caught in the guilt of sin
Make us mindful of their suffering
So that we may take from them the bitterest sting of suffering
The fear that it will have to be endured in loneliness
Lord, suffering we can bear, if we are part of a fellowship of fellow sufferers
It is suffering in loneliness that becomes unbearable
Give us grace to take away the sting of suffering from those who suffer
In these brilliant autumn days
We stand aghast before the wonder of thy creation
And murmur once again, 'How Great Thou Art'
May that greatness keep us humble
Through Jesus Christ our Lord
Amen*

*Heavenly Father
We give thanks for this meal
For the strength it gives our bodies
Teach us always to remember with thanksgiving
Our dependence upon nature, on our fellow humans and on Thee
So, we pray in the name of Jesus of Nazareth
Whose courage and compassion are our unfailing inspiration*

*Maundy Thursday
O Lord
Amid the changes of this season and of our common life we bow before Thee
We believe that heaven and earth are full of your glory
Yet our prayers are not frequent or spirited or confident, always,
As they should be
Is it our pride of heart?
Is it our poverty of imagination?
Is it our neglect of discipline?
Is it our concern for the treasures of this world?*

*Lord, teach us to pray as the Apostle would have us do
To pray without ceasing
On this evening when we recall betrayal and suffering
Lord teach us we ask a lively sympathy for others
Tonight we pray for those of our number, part of our communion, who are laden
with burdens of the flesh
We pray for Robert, Stella, Rhoda, Harriet, Ida, Florence, Julia, Lena, Beulah,
Ernestine, Marion, Gerald, Lewis, Lenore, Ken, Emma, Gladys, Louise, Ruth, Vera,
Laura, and so many others whom we name in our hearts...
Already we trust art Thou present to bring peace
Though not as the world gives
In prayer and through sympathy teach us obedience we pray
Through Christ our Lord
Amen*

*Father
Inspire in us again the desire to live only for Thee
To strive only for thy kingdom
To worry only over the things that matter to Thee
To forget our foolish and selfish ways
To love Thee and our neighbor and to love Thee by loving our neighbor
Father
Free us from fears that our job is not important enough
Our country not pure enough
Remind us that any work is great when greatly pursued
That any home is rich enough and surpassing
Where love and joy and peace are found
That true religion is simple and simply of the heart
And in heartfelt service to others
And that a country is and can stand only as it collectively seeks thy will
Father
Put our minds on the future
Help us to think of heaven and of heaven on earth
Give us great-hearted people in our land who are willing to dream
Of a time when selfishness and greed and hunger and need have disappeared
And that the earth may be full of the glory of heaven
As the waters cover the sea*

*Put our minds on the other future too
Force us to have sure hope of heaven
Help us to live each moment
In the conviction that we are to dwell in the resurrection with Thee
Help us to think of being raised from the dead
Help us to believe in Jesus Christ who is the resurrection and the life
Father*

*Into thy hands we commit the care of our loved ones who are ill
Heal them! Comfort them! Give them faith and courage!
Spare them unnecessary suffering!*

*Father
Forgive us our sins
Through Jesus Christ our Lord
By whom and with whom in the unity of the Holy Spirit all glory and honor be unto
Thee
Amen*

*Father
We are cut off from our neighbors
From our own best selves and from Thee
We walk alone
We ache to have someone truly know us, enjoy us
And as we are cut off
Then a lot of what we say and do is distorted
We say what we do not mean
We do what we know is hurtful
Our anger spills over
And we disgrace ourselves and harm our friends
We feel alone
And so, we despair
We feel alone
And so, we become aggressive
We feel alone
And so, we forget what it is to be happy
We feel alone
And so, we want to control and intimidate others
Gracious God!*

Heal us we pray!

