

Prayers of the People. January 30, 2022. First Presbyterian Church Portage

Glorious and covenant-keeping God, by Your grace we have reached another marker on our pilgrim journey. Our times are in Your hands, and we have come to this hour and this place by Your mercies and by Your grace. We echo Jacob's words: "God has been my shepherd all my life; His angel has kept me from all harm" and those of Joshua: "Every promise of the Lord has come true. Not a single one has failed!" Isaiah wrote: "I am overwhelmed with joy in the Lord my God! For He has dressed me with the clothing of salvation, and draped me in a robe of righteousness." Jeremiah testifies: "Your words are what sustain me. They brought me great joy, and are my heart's delight". Nahum tells us: "The Lord is good. When trouble comes, he is a strong refuge". Habakkuk recalls: "The sovereign Lord is my strength!" Strength, shield, refuge, sustenance — sufficient promises for life's journey! Your Word, O Lord, assures us this is so.

We enjoy the privileges of grace because we have been reconciled to You. "There is therefore no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus". May your grace, wonderful Savior, enable us to forget those things that are forgiven and held against us no more.

Help us to let go of what You have forgiven and forgotten. Not only does Your Word assure us of forgiveness, but also that we need not fear the future. You have told Your people: "I know the thoughts that I think toward you, thoughts of peace and not disaster, to give you a future and a hope."

So we commit ourselves anew to Your gracious care and keeping in the days ahead. Whatever comes to us in the year ahead, we believe You alone do all things well. Since You are our Shepherd ... We shall not want.

Father God, as we examine our wants, help us not to want anything You won't give. Help us to insure that our wants are our needs.

Gracious God, give us grace to receive all that You give us this year. We lift up our hearts in hope and trust towards You. We believe Your Word, and rejoice in Your Promises. Blessed be the glorious name of our Lord.

Gracious God, as we think of our incarnate Lord, we are so thankful for the example He has set for us. Help us to follow His example, and to keep His promises ever in mind.

We praise You that the Lord Jesus lived His life seamlessly, in total accord with reality, with no falseness, no self-deception, no dark secrets, nothing to regret, nothing to be ashamed of ... that He proclaimed the truth, the one utterly reliable foundation for our thinking and living. Thank You that He delighted to do Your Will ... that He withdrew for time alone in Your presence ... That He was attentive to Your voice, and sensitive to Your working ... that He lived in complete dependence on You, so that You in Him spoke those gracious life-giving words, and performed those mighty works.

Thank You that He demonstrated how we are to live and serve, completely depending on Him as our indwelling Lord, focusing on His life as He walked on earth, and beholding His glory, “The glory of the one and only” Who came from You, full of grace and truth. What a delight to know that, as we focus on Him, You transform us into His image by Your Spirit within us. You work in us that which is pleasing in Your eyes. You strengthen our heart in every good work and every good word, so that more and more, we honour Christ by the way we live.

Compassionate God, we pray that You will help us to always successfully resist temptation from the moment we are confronted with it. Help us to draw closer to You when anything tries to draw us away from You. Deliver us from the trap of temptation before we fall into it. Give us the strength, wisdom, and knowledge we need to fully resist temptation the moment it presents itself. We don't want any lack of judgement or weakness on our part to draw us away from You and the safety and peace of Your perfect Will.

Loving God, Your Word tells us not to fear or worry. During this time of the pandemic, as we receive all kinds of different information, we do worry, we are concerned. Father, we give our anxiety and fear to You. We surrender our hold on them, and release them into Your hands. We lift our eyes to You, for You are our help in time of trouble. Our reactions to the pandemic have been devastating. It has turned family members against each other, friend against each other, believer against believer, and has divided communities. We so need your help, your guidance, and the prayers of each other. We will praise You in the midst of all that happens in our lives. We know that in Your presence, we don't need to be anxious or afraid of anything. We refuse to entertain discouragement, and instead choose this day to find our encouragement in You. Your love comforts us, and takes away all our fear. Your power in our lives gives us strength, and makes us secure. Thank You for giving us the courage to go forward and fulfill the destiny You have for us.

Father, we thank You for each person in this congregation and we bring them before You in prayer. We pray especially for those who are experiencing a disconnect because of the pandemic, or for whatever other reason. Grant us a greater love for one another. Bring us closer to each other, so that we may carry out Your will. We think now of those who are in special need of prayer and other help, and bring them before You in our silent prayers. (Pause). Lord hear our prayers!

We thank You for the many blessings that You give us each day. Help us to recognize them as blessings from You. Thank you for the talents You have given each of us, and we ask for courage to use those talents for Your glory. As we look at the past week, we thank You for Your guidance and protection. We give You the honour and glory, and thank You for the opportunity to serve You.

God of peace, we bring before You, the world situations. The areas of peace are becoming smaller and smaller. Terrorism seems to grow and flourish throughout the world. Areas of war are increasing, and causing us to ask where is God? Innocent people are being killed; Christians are being persecuted and killed for their beliefs. Again we ask the question. Where is God in this? Help us to understand. We pray for Your intervention, and that Your Will be done.

As we look forward to the coming week, we thank You for the blessings that You will provide. God, in Your loving purpose, answer our prayers, and fulfill our hopes. In all things for which we pray, give us a will to seek to bring them about. For we ask these things in the precious name of Jesus, our Lord. Amen.