1. **Intercession**

*Silence follows each sentence*

God of grace and compassion:

You hear us in our silence as well as our words,

So hear us as we pray for those we love…

For those who suffer from illness, loneliness, illness or disability…

For all who are depressed, anxious, troubled in spirit or troubled by circumstances…

For the family in all its forms, that it may be affirmed and nurtured in our society…

For people all over the world who live under a cloud of oppression or worry about their health and welfare…

For the beauty of the earth and all its gifts that they may bring hope and healing…

Hear our prayers, O Lord, and grant us your peace.

1. **For our lives and gifts**

God of wisdom and understanding,

We search for appropriate words to say as we come to you in prayer.

When words fail us, let us speak to you through our silence, knowing that you hear us in all times and places.

Our lives are filled with so many wants, that we often forget how you provide for our needs.

Show us the joy of simplicity, and enable us to grow in our appreciation for the goodness of life :

for the caring of friends,

the love of family,

the familiarity of home and community,

the freshness of a spring morning,

and the quiet solace of the night.

Awaken us to the signs of your love and concern for us.

We find much of life which is mysterious and unknowable.

Grant us the fortitude and strength to cope with devastating news, and to address our failures and to accept our limitations.

Give us a vision and understanding of what we can do to promote and encourage health and healing.

We pray for the gifts of the spirit:

For patience,

Joy and faithfulness.

Through these qualities, may we grow into our true likeness as your children, according to the example of Jesus Christ our Lord.

1. **Prayer of Intercession**

*After each sentence a period of silence is kept*

In our silence, we pray

For those who love…

For those who are unloved…

For the church and all the possibilities awaiting us for ministry, mission, and service making disciples…

For the needs of our community in this time of severe stress..

For the soul of our nation…

For our neighbours, our friends and those who pass by on the other side.

In the name of Jesus our compassionate Lord.

1. **Foul Weather Companions**

When the sky is bright blue with clear sailing ahead,

When your worries are few and your troubles have fled,

You can guarantee that you will be surrounded by friends,

As if on your favour their future depends.

When your pockets are full and the world is at your feet,

You will get invitations to join the elite.

For it is not too hard then for some folks to be nice.

They will fuss and flatter and seek your advice.

The question to ask yourself once in a while,

When you are getting a slap on the back with a smile,

Is, What will become of your fair weather friends,

When the going gets rough and your influence ends?

Can you count on them, when you need their support,

When good fortune has evaporated and your efforts fall short?

That is the test! The best are the foul weather companion

who are still by your side when the fair weather ends!

1. **What is Hope?**

Hope cannot be achieved alone. It must in some way or other be an act of a community, whether the community be a church or a nation or just two people struggling together to produce liberation in each other. People develop hope in each other, hope that they will receive help from each other. As with the imagination, we tend always to think of hope as that final act which is my own, in isolation and in self assertion. But it I not this at all; this interpretation is, in fact, one source of its dubious and sentimentalised reputation

William Lynch, *Images of Hope: Imagination as Healer of the Hopeless* (Notre Dame : University Press, 1974, page24

1. **Brief statement of Faith, PCUSA**

We trust in God the Holy Spirit,

Everywhere the giver and renewer of life.

The Spirit justifies us by grace through faith,

Sets us free to accept ourselves and to love God and neighbour.

And binds us together with all other believers

In the one body of Christ, the Church.

The same Spirit

Who inspired the prophets and apostles

Rules our faith and life in Christ through Scripture,

Engages us through the Word proclaimed,

Claims us in the waters of baptism,

Feeds us with the bread of life and the cup of salvation,

And calls women and men to all ministries of the Church.

In a broken and fearful world

The Spirit gives us courage

To pray without ceasing,

To witness among all peoples to Christ as Lord and Saviour,

To unmask idolatries in church and culture,

To hear the voices of peoples long silenced,

And to work with others for justice, freedom and peace.

In gratitude to God, empowered by the Spirit,

We strive to serve Christ in our daily tasks

And to live holy and joyful lives,

Even as we watch for God’s new heaven and new earth,

Praying , ‘Come, Lord Jesus’

1. **Unbearable**

When something terrible happens to someone else, people often use the word ‘unbearable’. Living through a child’s death, a spouse’s, enduring some other kind of permanent loss – it is unbearable, it is too awful to be borne, and the person or people to whom it has happened take on a terrible glow in your mind, because they are in fact bearing it, or trying to : doing the thing that is impossible to do. There are times when bearing burdens seem impossible.