Heavenly Father

With the sounds of this past week

Still ringing in our ears

We pause before Thee

With the dust of the week still clinging to our feet

We pause before Thee

With the memory of this past week

Still fresh in our mind

We pause before Thee

Lord, hear our prayer

All that has been between this sabbath and the last

We offer to You

The discoveries

The taste of new food

The handshake of a new friend

The losses: of neighbors familiar and unfamiliar

The surprises: the startling return of an old acquaintance

The unexpected news of victory or defeat

The births and beginnings and baptisms

The decisions and delays and deaths

All that has been

We give to you

We lay before you

We offer to you

O Eternal, Holy Spirit

Lord who restores us

In you we do not long for the wrong things

For you mock us when we do

You force us to stop and rest

When we would rather lay ourselves waste with striving

You take us by the hand alongside still waters

There we see our own reflection in the pool

We lean over the lake

And peer at our own image

*My!
What a sight
Lord who restores us
You do not desert us, nor do you leave us
To be devoured by our own presence, alone
You drag us along
Prodding us to live worthy lives
For your name's sake
Lord who restores us
We trust you in dark corners
Not because we feel confident
Heaven know how we fear and fear and fear
Nor because we deserve your comfort
We are undeserving—much as this appalls us
We trust only because we take you 'at your word'
Lord who restores us
We scent the aroma of a great banquet
Prepared for those who hunger and wait
And we are quieted
And we are quieted
And we are quieted
And we are touched
And we are...restored
Christ is risen!
He is risen indeed
Surely goodness and mercy
Shall follow us all the days of our common life
And we shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever*

Living God

*Our: Father, Guide, Judge, King, Maker, Hope, Eternal Rest
We give Thee thanks that thou hast placed this world under attack
That Thou hast invaded it in the person of thy Son
Our Lord Jesus Christ
To Whom we turn in our hour of prayer and praise
Awaiting news of his kingdom
What news have you for us Lord?*

*What news of thy kingdom?
What is the report?
Where and how shall we await the coming of thy kingdom?
Where and how can we be of service to Thee?
Teach us Lord, for we are unworthy servants
To one thing constant never:
Undisciplined, uninspired, ungrateful, unkempt, unhappy, undecided
Where and how shall we serve thy kingdom as Thou putest our world under
attack?
Help us to put away all shameful acts*

*Lord help us to trust you
When we face the unknown that always frightens us
When we recall with regret a time gone by
When we are tired
When we are tempted to put a lesser loyalty before our faith
Lord help us to look to you and not just at other men, princes though they be
We look about us with concern
And see many of our brothers and sisters who are out of work
And who live with the great sorrows that unemployment brings
And yet there seems so little that we can do
We pray for enough prosperity so that even the poorest
Will have shelter and food and clothing and heat
And some hope for the future
Some of our young people have gone on to college
And to the military and to work away from home
Now we are missing them and praying that they will do us proud
And that they will find ways to serve Thee with gladness
Instill in us thy spirit we pray
Fill us with love and joy and peace and patience and kindness and goodness and
faithfulness and gentleness and self-control
Amen*

*Almighty and Everlasting God
Our Creator, Redeemer, and Sustainer
Who by thy love has made us and through thy love has kept us
And in thy love would make us perfect*

*Lord, we find it troubling and hard to be grateful
Our waywardness and our pride forever obscure and confuse our place before
Thee*

*We find it hard to be truly grateful
For to do so we must give up many of our claims to fame
No longer can we say, 'Look what I have done'
No longer dare we mutter, 'Lord you could have done better'
No longer can we boast, 'See what I have accomplished'
No longer can we cheer, 'This we have done well'*

*We find it truly hard to be grateful
For to do so we must remind ourselves that we are creatures
Sheep in another's pasture, dependent on Thee in life and death
We have what Thou givest
We are what Thou makest
We do what Thou woul permit
Hard as it is for us to remember, we are thy people and the sheep of thy pasture
Thy life is within our souls but our selfishness hath hindered Thee
Gracious God*

*Give us words and thoughts with which to offer Thee thanks
For the abundance of gifts of creation
Which the harvest shows us, we thank Thee, Lord
Much if not all has been safely gathered in
Almost before the winter storms began
You do provide for our wants to be supplied
For harvest of grain and corn and for produce of milk
For harvest in the great manufacture of our blessed land
Rich in things if not always so in soul
For harvest of financial security for those who enjoy it
And with earnest prayers that the many who do not will soon be safe from want
We give Thee highest thanks and praise and raise a joyful song of harvest home
Heavenly Father*

*This harvest before our eyes recalls yet another harvest
We sense about us a hidden harvest of the spirit
Which this hidden harvest bears
We thank Thee Lord
For loving communities that care for their young and old and sick
For joyful men who preserve the frolic of youth into adulthood*

