

Opening prayer: Eternal God and ever-merciful God, you come among us in the giving of your Son, Christ Jesus our Lord.

As we your people, Now come among each other and come before you, We ask you to come upon us afresh, for we need to be forgiven, we need to be encouraged, we need to be inspired and we need to be dedicated our selves to you and to work of your Kingdom.

Hear us, we plead and sensitize us anew, that we might hear you now and need you forever and ever. Amen.

Pastoral prayer: Gracious God, as the disciples asked of Jesus, "Teach us to pray," so we make the same request of you, for we want our petitions and thanksgivings to reflect the advent of your Kingdom and its expansion in our midst. You move us to plead with you for the rule of righteousness, that you might ever create faith in those who hear our testimony, that those in whom your quicken faith might overflow in love, that those whose hearts cleared in love might ever hope for that day when righteousness will indeed fill the new heaven and new earth that you have fashioned.

As the disciples ask Jesus, "Increase our faith," so we ask you to increase our faith, for we know it is faith that banishes

Fear, it is faith that victoriously overcomes the world, and it is faith that allows your mercy to overwhelm us.

As the disciples were rebuked for hindering the approach of children to Jesus, so we ask you to save us from hindering any and all who are drawn to our Lord, especially those who are often slighted: the poor, the un-employed, the deranged, the disreputable. Grant that we might so reflect your compassion that they will say of us, as it was said of Jacob of old, "Your face is transparent to the face of God, with such favor have you received us." Amen