

“We are prone to judge success by the index of our salaries or the size of our automobiles rather than by the quality of our service and relationship to mankind.” MLK, Jr.

O God who is our rock, our refuge, the one to whom we can be honest and transparent, we pause now to be still in your presence, hoping to set aside the cares and concerns on our minds and give our attention to you, or, better yet, to bring you the cares and concerns on our minds and ask you to take them from us. For we have all come from different places, not just physically but emotionally and spiritually. Some of us are feeling confident, joyful, and ready to meet the challenges we will inevitably face. Others of us come with struggles and disappointments, and are feeling anxious, frustrated, uncertain, or merely, “okay.” Some of us come with questions, with doubts or with fears. But all of us come to be reminded that we are loved, cared for, forgiven, and that we are children of a mighty, sovereign God who wants to help us live meaningful, fruitful lives.

Because Lord, we know that the world around us promotes values that are different than yours, and we need to be grounded in that which is holy, which is Christ-like. Yes, we too often judge and evaluate ourselves, and others by looks and appearance, by wealth, by social position. We judge on age, on mental capacity, on physical capabilities. But you O Lord, are different. As the Bible tells us, “The Lord does not look at the things people look at. People look at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart.” And so we pray with the psalmist, “Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me.” Help us to always take the higher ground in life. Help us to be more intent on serving and caring for others than on being comfortable ourselves. Help us to be willing to forgive and not harbor resentment. Help us to be more concerned with loving others than with being loved, remembering that if we are loveable, others will love us. As much as possible, let us have the mind and heart of Christ, so that we may indeed work and live to bring your kingdom here on earth as it is in heaven.

And Lord we come today also because there are those we love and want to pray for with our brothers and sisters, because we trust in your words that the prayers of the righteous are powerful and effective. And so you have heard those on our prayers of concern list, but there are others, so hear us now as people in this congregation live up the names for whom we ask your blessing.

And now, Lord, with one voice, as a community of faith together, we pray as Jesus taught us...