*For men and women of peace
Who warn us of the consequences of fear and isolation
For patient teachers
For kind employers
For good parents
For faithful churchmen
For gentle, gentle husbands and wives who show us how to be gentlemen and
women
For those who exercise self-control
For this great hidden harvest of fruit of the spirit
We give Thee thanks and praise, and raise the song of harvest home
Even so Lord quickly come
Raise the final harvest home
Lord of harvest grant that we wholesome grain and pure may be*

*We are draw up short
Lay before Thee
Aloneness
Dismay at the waste in human lives, our guilt that we don't do more with what we
have
Prayers of intercession
Drawn to Thee still
Turn us inside out
Service—that letter, call, book
Our trust in Thee
Lord, we tarry here a while but we are going home*

*In this hour we stand before a God
Who has lifted up many generations and
Has seen them pass away
We come before a God
Whose love has already seized
The generations to come
We give thanks for our place in
The march of generations
So, let the sea roar, and all that fills it
The world and those who dwell therein*

*Let the floods clap their hands
Let the hills sing for joy together
Before the Lord, for he comes to judge the earth
He will judge the world with righteousness and peoples with equity (Ps 98)*

Give us grace

Dear Lord

To allow those about us to be free

Have we conquered this land

Only to forget

That

For freedom Christ has set us free?

Some about

Allow us freedom

How great they are!

Some of our neighbors will permit us to boe

What we will be

Without trying to

Control us

For freedom Christ has set us free

Let us not then return to slavery

Keep us from enslaving others

Let us live and let live

Free to be as Thou would lead us

Gracious God Our Maker

Holy Lord Our Helper amid troubles

O Thou Mystery, Hidden Power of Pardon

Together we pray for those thy children who are in need

For the elderly in Bosnia who have seen the work of a lifetime

Destroyed in months

And have watched the whole world look past their pain

For children in America today

For all who have seen evil and done wrong

For saints who grieve without complaint, lonely, hungering for one now gone

For young people disappointed

For ministers of your gospel

For one struggling to face the past and the future in faith

*For new ventures begun in hope
For hatchets buried, corners turned, dust shaken, leaves overturned
For our church
Its people, its ministry, its second mile giving, its worship life
For our friends
We pray
Amen*

*Heavenly Father
We cling to Thee in this hour
Help us we pray to lay ourselves before Thee
To know our lives in thy sight
To see our lives
The shortness of our lives
To remember that our times is the space of a few handbreadths
To remember our lives as thy gift to us
To hope that in our time we may come to a relationship
With Thee through thy Son Jesus Christ
Help us to remember that the gift Thou hast given us includes a task as well
That we are here not without purpose, not without work, not without a reason for
being
Rather that we are called to obedience
Here we need help
We miss the narrow way
We need to be led back
When we are on the way we find it difficult not to turn around
We find it easier to wall ourselves up, to shut ourselves off
We know that on the straight way we would have real communion
We find it easier not to grow
We prefer what is familiar even what is familiar hurts us*

*Dear God
With the pain and the glory of this past week trailing at our feet, we enter your
house to pray
By design or habit or fear or longing we have been carried to this place, and now
pause before Thee
God of life beyond death*

*God of forgiveness beyond sin
God who raises the dead and frees the prisoner
To Thee we lift our hearts
For reminders of your law we give thanks
For the harsh teaching of experience in which the law we break breaks us
We offer some thanks
No other God but Thee do we seek
No human art finally fills us
Help us not to pray in vain or to miss the chance for worship
Instruct us in how to love our neighbor we pray
To honor elders, to choose life, to be true, to be fair, to be honest, to be happy
O Lord into our homes this week the long shadow of absence and emptiness has
somehow stretched
We are shaken by the illness of friends, the mistakes of loved ones, hurt inflicted
and endured, plans gone awry, chances missed
All our sorrow we wrap up now and leave at your altar
Thank you dear God that by thy grace joy too has warmed our homes
Birth
Problems faced and solved
Reconciliation
Healing
New Life
All our joys too we commend to Thee
As spiritual offerings
Lord teach us to pray as we ought and need we do ask in Jesus' name
Amen*

*Almighty and Mysterious God
With many different thoughts and words
By many different actions
We hunger for you
Even when we claim to deny you
We want to know your will
We pray that as a people
We might find our way back to Thee
Will you help us to exchange our
National self-interest*

