

"We are not at peace with others because we are not at peace with ourselves, and we are not at peace with ourselves because we are not at peace with God." - Thomas Merton

Loving, forgiving, mighty God, we lift up to you our praise, our thanks, our love, our lives. There are other places we could be this morning, but we have chosen to be here. To worship you, to listen to you, to be changed by you, to offer ourselves to you, because we know that we need you in our lives. For you are the one, the only one, who knows all things, who loves unconditionally, who offers strength and hope that goes far beyond what people and things of this world can give. And we are humbled, and we are grateful. And yet, Lord, we confess that we sometimes distance ourselves from you. We don't like what's happening to us or our loved ones, and we blame you and question you. Pressures get to us, and rather than come to you for help and calm and guidance, we become impatient and frustrated, and we make problems worse. Things don't go the way we want, and we complain to you rather than trust you. Yes, we are sometimes not at peace with you and we hurt ourselves because of it. And Lord, at this season of the year we are reminded once again that even though we distance ourselves, you continue to want us. You want us so badly that you came as a human to be with us. You were not content to let us go about our sinful and haphazard ways. You came to love us, to forgive us, to show us how our lives can be meaningful, peaceful, content. And so, in this Advent season, let us indeed pray Come, O Christ, Come into our lives and show us the way.

Lord, we come this day also to bring others closer to you in and through our prayers. We know that our country, our world is in need of your healing, your tolerance, your wisdom. We know that those around us need a sense that you are there. For there are some for whom this season is not jolly. There has been loss, there are health issues, there are concerns that cannot be alleviated by singing carols or decorating a tree. And so we ask for your deep and abiding presence for them. There are specific people we wish to mention. You have heard those on our prayer list.

Lord, in this season, when we know that there may be guests in our church, there are those who think about you more during Christmas, there are those who are looking at where their lives will go in the new year. And so we pray that we would be a people and a church that shares your love and acceptance and offers ways to draw closer to you. And so, 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