

Centering and Pastoral Prayer

O God, we are in awe of your grace, that is
tough enough to withstand our arrogance and indifference;
tender enough to soften our hearts into humility;
honest enough to shape our criticisms into compassion.

In your creativity, you raise up in every generation, right among us, witnesses who are willing to take up the torch of your passion and purposes. They speak your word in a new language. They will lead this human family of yours—and ours—toward something that looks more like your kingdom on earth.

Your grace is evident here, today, in these young people who are ready to take the bold step of confirming that they want to be part of this fumbling, flawed, but ever-hopeful thing that is your Church. The church that is the body of believers who follow you everywhere, all over the world; and the church that is this body of United Methodists in Campbell.

Make this a place through which justice can still insist its way into our world. Make this church a place where we learn that our everyday lives can be full of clear vision and commitments of conscience.

We lift up to you this morning, our God, the names and faces of all those in our little worlds and in your big world who need something a little more from you this week: peace, healing, strength, courage. We remember that you offer to them your presence unflinchingly, and that you care for these your loved ones even more than we do...and we are grateful.

And then, we ask, take and transform our gratitude into courage. Shake us and move us until we care enough to put our own security at risk, until we are willing to interrupt our own comfort.

Let us learn to keep our balance by taking you more seriously than we take ourselves.

Let us learn the lessons of your dream for us: a kingdom where we listen to and respect each other, where we appreciate and learn from each other; where no one's need is ignored, no one's gift turned away; where we are as generous with each other as you are with us; and we are as truly free, as firmly bound, as deeply grateful, and as constantly joyful, as you mean for us to be.

We pray in the spirit of Jesus, in the hope that we are walking in his footsteps, and in the words he taught us to pray together:

Our Father...