*For a glimpse of the justice of God
We pray that
One by one
We might learn to live
Not absent mindedly
Not driven by longings for pleasure
Not harried, on the run, fighting an everlasting rear-guard action
Not carried away by self-satisfaction
Or by lack of self-satisfaction
Not fearful, not fearful, not fearful
But faithfully
Striving to live in thy sight
Then shall we know Thee
Come unto us as the rain O God
To strengthen us
To give us good growth
To feed us
To fulfill the promise of our trust in Thee*

*Heavenly Father
In the speaking and hearing of thy name alone
We expect to find freedom, peace
Deliverance from the pettiness
That clouds our minds and warps our will and discourages us
We expect deliverance straightaway
From the infrastructure of material gods
With whom we and our children live
We give thanks for talented people
Near and far
Who give us through their ability
A hope that the massive problems which face us
Also have solutions
For scientists, engineers, builders, architects, planners and
All whom they direct
We give thanks
Out of the depths of our hearts
Do we cry to Thee Dear God*

*Hoping for a cleansing and redirection
And a sense of new life
In Jesus's name*

*Dear Lord and Father of mankind
Forgive our foolish ways
Cast out our sin
And enter in
Be born in us today
As the days grow shorter and nights longer
Help us not only to look
But to listen for Thee
Help us to hear, where our sight fades into darkness
Help us to hear the overtones of thy presence
Help us to listen for Thee
Some of us come to worship today
Truly looking and longing for Thee
We sense that alone we fall short
Dress us up in an assurance of thy care
Then our undue striving will stop
Our constant straining will cease
Our fear of our own real selves will melt before the word 'Thou art'
Will we make the journey to Bethlehem?
Will we be ready for Christmas?
In all our preparation
Will we notice the invasion of One
Who bids we be prepared for Him
Himself
And not only for his birthday
Help us to hear the overtones of thy presence among us
For those who are alone this morning and last night
In bars alone
Watching television alone
Eating in restaurants alone
Lying in beds of pain alone
Hungry alone
We ask thy blessing*

*Forgive our negligence
Bind us close to Thee
Then set us free, make us free
Amen*

*God of love and God of power
Our origin and our destination
Our help in time of trouble
Guide through struggle
The source of our best hope and highest dream
We give Thee thanks for this another day
For this further opportunity to know Thee
And even in this late hour to do thy will
Send thy speedy blessing on those who hunger and thirst for Thee
Almighty God
We pray that Thou wouldst interrupt our lives and thoughts
Causing us to gaze upward
To recognize our need of Thee
Heavenly Father, deny us when we lean toward selfishness
Eternal spirit, announce yourself, enter into our lives, change our patterns of
thinking and doing
Amen*

*Heavenly Father
Who alone art good
We lift up our hearts to Thee in this hour of praise and thanksgiving
We ask thy forgiveness
For our lack of charity
For our pride and self-indulgence
For our self-worship
For many words unfitly spoken
For deeds done in spite
For quarreling without purpose
For a predilection for easy tasks we can
See and measure and finish
When we are called to work at things more difficult
For a certain lack of trust*

*We ask forgiveness in the strong name of Jesus Christ
We pray thy healing
Upon our own families
Upon those whom we have met this week who of a sudden are ill
Upon those whose trouble is long standing
Upon certain ones whose need is a pressure
And cause for worry
Upon the very old and the very young
Who are closer than we to Thee
Upon some whom we name silently in our hearts before Thee
We pray thy healing
We seek thy reconciliation
Between neighbor and neighbor
Parent and child
Teacher and student
Friend and friend
Amon the nations and powers
The interests and wealth and the dire need of the many
The divisions within—even—thy church
A cause of shame for the church
We seek thy reconciliation, in the strong name of Jesus Christ, these are our
prayers (for forgiveness, for healing, and for reconciliation)
We lay them before Thee.
Thy will be done!
Amen*

Complaint

*God of wisdom, our complaint this morning
A malaise brought on
The silent suffering of those in the neighborhood
The stark ugly face of hunger
Turmoil of a world growing too quickly
Imprisonment that makes us all jail-birds
Appeal
God of commitment, our appeal this morning is
For specific events of healing
For malaise*

