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Pastoral Prayer  
February 22, 2026

The three Abrahamic faiths are grounded in the wisdom found in the Old Testament books of prophecy: Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekial, Amos, Micah and others. These prophets call out, as if from the mountaintops, for people to see – to see *clearly* - the truths within society that are unfolding around them. I offer you my favorite definition of a prophet:

“A prophet critiques the dominant ideology, articulates the public pain and seeks creative solutions.”

We, as a church, need both the pastoral and the prophetic arms of ministry. The times we are living in now necessitate courageous prophecy and tenacious reliance on the strength we find in one another.

Would you join me in prayer...

God of wonder and mercy, God whom we come to know in the smallest of miracles and in the biggest of hearts, be beside us this morning in this house or worship, we pray. We need you beside us. Today. Always.

God of the ages, we find ourselves living in a time of confusing contrasts. The world around us will soon be blanketed with a magically beautiful, pure, white coverlet that masks the pain and suffering of so many. In each snowflake there is a miracle of exquisitely delicate symmetry – and yet there are far too many people who will wander this night in the cold, seeking shelter. There is a harmony of purpose shared by hundreds of thousands of people seeking courageously to build a better world, and yet there is the nagging torment of a chasm growing deeper that separates those in power from the will and welfare of the common man and woman and child.

You, O Lord, have called **us** to be prophets; to be courageous in speaking truth into the miasma of confusion of our day and time; to name and expose the domineering ideology. People are hurting. People are frightened and fearful. People are suffering.

And this we know: *we are* called to love, to seek justice, to enact mercy, to broadcast far and wide a ministry of compassion and grace. We **know** of suffering around us, we cannot pretend to be unaware, and we so we must speak boldly to mitigate it. We must roll up our sleeves, and lay bare our hearts, for the good of the many who need our voices, our solidarity and our unconditional love.

In the week to come, we pray that You, God of mercy, would minister to whatever sadnesses haunt us. Help us to hear your steady and clear voice of love that reaches into the depths of our loneliness and our nagging feelings of inadequacy. Help us, God of wisdom, to find the clarity of purpose we need in these times when confusion reigns around us. Help us to resist the siren voices that urge us to look away from suffering; to attend only to our own wants and needs.

The world around us is vast – is varied- is beautiful in its diversity. Help us to know how to fully wrap our arms of mercy around the width and breadth of all those You love. Help us, in the week to come, to be a people of mercy... a people of grace... a people of unconditional love... a people of justice and truth... a people of courage...a people of prophecy.

All this we pray, claiming the promise that You are always at our side; and in the name of your son, Jesus the Christ. Amen.