

Jesus instructed his disciples, and us, “When you pray, go into the closet, and pray in secret, and your Father who sees in secret will reward you.”

Pastor and author E. B. Bounds: “A holy life does not live in the closet, but it cannot live without the closet.”

O Lord, we come because we know that living a holy life is what we want to attain, it is our purpose, our ultimate goal. To live into your image in which we were created. And at those times when we are loving and compassionate, when we refrain from anger in order to keep peace, when we are a blessing to someone who needs us, when we work for justice, when we allow ourselves to be used by you and for you, O God, what a joy and sense of purpose that fills us. To know that we are part of something bigger than ourselves, to feel that we have made a difference, to know that the God of the universe has worked through us to bring hope, healing, comfort, love. And we wish we could continue that holy living. But then, Lord, we often let the pressures and demands of the world around us affect us and we don't live such holy lives. We become impatient or intolerant, we speak badly about someone, we ignore the needs of others, we are stingy, prideful, lazy, selfish. And sometimes we just don't trust you, we don't bring everything to you, we stay out of the closet where you call us to come to you. And we know the hurt that causes our soul. All because we haven't taken the time and quiet to be with you.

And so Lord, in this moment, we enter into the closet of our minds, where, in the silence of these next few minutes, we are alone with you, to speak to you, to listen to you, to be with you, and as we prepare to come to your table, we make our confessions to you.

Lord, thank you for this solitary time alone with you. But we are also reminded that we do not stay in the closet, but that we go out to the world. And so we pray for the world around us. We pray for friends and loved ones who are in need. We pray for our country, which continues to sow discord and division among our citizens. We pray for the United Methodist Church and those in it who are striving to be examples of what it means to love and accept and tolerate differences. Lord, we are all in need. And there are those we wish to specifically lift up to you. You have heard those on our prayer list, but there are others.

Lord, for all these people, situations and things we ask, we do so in the name of Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior. Amen.