

Intro.**(SEATED ON STOOL)**

Here it is, God ... another Sunday morning ... another day to worship you ... prime time for those like me who you've called to minister in your church

The pulpit's open and the people want to hear from your Word ...

But right now I feel I need to pray to you ...

Father, there's a bunch of things I feel like telling you this morning ... will you listen?

Current financial situation in our church

- Thanks for year just ended & generosity shown to end strong, but ...
- Lament that we couldn't support outside ministries as strongly as we hoped
- For hearts of continued and growing generosity, grounded in your extravagance
(STAND BY altar table, hold up Christ candle)

For congregation to feel unity despite ...

- Diversity of religious backgrounds
- Theological diversity
- Diversity in our politics, esp. in this election year
- Diversity of our economic levels
- Diversity of marital and family situations

For MCUSA

- With so many divisions we don't even know what unity looks like
- For forces & beliefs that hold us together to be stronger than those that divide us
(RETURN TO STOOL)

For the needs & hurts among us

- Open our eyes to the hidden racism among us & the privilege we can't see, which keeps us separated from those who look different from us
- For those who feel wounded by the actions of others
- For those who feel powerless in situations beyond their control
- For those feeling confused & bewildered about the future

Not only for the people of this church, but for others who will believe in you through them

- Their own children & grandchildren
- People they may help bring to Jesus Christ
- People whose lives they have positively influenced
(LEAN AGAINST PULPIT)

Thanks for those you've given me in this congregation

- You know how much I love the people of this church, how my heart is with them & how good it felt to return here to them after being away last summer
- People of WMC have been your gift to me, as well as a holy trust
(KNEEL ON PLATFORM)

For your message to get thru to them in me and thru me despite ...

- My mistakes as a pastor
- My stubbornness and sometimes controlling nature
- My many distractions
- God, don't let me get in the way of ministry happening among these special people! Be glorified, Lord! Amen