

07-06-2025 -- Words of Worship and Prayers

Welcome –

Good morning. What a week it's been... along with our own, personal struggles we watch as wars rage on, children suffer and starve, politicians play Russian roulette with people's lives and well-being and torrential rains in the Hill Country of TX sweep people away in the dark of night. To gather us together and hopefully help us to find some much-needed calm and peace, I'd like to read a poem by Wendell Berry. Wendell Berry is an American novelist, poet, essayist, environmental activist, cultural critic, and farmer. Here is his well-known poem,

The Peace of Wild Things

When despair for the world grows in me
and I wake in the night at the least sound
in fear of what my life and my children's lives may be,
I go and lie down where the wood drake
rests in his beauty on the water, and the great heron feeds.
I come into the peace of wild things
who do not tax their lives with forethought
of grief. I come into the presence of still water.
And I feel above me the day-blind stars
waiting with their light. For a time
I rest in the grace of the world, and am free.
Wendell Berry

It's my prayer that we can rest in God's grace here, together, as we worship.
What do you bring to share with one another this morning?

You might recognize our Call to Worship; we did it last Sunday! One of the things we talked about at our book discussion on Wednesday evening was the Greek word *metanoia* – it's most often translated as repent. It literally means to turn, to change one's mind or purpose, to change one's priorities and direction. In this reading we are physically turning – to offer our thanks for the various gifts that the Creator provides from each direction. Along with that, perhaps this can also serve as a corporate “turning” on behalf of the world.

I invite you to stand, in body or in spirit as we read and face the four directions as we read about them and then turn toward the center of the sanctuary at the end.

Morning Prayer –

Creator God, we bring our prayers to you this morning. The contents of our hearts are jumbled with everything from gratitude to grief, from wonderment to worry, from anxiety to anger, from excitement to exhaustion. And so, God, we bring all of it – as part of what we offer to you in trust and vulnerability. We acknowledge that our faith and our hope lie in you.

We are grateful for the days of harvest that have been able to happen, for safety and success, for beauty and for being in the fields, for the marvel that is the process of planting the seeds in the ground, waiting, watching them sprout and grow, seeing the fields transform from green to golden and finally, reaping the grain. We acknowledge, God that it's been a difficult season with so much rain here at the end. Thank you for your presence with us – even in frustration.

We pray, God for those who are grieving under the weight of unbelievable loss. For those in the midst of wars, trying to live through hunger, displacement, destruction and uncertainty – in Ukraine, in Gaza, in Yemen, in the DRC and Haiti.

O God, we think of those in Texas who are facing the loss of loved ones because of the floods that came so fast and furiously, snatching people and property away before they even knew what was happening.

And closer to home, we pray for Leona's son's family...

Through the power of your Spirit, showing love and care through your people, God we pray for comfort, for the courage to face another day, for glimmers of hope to make their way through this current darkness.

God, we're grateful for opportunities to serve and to travel, to meet together with those from our broader faith community. Be with the youth, with Tina and Kevin and Bonnie as they're driving to Rocky Mt. Menn. camp and as they serve there this week. Help them each to feel your presence and experience your love in new and life-changing ways as they work and play together. Grant them safety and a renewed sense of purpose in their lives. Be with Timothy and Gretchen this week as they travel to the denominational Convention in Greensboro. As they meet new people and renew friendships and acquaintances, let them feel your Holy Spirit presence as well, as it moves through the worship services, the sessions, the shared meals and everything else they'll experience. Grant them safety as well and renew their spirits. And more immediately, be with Timothy this morning as he brings us the message. Thank you for his willingness to share his gifts and thoughts with us. Bless him with a calm and confident spirit as he preaches.

Thank you, God for those who've been able to go to camp this summer – Mennoscah or Rocky Mt. or other camps. Thank you for those who are serving as staff and for those going as campers. Thank you for the experiences of being in nature and finding you, their Creator there, in the midst of that setting.

Be with us now as we continue to worship you. May the words of our mouths and the meditations of our hearts be pleasing to you and build one another up so that we can clearly and strongly be known as your people in this world. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

Offering Prayer –

We plow the fields and scatter the good seed on the land,
But it is fed and watered by your almighty hand.
You send the snow in winter, the warmth to swell the grain,
The breezes and the sunshine, and soft, refreshing rain.

You only are the Maker of all things near and far.
You paint the wayside flower, you light the evening star.
The winds and waves obey you, by you the birds are fed;
Much more to us, your children you give our daily bread.

We thank you, then, Creator, for all things bright and good,
The seedtime, and the harvest, our life, our health, our food.
Accept the gifts we offer for all your love imparts,
And what you most would welcome; our humble, thankful hearts.

All good gifts around us are sent from heaven above.

We thank you, God, we thank you, God, for all your love.

Benediction – May the Eternal Spirit of God bless you with profound peace

As you live rooted and grounded in the love of Christ.