*For healing for the physically ill
For nourishment for the hungry
And freedom for the prisoners
Trust
God of power
Our trust is in you
Some inkling of that trust has brought us together
That trust encourages us to hear you in prayer, in preaching, and in praise
Our trust, unshakably grounded in Jesus Christ*

*Dear God
You invite us to an hour of reflection, thanksgiving, communion, questioning,
meditation, celebration
Let us give thanks to the Lord!
For this is a time to give thanks
For food, for shelter, for health, for peace
That not all the world shares
This is an hour for divine worship
For remembering the saints of old
For warming hands at the gospel fire
For being still
For keeping still
For silence
That in the silence
We might catch the faith of one who said:
The Lord is my light and my salvation
Whom shall I fear?
The Lord is the stronghold of my life
Of whom shall I be afraid?*

*Father
We remember that the apostle said
That when he was a child he thought and spoke and acted like a child
But when he became a man, he gave up childish ways
We know that it is your will for us
That we learn to live as adults and Christian men and women
And to give up childish things and ways*

*Yet fear of the future makes us prefer what is familiar
Even when that very common closeness hurts us
This advent season we pray that we will grow into full adulthood
Into the kinds of people you would have us be
Give us the capacity for wonder
The capacity for vulnerability
The capacity to laugh at ourselves
This season is wonderful if we see the wonder
But do we Lord? Do we see wonder?
Or do we see a monotonous recurrence of things that have happened before
And will surely happen again?
The coming of the Christ child to the humble manger in Bethlehem
Should surely give us courage to face the dark
And poorer spots of our lives: does it?
Do we let ourselves be vulnerable?
And let ourselves be hurt for your sake, Lord?
Give us courage to be defeated in a good fight
Give us courage to be beaten for a good cause
Help us to be vulnerable for Thee, as was the babe in the manger
Lord, if Thou has come to us
If Thou has taken the burden of our humanity upon yourself
If Thou hast come to us
And brought us the salvation we could not give ourselves
Then can we not be free to laugh at ourselves
We pray to be given the gift of self-mockery
So that we learn not to take ourselves too seriously
This Advent season we pray for the gifts
Of wonder, vulnerability, and self-mockery.*

*Heavenly Father
We ask for a sense of your spirit this morning
May our speaking and listening
Our worship before you
Be filled with marks of the truth
That can set us free*

We come before Thee, the truth of the living God

*With a week full of experiences, some good and some bad
Remembering that thou art a God who 'delights not in wickedness'
Who has no use for: lust, gluttony, avarice, sloth, anger, envy and pride
And so lets these things drop to the ground, dead
We puff ourselves up
You pop us like balloons
We hide ourselves in half-truths.
You expose us
As the dawn exposes the earth in the morning
We are hard where we should be soft
Soft where we should be hard
Fearful!
Fearful in things large and small
But Thou art the same Lord whose property is always to have mercy
And so we enter thy house
Praying for healing for those who are ill
Praying for a sense of care, of delight in giving
Praying for the will to discipline ourselves
To be taught by Thee
In order to use all that has been given to us:
Money, television, telephone, automobile, food, clothes, shelter, safety
And not be used by them
To do all to thy glory
In this life we know pain and confusion
Lead us Lord
For without Thee we are lost*

*O Lord Our God
In Thee do we take refuge when the storms come upon us
We shelter ourselves in Thee for a time
We shelter ourselves in your faithfulness
Heavenly Father!
Thou art our fortress and bulwark
So many fears nip at us like stray dogs
It seems like we are torn apart by them
A visitor—we are concerned
The telephone—we are concerned*

*A fire siren—we are frightened
The daily mail—we are concerned
The newspaper—we are concerned
The hurt look in a loved one's eye—we are guilty
Like a man running down a dark alley
We are chased by the fear that surrounds us
Lord God Almighty to save!
Deliver us from the fear that pursues us
We shelter ourselves in Thee
Can we hear the words of thy Christ?
Will we this day hear and obey?
Will we this day trust and obey?
We shelter ourselves in Thee
We wait in the cross's shadow
Christ is risen!
Lord hear our prayer*

