

Prayers

Leader: We come together today as people with different skills, different abilities, different disabilities.

People: We come, however, as one body in Christ.

Leader: We ask God to help us be compassionate toward all, even as God has been compassionate toward us.

People: Gather us together, in compassion and in faith. Help us to welcome and honor everyone in this community.

Leader: Regardless of physical strength and ability,

People: Regardless of differences of mind or spirit,

Leader: Open us, O God. Make us accessible to your Spirit, and accessible to all your people.

All: Amen.

Giver of Life, Lover of those who run and skip and push walkers and roll in chairs and live with hidden pain, we sense your inclusive invitation to the table, but we hesitate. We turn from those whose differing abilities we do not understand; we fear those whose diversity can change the security and intimacy we feel in our close-knit community. Teach us to trust your divine image that lives within each person, and give us courage to recognize and value the gifts of everyone. Amen.

PASTORAL PRAYER

Leader: God our Father, we thank you that our individual lives become complete as we live in community with others. We thank you that together we can do so much more than we can do separately. Yet together we also do evil things we would never dream of doing as individuals. We exclude some for selfish and unworthy reasons; we forget others because no one draws attention

to their needs; we force yet others to turn their backs and go it alone. Father, we pray for all who do not feel that they belong: We pray for the sick.

Remember the physically ill, that the burden of loneliness may not be added to their burden of illness. Remember the mentally ill. We realize with sorrow that many now in hospitals would not be there if we were a more loving and patient society. Remind us of our responsibilities to our brothers and sisters.

We pray for prisoners.

For those in prison for their political views, give them fresh hope. For those in prison for their offences, may they not be forgotten by the rest of society, but helped to find a new place in the community.

We pray for the old.

Save them from being cut off from others merely because they have difficulty getting around. Show them what contribution they may make at this new stage in their lives.

We pray for the young.

Quicken in them a keen sense of what you are calling them to do. And keep them safe from the Tempter's power. Give tolerance and patience to those who must listen to what they have to say, and renewed courage and conviction to those who must carry out what you want done.

We pray for those with disabilities.

For all who have been forced to see their lives through other's prejudices, you intend to overcome every failure of the imagination on our part. Hear us now

as we pray together... continue with Lord's Prayer

O bounteous God, we note the changing of the seasons. We look forward to celebrating the bounties of this earth. We remember with thanksgiving the Great Banquet, you, Most Holy, have invited us to. We praise your name for those among us who heed your call to invite the blind, the lame, and the poor. We praise you for those who embrace the stranger among us. We acknowledge that this journey is difficult yet is necessary for the wholeness of the body of Christ. We lift up to you those among us who still have no voice in the difficult issues that

confront our society. We especially reflect this autumn on the issues of our brothers and sisters who are labeled disabled, persons created in the image of God, gifted by God. The needs are many: access to worship, affordable and accessible housing, access to education, access to employment, access to public accommodations, the right for self-determination, access to health care, and access to voting. Forgive us, gracious God, for those things we have not done and for those things we have done that have hurt others.

Let us celebrate all the diversity of your creation. We humbly ask your blessings as we practice our faith and our life together in the body of Christ that it be made whole by including all who enter our places of worship. Amen

by Linda J. Peterson