

**A Bidding Prayer of Confession and Pardon
for the Renewal of Cheraw First United Methodist Church**

In a time of great distress in Israel, the prophet Joel sounded a call. So hear the Joel's invitation: "Between the vestibule and the altar let the priests, the ministers of the LORD, weep and say, 'Spare thy people, O LORD, and make not thy heritage a reproach, a byword among the nations. Why should they say among the peoples, 'Where is their God?'" (3:17).

O Lord our God, your church in every place is the body of Christ, the people for whom your Son came and taught, died and rose, and through whom he touches a broken world. It is dear to him, as precious as a bride, and he knows well the failings of his people and their pastors. Forgive us for any way that we have neglected or scorned or discounted this local church and not kept our baptismal promises.

Grant us a fresh and deep love, O Lord, for one another as followers of Jesus.

Awaken us, O Lord, to all who are not "our kind of people," because Jesus came and died for all. Forgive us for often appearing as a closed club of the prosperous and well-dressed and for being concerned more about appearances than the pains of a lost and dying world at our doorstep. Save us from the nostalgia of the "good ole days" and give us faith and courage to be remade for a new future with you and this town.

Open our eyes, Lord Jesus, that we may see clearly your purposes for this church.

You have sent us pastors, O Lord, some of whom were faithful to the faith and loving of the people, others who stumbled in their duties, and still others who betrayed their calling and left us angry and weak. Forgive us for asking them to do our work as well as their own, for all the gossip and attacks that have made us hard to serve, but most of all for not praying for them and welcoming them into our hearts.

Be our Shepherd, Lord Jesus, and help us to love, support, and forgive our pastors.

How foolish we have been, O Lord, to fill our lives with endless entertainments and to neglect the disciplines of daily Scripture reading and prayer in our homes. How often we spout the false wisdoms of a fallen world rather than the truths hidden in plain sight in your Book. Our desires are disordered, and we ask for new hunger for the knowledge of you found only in Holy Scripture.

Clear our hearts and minds of clutter, that we may read and obey your Word together.

For all the times that we have resisted and grieved the Holy Spirit whose whispers and calls we ignored and explained away, and whose gifts we spurned. For reducing this living faith in Jesus into a manageable religion. For the people we dismissed as problems. For choosing the ways of convenience rather than the company of the suffering Jesus. For spending your tithe on our stuff.

Shake us loose, O Lord, from these sins, and restore to us the adventure of being your followers.

O God of holy love, who created us male and female for each other, the wreckage of broken families is all around us. We have winked at immorality as a private choice. We have let our own people crash and burn rather than go to them with the offer of mercy and restoration. We have lived without the disciplines of love, and we have created an unholy mess. The world ignores us and looks for help elsewhere. Our fences are down, our garden full of weeds, our fruit small and withered. Our hope is not in our plans but in you.

Today we plead for a long season of repentance and restoration. We are eager to change our ways.

A Hymn of Confession and Hope
for the Spiritual Renewal of First UMC, Cheraw SC
To the tune *Sweet Hour* [8.8.8.8 Double]
Lyrics by Pastor Phil Thraillkill, Interim Minister (July-September, 2020)
Composed September 6-7, 2020

1. There was a time when we were young,
When faith was full and hope was strong,
We loved God's Book and followed on,
Behind the one who bore the cross./
The people came and lives were changed,
We grew in strength and gained a name,
We took a stance and drew a line,
Our people were the best in town.

2. But something happened with the years,
We took our ease and lost our way,
We climbed the heights and with each step,
Grew proud and distant from the poor./
And now we are the lowly lot,
Bitter the fruit of our neglect,
Of love and prayer, now cold and stale,
Turning to everyone but you.

3. As money shrinks and people go,
We guard the house and hope in vain,
A priest will come and save us all,
With magic wand and winsome smile/
But you, O Lord, this church is yours,
Without a change will close its doors,
So break our hearts and change our minds,
to seek your face in trying times.

4. The grace of change is what we need,
to turn to you with all our hearts,
to weep and seek, to wait in hope,
that you may visit us again./
So come, O Lord, in all your power,
And shake us loose from all our sloth,
Rouse us to welcome our great friend,
And follow Jesus once again.