*Today our prayer is for our country
So troubled and hurt as she has been in the last week
We pray for the healing of our countrymen and others
Injured in the fighting in Lebanon and Grenada
We pray for the grieving families of those who died
We pray that our own hearts
Will not become hardened against these deaths
But that we will have the grace to see each and every death
As an infinite loss
The loss of a child of God
We pray for the many Christian and faithful men and women
Who have been entrusted with the governance of this world
In so many ways
In so many ways our lives rest with their decisions and actions
May our leaders be both strong and merciful
May our citizens be both loyal and watchful
May our wise men be both insightful to know the truth
And courageous to speak the truth
Though it cost them dearly*

*May our children be trained up in a way pleasing to Thee
To prepare the way of the Christ
And of his kingdom on earth
May our senior citizens find ways to share their treasure
Of wisdom and experience with ignorant and naïve youth
May our churches not shrink from the calling
To be both in the world and yet not of the world
Keep our church doors open
Even to the least of these our brethren
May our Christian people once again hear the gospel call
To make each moment an act of worship
Today our prayer is for our country
So troubled and hurt as she has been in the last week
Lord hear our prayer!
Amen*

*God of our achievement and of our failure
God of our kindness and of our bickering
God of our insight and of our blindness
God of our strength and of our weakness
God of our honor and of our embarrassment
God who is with us in the springtime of well-being and in the autumn of discontent
We are not worthy at all of Thee
We skate on the surface of life when you would have us dive in to its depth
We do not notice that souls are being formed as the world hastens on its way
Thank goodness for the Christ!
The Christ who helps us learn in the simplest things in life who we really are
The Christ who gives us another day to learn the hard lesson of his love
The Christ who moves like wind to make this world a better place
The Christ who loves u though we are utterly unworthy
God of our sin and of our salvation
God of our doubt and of our faith
God of our friends and of our enemies
Give us a closer walk with Thee this week
In the powerful name of the Risen Jesus we pray
Amen*

*Father in Heaven
We have offended you
We forget why we are here, and what truly lasts
We are unwilling to love only love
We do not control our hungers
We neglect to care for details
We store up treasure on earth
We are lazy
We get angry at others when we have only ourselves to blame
We thrive on flattery, whether true or false
We are so busy with ourselves that we do not watch for You
Yet we are here this morning
Something warns us that Christ lives
That Christ is yours
And we are his
(If only we could live with this in our hearts!)
Where is faith?
Where are men and women who can trust enough to take some chances
Where is hope?
Where are the communities of women and men who have a good vision for the
future?
Where is love?
Where does one go hungry so that another may eat?
Trust, desire, and sacrifice abide, these three
We long to know them!
We are blind, deaf, mute and disoriented
Maybe we will stumble on faith, hope and love
But God if you lead us, we will know them soon and for sure
For Thou only art holy
Thou only art the Lord
Amen*

*Brothers and Sisters
The Christ calls on you now to follow him
He invites you to shun every form of evil
To seek every kind of good
And to worship God in public and private*

*He calls upon you to consider the source of your life
To considers its destiny
To realize that it is later than you think
The Christ calls upon you to love your neighbor
He shows you that you like all men are a sinner
And he tells you that he can lead you out of even the deepest sin
He warns you that without the kind of love he inspires
This old world is without hope
He reminds you that though you tarry here awhile
You are going home
To a house not made with hands
The Christ calls on you now to follow him
To worship the Lord thy God with all thine heart and soul and mind and strength
And to love thy neighbor as thyself
He asks only this:
That in your heart you say without falseness
'Lord I want to be a Christian'
Are you new to the faith?
Be baptized in this community right soon
Are you baptized but at a distance from Christ?
Confirm your faith now
Are you baptized and confirmed but doubting?
Believe again in the only Person who was ever worth believing in, the Crucified
One
Are you baptized and confirmed and believing and in no special need?
Mention it in prayer right now
Are you baptized and confirmed and believing and in no special need?
Then look about you to those less fortunate
And remember the words of the Lord how he said,
'As you have done it to the least of these my brethren, you have done it unto me'
The Lord Jesus Christ calls you to his banquet table
Whether you hear the call for the first time or the fiftieth time
Don't come late to the banquet
The Christ calls on you now to follow him*

