

Rev. James Harnish tells the story of a man who came home one day to find that his wife had put up a wall hanging that read, "Prayer changes things." However, 24 hours later, the wall hanging had been removed. She asked her husband, "What's wrong? Don't you like prayer?" He said, "O yes, I like prayer. I don't like change."

O Loving and Holy God, we come to you in prayer because we believe prayer does change things. However, we know that when we enter into your presence in a real and genuine way, then we open ourselves to your changing and transforming power in our lives. We open ourselves to be changed. And that can be scary. For Lord, sometimes we don't want to face ourselves. We don't want to admit that there are parts of us that need changing. We don't want to feel less than the best. Because it hurts, and it's disappointing, to ourselves and to others, and so we'd rather just not think about it. But in your presence, we have no choice. For you know every part of us. There is no hiding, no faking it, no pretense. We are who we are, and we've done what we've done, and yet, the incredible part is that you love us still. You love us with a love that will never let us go. You love with a love that wants us to change so that we know what it is like to live in union with you. To feel like our lives are in your hands, and that we do not go this journey alone. But that we have the Sovereign, loving, powerful God of the universe on our side. And so, forgive us Lord, and may we pray as the Psalmist did, "Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting." Yes, O God, search us and help us to search ourselves. And then grant us the strength and determination to do the hard work of confession, repentance, and change. Thank you for your love and your power to change us.

And Lord, we pray for change for others too. We pray for change in our world, our county. We pray for change in the way we, as nations, as leaders, as citizens, interact with one another. Help us all to be less adamant to make our rights, our opinions, our concerns heard, and be more willing to hear others. To engage in conversation in which we put ourselves in another's shoes. To be less judgmental, and more empathetic. To be willing to find ways of compromise, to focus on what is most important, to find a path for the greater common good of all. Help us to follow the way and words and wisdom of Jesus Christ. There are individuals we pray for as well. You have heard...

Lord, as we think about our families, our community, our country, we know that we, as a church, can make an impact. We can share the good news of Jesus Christ, and the difference he can make. And so, today we pray our John Wesley prayer together...

Dear Lord, we want John Wesley to be a strong and vital church in our community. And we want to be guided by your vision and plan for us. As we move into the future, please lead us all in our thoughts, our discussions, and our decisions. Show us what you would have us do and how you would have us do it. And help us always remember that John Wesley is your church, not ours – may your will be done. In Christ's name we pray. Amen