

Prayer of Blessing

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The Temple

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God of Blessing; God whose name we bless:

You generously gift Community of Christ in this hour. You call our name and send us again into the world you love. We need no other word now. We ask no other blessing than your promised presence. We now shoulder the yoke that is easy and the burden made light.

Within this spiraling sanctuary (our effort to mold the material world toward your ends) you call us to a vision not yet attained, but toward which Spirit tugs. Words of this hour echo the Voice that speaks in all time and all space. From islands and atolls, in shadow of Alps, Andes, Himalayas and Urals, across plain's expanse, and in verdant tropics we "listen together," **literally together**, to you: Word, Verb, Voice. We need no other blessing now.

Now it is *our* time to bless *you*:
Now it is *our* time to bless the earth."

"Creation flows unceasingly out of the timeless mind of God," we sing. Creation **is** your blessing. Now, in this moment, molten magma flows from earth's core to form a volcano in South America. Seeds lying dormant for years on desert floors hoard enough moisture to blossom in beauty at daybreak. A spiraled fern unfurls in the "land of the long white cloud" in the South Pacific.

Creation is *your* blessing, God, but Creation needs **our** blessing. At planet's poles glaciers calve prematurely; brother and sister species sicken and die; thinnest sliver of atmosphere in which earth's creatures live, move and have being strains in distress. And you plead, "choose life, replenish, do not destroy. Bless the earth!"

Now is also *our* time to bless the human family:

"From your own image being comes." We hold our infant children in love and hope, cure disease, weave tapestries, provide refuge for future generations in wisdom's dwelling. We plant and harvest to feed flocks and families, build cities to enhance commerce and culture, explore outer reaches of the cosmos, and our own inner depths. We bless humanity.

But, too often we curse and do not bless. In this hour, in Darfur and Afghanistan and Zimbabwe, in Binghamton and Pittsburgh, terror and violence destroy body and soul, leave permanent scars in hearts and minds. And you, Eternal Creator, weep.

You call us to join in blessing humanity: to inhabit and restore broken places; to reconcile tragedy and transform madness; to weave patterns of wholeness into political agendas, economic solutions, and cultural expectations.

On the eve of the 179th anniversary of this Community of Christ we hear again the call to your eternal dream of peace: sacred peace, whole-creation peace, the beautiful blessing of Shalom, the Good News of Zion, community for all creation, redemptive Restoration proclaimed and lived by Jesus.

On this first day of Holy Week we walk through the shadow of the cross where one acquainted with suffering and grief draws creation toward peace and beauty. Beneath the cross of Jesus, help us speak a resounding, radical “Yes” to what we are to be and do. Heal the shadow places in our hearts and spiritual heritage. Wash over us and open floodgates of generosity that create possibility for ministry yet unimagined. Ground us more deeply in you. Teach us patterns of authentic discernment that reveal your presence in our formation as Community of Christ.

We breathe blessing in. We speak blessing out. We pray blessing on this week of remembrance and re-patterning of life to follow the way of sacrifice and resurrection.

Blessed [are you] God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing (Ephesians 1:3 NRSV)

Amen.