*Lord God
Return to us in Jesus the Chosen One*

*You alone are our shepherd, our guide,
With Thee we shall never want for another chance for new life
When the old path has become cluttered and unpassable
We thank you when you make us, force us
To lie down and rest
To be refreshed by an inkling of your presence
To be restored in the knowledge that we are creatures, created to serve You
Sometimes we do right
And that feels good
To know that we have done right
That we have served the cause of justice
It is an act of worship to do what is right before Thee
And it truly pains us that we are not more often always capable of doing right
Sometimes we end up in the valley of darkness
And there is a mighty anger in us
When we see unrelieved sickness
When we see sudden unfair tragedy
When we see the corrosion brought on by fearful selfish living
Then there is anger in us
We give thanks that in this darkness
Your light is upon us
Your song is in our hearts
You are great to comfort us
Sometimes we are trapped
Hemmed in by enemies
Then do we learn to savor thy gifts
Food for the body, anointing oil for the soul
Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of our lives
And we shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever*

*The Bible questions us:
When the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on earth?
Adam, Adam, where are thou?
My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?
Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth?
Who determined its measurements?
Surely you must know*

*Are you not one of them, Simon, one of the disciples of Jesus?
When the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on earth?
Let us all praise God*

A thought:

*There may be safety in the feeling of incompleteness or uncertainty
Otherwise failure would give rise to the death struggle for success
But this cloudier sense of 'unrighteousness' keeps the ego off balance
Alert, on its feet, asking questions of the speaker
So, we are safe from triumphalism
Safe from deadly certainty
Alive to the Spirit
Anxious for God*

A prayer:

*We are not so smart
We know that we can be broken if asked to do too much
We ask protection
When the institutions that we have made
Family, church, company, state
When they turn on us and begin to eat us alive
Give us a sure, sure sense of our ultimate worth in your eyes
Make us wise as serpents, innocent as doves
When we cry 'The night is dark and I am far from home'
Be to us a light in the dark*

*Almighty God
Author of eternal life
Illumine our hearts
By the light of thy grace
That our lips may show forth thy praise
That our lives may bless Thee
That our worship may glorify Thee
Through Jesus Christ our Lord
Who taught us to pray together*

In this hour

*We will give thanks to the Lord with our whole heart
We will tell of his wonderful deeds
We will be glad and exult in him
In this hour
We will ask again
How shall we teach our children?
How does the heart grow?
In this hour
We will give thanks
Let us worship God*

*Hear what comfortable words
Christ saith unto all that truly turn to him
'Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden
And I will give you rest'
Hear also the words of St. John:
'God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son
That whosoever believeth in him should not perish
But have everlasting life
Hear also the words of Scripture
The Lord is gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love, full of
compassion, slow to anger and of great mercy
The Sacrifices of God are a broken spirit
A broke and contrite hear
God will not despise*

*Heavenly Father
What comfort it give us again to raise voices
And hymns and praise to Thee!
Without Thee
Our frustration would turn to bitterness
Without Thee
Our confusion would mean utter blindness
Without Thee
Our past would eat us alive
Without Thee
We would have no reason to give...or live*

*It gives us comfort
Though we stumble
Though we straggle
Though we sometimes think it might be more pleasant
To forget the whole thing
It gives us comfort
To call upon thy name
Upon that name that charms our fears
That sets the prisoner free
Yes
It gives us comfort to raise voices, hymns, and prayers to Thee!
Amen*

*Between the dark and the daylight
When the night is beginning to lower
Comes a pause in the day's occupations
That is known as the children's hour
Father God
We pause now in the midst of the swirling weeks and months and years
In the midst of the worries and sickness
Joys, sorrows, and just plain hard work
We pause as children to give thanks
We give thanks for peace and prosperity
For comfort and a wide open and rich land in which to live
We give thanks for friends and neighbors
For community and church
But as we pause
Between the dark of our own limitations and failings
And the daylight of your Word
We would ask these things
We ask for your guidance
As we work through the decisions that make our lives
Spirit of life in this new dawn
Give us the faith that follow on
We would ask your presence
With the physically sick and the emotionally distraught
May they know the love of their neighbors*

*And may their neighbors love them as you taught them to love
We would ask your influence
On the great decision makers of our nation and world
May they have the insight, energy, and creativity
So necessary in their trying situations
Father God
We pause as children
Your children
Between the darkness and the daylight
And ask your guidance in each and every one of our deeds
In Christ's name we pray
Amen*

