

Pastoral Prayer 1996

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Christ Community Church
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Transcription of the prepared text

O God, we address you.
Yet, is that not presumption?
For you are the high and lofty One
who inhabits eternity.
How dare we speak?
How do we speak?
And to whom?

Yet, we speak.
We cannot do otherwise,
for in some deep, primal sense,
we know we have been addressed –
addressed by someone beyond us,
by One who always eludes our groping attempts
to grasp, to define.

Yet, the prophet spoke of you as dwelling
with those of humble and contrite heart.
Moses was said to have seen your glory
and heard you speak as friend to friend.
The evangelist claimed the Word was made human, dwelling in our midst.
St. Paul witnessed to seeing your glory in the face of Jesus,
and, while he acknowledged that now we see in fuzzy images only,
one day we shall see face to face.

With the Psalmist, we affirm:
*The Lord is my light and my salvation,
whom shall I fear?*
*The Lord is the strength of my life,
of whom shall I be afraid?*

In your presence we join with persons across the nation
gathered in our Capitol – standing for children.
O God, we do pray for children, for the rising generations,
the generations yet unborn.
As a nation, move us to truly human values;
enable those who care for the children
to turn the tide of neglect and abuse.
God save the children.

In your presence, before your face,
we celebrate this community of faith.
When alone, isolated with our fears, our questions,
you seem far away.
Doubt erodes our trust;
despair threatens our deepest hopes.
And then we come together,
the Word becomes flesh –
in the touch of another,
in the solidarity of community.

We enter this sacred space
and know again what is beyond knowing –
life together, shared experience
restores our trust and renews our hopes.

The birth of a child, a watery cross on the forehead saying,
“This child is loved, belongs, will never be abandoned.”

Beautiful young men and women rise to say, “I believe,”
light a candle owning for themselves
their spiritual birthright.

Two lives, so wonderfully nurtured, so richly endowed,
find each other, kneel, give themselves to the other,
yet remaining wholly their own persons,
acknowledging in their separateness their union
which is the mystery of your bonding love.

A tent is erected on a parking lot
and over half a thousand of this community
let down their hair and kick up their heels
and celebrate in sheer joy–
all that is human;
all that is good and true and beautiful –
and a people knows in their heart

that grace is present and the future bright.

A four-and-a-half-year-old, beautiful and lovable,
visits the world's leading cancer center
to be treated for a deadly disease,
and our hearts are joined – pleading for her healing,
embracing her loved ones with compassion that wells up within us.

Baptisms, confirmations, weddings, life-threatening disease,
tent revival and pig roast –
a rose that celebrates a birth;
a rose that bespeaks the presence in absence
of one loved and lost awhile.

Dear God,
what a quilt of human experience we share.
And as the images tumble through our minds,
we know we do know.
We do believe.

Ah, dear God, we believe;
help thou our unbelief.
We cling to you;
there is nowhere else to turn.
We turn to you,
we worship, the miracle happens again –
not once for all,
but all we need for now,
token enough of that day that shall know no setting sun
when we shall be all together
in the presence of Light Eternal,
knowing as we are known –
indeed, face to face.

O Lord, hear our prayer,
through Jesus Christ our Lord.