

“The strength of the church is not the strength of its institutions, but the authenticity of its witness.”  
Leonard Sweet & Frank Viola

O Lord Jesus, we remember that you told your disciple Peter, “You are Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell will not prevail against it.” And O Lord, we know that there are forces out in the world trying to prevail against the church and diminish the strength and power of your word and message. Sometimes those forces take the name of violence and injustice, in places around the world, like Africa and the Middle East where people are killed for confessing their faith in you.

Sometimes those forces take the name of political correctness and exclusion, where even saying your name, or offering a prayer is frowned upon, or worse yet, forbidden. Sometimes those forces take the name of sports, activities, work, calendar, that take precedence over worship, over prayer, over spiritual growth. Sometimes those forces take the name of laziness, indifference, apathy, which weakens faith, and dampens resolve. And sometimes those forces take the name of self, an idol of our own making, wanting to be in charge, wanting things our way, wanting our will to be done. And so forgive us, Lord, and help us to re-fan those flames of Pentecost, that we might be filled with power, with conviction, and with a renewed love for you that compels us to be authentic witnesses to you in our lives, and thus, in our world. Yes, come, Holy Spirit, come.

Lord, this day we wish to pray for others. The need is great, but we know that you are greater. And so hear us now, as we lift aloud the names for whom we ask your blessing.

Lord, we thank you for this time of quiet, where we know we are loved, we are heard, and we are blessed. And as we prepare ourselves to go back out into the mission field of our homes, our work, our activities, our part of the world, may we be an authentic witness both as individuals and as a church. As we say together our John Wesley prayer...

*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*