*Heavenly Father
How great is thy name O Lord our God through all the earth
To mention it brings us peace
We fall so short of thy purpose for us, though
That we ask special blessings
Deliver us we pray from evil
Close our ears
To gossip
To false teachings
To the raucous din of TV
To the selfish requests of our inner hearts
To the counsel of fear and timidity
That we might hear no evil
Close our eyes
To backward glances, that do no good
To fascination with others' wrong
To our own minor good
To the approval or disapproval of men
To blank stares of material finery
That we might see no evil
Close our mouths
To character assassination
To unnecessary criticism
To rough language*

*To thoughtless, thoughtless words
To flattery
That we might speak no evil
Heavenly Father
How great is thy name in all the earth!*

*Father
In our prayers this morning
We lift up the plight of the homeless ones on earth
For those in South East Asia and Lebanon and the Bronx
Who wander, with no destination
We ask that even our own far off conduct
Might serve as a conduit for their settlement
With the very spirit of our own nation
Which drifts undisciplined
We make a reckoning in our hearts
For the homeless children near and far
We ask a strong arm of support
How does each of us become a strong arm?
For our own misdirection
For our own homeless lack of hope
We silently ask forgiveness
God of Abraham and Isaac and Jacob
God of the manger and cross and empty tomb
God of light which shines in the darkness
Teach us that we are going home
Lord, we tarry here awhile
But we are going home
Help us to understand the guidance in our Lord's prayer
As together we invoke it*

*Heavenly Father
Whom we do not know, cannot see, may not understand
But who knows, sees and understands us
Why do the nations conspire
And the peoples plot in vain
Our rulers, all rulers are set against us*

*They do their own people great harm
They trap us in great dark cities
Detroit, New York, Caracas, Dar Es Salaam, Hong Kong
Chaining us with heat, ignorance, drugs
A great emptiness in the side
Our rulers have turned against the commandments of Jesus
And we have let them get away with it
Do we hear you laughing?
Deriding human pride that pretends to escape your judgment?
In fury, proclamation, faith, You have taught us
To measure all by the yardarms of the cross
Lord, have mercy upon us thy disobedient children
Have we not heard your warning to the rulers of this earth?
We have heard it
Why then do we not echo it?
Have mercy
Be wise!
Be warned!
Bow down!
Service justice with fear and trembling!
Our coming forward to pray rests on Christ Jesus
We have heard of a king in a manger
Surrounded with filth and commonness
Raised among us
The measure of all things
You said to him, 'Thou art my son. Today I have begotten Thee'
Praise to Thee O Most High
In Jesus name We pray*

Father

*We know that not a sparrow falls but that you know it
We know that even the hairs on our heads are numbered
We know that you watch over your children
For your abiding care we are thankful
But we grieve in this hour
For one whose sudden death we did not foresee or expect
We grieve for a loss that is permanent and painful*

*And down deep we grieve for what might have been
We hoped for more time
Help us in our remembering to cherish
All that was solid and good and humble and Christian in every life
Help us to accept what has happened
Chase from our minds that nagging and useless thought, 'If only...'
Bring us to a sound acceptance of death
For we affirm the goodness in life
We affirm care of all children
We affirm reliance on Christ
In life, in death, in life beyond death
In this hour of grief
Of memories, of acceptance, of strong affirmation
We give our lives over again to this one we call Lord
Even Jesus Christ*

*Wood on wood
The rocker rubs the floor
In a haze of pipe smoke
The spaniel whines
He dreams
His master muses
The rocker rolls and creaks
A hundred pictures, a thousand memories
To sleep, to sleep perchance to dream
The rocker repeats
Its cadence of peace
Hearth and heart red
In crackling amusement
Wood on wood
The rocker remembers*

*Dear Lord
God of us All
Source of Life
Our last and ultimate hope
We lay before you the excesses of these last few days*

*We stand alarmed, chastened and humbled by excesses in spirit and in body
Some are awash in numerous hours of work
Some are inundated by people and visits and parties and reunions
Some see billows rolling of problems and worrying, cresting ever higher each day
And far away
Others have cars under water
Others walk past pools of blood in formerly friendly neighborhoods
Others see homes covered in fire and ash
Eternal Father strong to save
Lift us above the small swells nearby
That we might help, in some small way,
To stem the surging tides of evil the world over*

*(**Salt City Prayers** is Dean Robert Allan Hill's seventeenth book, and can be found both on his blog (deanhill.blogspot.com) and on The Marsh Chapel website.)*