Such is the challenge we all face at some time and have to stand by others when they face them.

1. **Bearing out**

Dr Michael Lindvall of Brick Presbyterian Church, New York writes in: *The Christian Life : A Geography of God* (Louisville : Geneva, 2001), page 59

Instead of asking , ‘What did you get out of that service?’, he suggests, ‘the better question might be: What did you lose in that service? What burden did you drop at the foot of the cross? What pride did you shed? What gnawing anger are you going home without? What lie do you no longer believe?’

1. **Love of God**

In a sermon by Eugenia Gamble , she presents us with a series of poetic images of what cannot be described or even approached : the love of God.

God’s lightening love is like an ocean, emerald green,

Cool and gentle in which we can see to the bottom and wiggle our toes.

It is like an ocean dark and churning all foam and unexpected tumbles.

It is like an oxygen mist with just a hint of albuterol that slips new

Life into scarred lungs and sets them free.

It is like new glasses and spring flowers and poems by old masters

And sleeping dogs.

It is like a drip of honey on a finger or like a mother lifting a car

To free a child.

It is like rain on parched clay,

Like the little word ‘maybe’ in the midst of despair.

Like a photograph of old days that never end and like something

Shiny, new and unbroken.

It is like a hand offered for nails.

It is like nothing we know and everything we long for.

1. **Prayer for children**

God of all peoples and places, God of all children of all ages,

We come before you to offer our prayers for you people.

Yu who were born a child in a world that had no room for you,

Hear our prayers for the children of the world.

For the children who put chocolate fingers everywhere, who delight to stomp in puddles

The children who stare from shut windows and cannot plat or run about as they might like

The children who have little food and no treats and have no blanket to drag behind them

The children whose monsters are real, who go to bed hungry, and are starved for love and affection

The children who want to be carried and those who must be carried, those who do not get a second chance, and those who will grab the hand of anyone kind enough to offer it.

Jesus, child of Bethlehem, we pray for all your children –of this church family and all families.

Give us the love to bless, keep and hold all your children with love, though Jesus Christ our Lord

1. **Communication**

We give you thanks for the wonders of communication

Smiles, waves, words, music, all means of us telling our story

Telephones, radios, televisions, mobiles, the internet and digital devices

Allowing us to hear and learn what is going on in our world and in the lives of those we love

Enable us, by your grace,

To have the ability to communicate more clearly and readily with our friends and colleagues,

Prevent misunderstandings which arise unnecessarily and lead to anger and mistrust.

Teach us to respect, honour and care for all with whom we communicate, so that the world may become a more harmonious place

Through Jesus Christ our Lord.

1. **Depression**

There are many times when we become depressed, and often we know why.

The news, the tensions and the anxiety which surrounds us infiltrates our minds.

Sometimes we do not know why and darkness overwhelms us coming from who knows where.

We feel clouds of despair hanging over us, so dark an our future seems lost in the depths.

Enable us to see hope in the care that surrounds those we love

The kindness of strangers,

The rhythm of the seasons

The laughter of children

The comfort and warmth of our homes

And the hope we have in the self- giving love of Jesus our crucified and risen Saviour

In whose name we pray.

1. **Hunger**

Many people in the world today are

Hungry for food,

Hungry for knowledge,

Hungry for love.

Strengthen us so that we never take these things for granted.

Enable us to use the knowledge, gifts and skills we have to the best of our ability, in the service of others.

Open our eyes to the opportunities we have each day to

Feed the needs of others from the resources you have given us

Satisfy the longings for championship through our fir ship.

Enlighten those deprived of education by our willingness to share our knowledge and insight.

May all your children begin to know the love and care you have for creation and our lives, as Jesus taught us.

1. **Hospital**

Gracious God

We ask you to bless our hospitals this day.

Guide, protect and encourage us as the staff face the challenges of the sick and those who love them

Inspire them and with strength in times of sadness and when physical resources are exhausted.

Comfort and care for everyone sick and suffering and all who work with them to support the ill and the vulnerable so that they may carry out their duties conscientiously,

In the name of the love of Jesus.