

PLYMOUTH CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH

1900 Nicollet Avenue
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Pastoral Prayer
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Executive Minister

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God, who freely gives us so many blessings, are you pleased with our thanksgiving? Do our hymns of gratitude gladden your heart? Will your countenance shine upon us as we go around the table this Thanksgiving Day reciting all our blessings, or at least the ones that come to mind?

We ask because at times some of us worry about our gratitude and how you hear us. We wonder if you sense awkwardness in our praise or discomfort in our thanksgiving. We wonder because we know that even the poor among us are counted among the world's most wealthy. The cornucopia of our possessions spills forth with an accumulation that thrills us, but also troubles our conscience. How can we be appropriately grateful when many of our possessions come at the expense of others? How can we thank you for our abundance when we remember the sore shoulders and callused fingers of laborers who reap much less than they sow? How can we say grace over a table that holds too much when we know someone nearby has no table and no home at all? How can we praise you aright from the top of an unbalanced economy? Does this injustice mute our praise? Does overabundance contaminate our prayers? Are you pleased with our thanksgiving?

God, make a pathway through abundance. Take us by the hand and lead us through our accumulation of things to truly holy treasures. Guide us as we seek pure and godly blessings hidden among our possessions: the gift of good health and the mystery of life itself, the joy of human love and the consolation of faithful companions, the challenge and nurture of our faith and churches that support us even in our doubt, friendship and song this morning that build bridges between us. For countless blessings that we receive and even those we feel we justly earn, we thank you without hesitation, without guilt, only with pure joy and hearts filled with praise.

And, what can we say about our many other blessings: the ones that seem too rich, too abundant, too much? Help those of us who have more than we need to accept the yoke of responsibility that comes with our privilege. Guard us from the dangers of affluence and awaken our passion for equity and justice. "O God, help us to see that no wealth is good unless it brings blessings to others. May our observance of this festival teach us not to withhold from others a share in the bounty that is ours, and not to dispossess them of what they have gleaned by their own efforts." (1)

Let our thanksgiving be pleasing to you. We recall the words of your prophet Amos: "Let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream." Help us offer our praise in words that give voice to the needs of others. Let us sing songs of thanksgiving that harmonize with your righteousness. Let our gratitude be expressed in a deep and passionate commitment to those who struggle for justice. Let us always be conscious of those who bear the weight of others' wealth and therefore let us be humble in affluence and ever vigilant in meeting the needs of the underpaid, the overworked and the hungry. Let us be mindful of the strain that abundance places upon creation and let us be deeply committed to its preservation.

Help us, O God, to be truly thankful, but also to be **justly** thankful for the rich and abundant blessings in our lives. Aid us always as we strive to express our thanks in righteous living that flows like an unending stream from deep reservoirs of faith.

Amen.

1. From the Evening Service for the Sabbath in Sukkot found in Gates of Prayer; The New Union Prayer Book, published by the Central Conference of American Rabbis, 1977.