

Rev. Karen Hagen (Tippecanoe Presbyterian Church) was given the honor of offering the opening prayer for the Wisconsin legislature Tuesday, March 24, 2021. Her reflective prayer follows:

There's a difference between preaching and praying.

So in preparation for praying, let's reflect together for a moment....like we are doing at Tippe Church...reflect on what we've each learned about ourselves this year...learned about what it means to be a human being during a pandemic in such a divisive time.

What have you learned about...your...self?

I'm learning:

I cry...and laugh more now...because now I am paying attention.

I thought I had been listening, but now realize how often I was listening to those who are already in my bubble...I have been naïve and complicit.

I've experienced a palpable difference between trying to convince someone of my point of view vs. coming alongside them curious to understand the nuances of theirs...their chosen means to what is often, a common goal.

I've learned to ask someone I might have previously argued with:

"If you are right about that, what might happen next?" And so...create possibility for them to discover the complexities or wrinkles in their own thinking.

And I am learning to examine the unintended wrinkles and complexities in my preferred thinking, too. I am learning how humility and empathy shape possibility for moving forward together.

I remember:

"It isn't what I don't know that gets me in trouble. It's what I am sure of."

"That it is hard to hate someone when I know their story."

"That people don't care what I know till they know that I care."

What have you learned about yourself? Really. In all humility.

What is the hope you most need to hear today?

Let us pray:

Holy One, we sigh a sigh too deep for words this day!

How humbled we are to be in a position to creatively address real needs through our Assembly deliberations.

Surely, God, You are in this place...within each one here gathered.

You are present here with us just as surely as You are with all of our state's children, with those who have lost their jobs and health insurance. You are surely with those who are hungry and the increasing number of homeless....and those who give themselves to the struggles of justice through lawful protest and needed advocacy.

Surely, they are also here with us today.

May we have ears to hear Your voice in theirs.

God, You are in this place just as surely as You are with each person who has been stricken or died in this horrid pandemic...



Rev. Karen Hagen and Rep. Christine Sinicki

may they know Your exquisite peace.

Surely you are with...

those who mourn, front line workers in medical settings and those in jobs deemed essential even as their pay is legally, although not morally, minimal...

Surely You are with those seeking vaccines and needed affordable, accessible medical care, as well as parents and teachers trying to keep our children safe.

You are with those who live isolated and those who feel disconnected.

Surely You are in this place as You are with each one who voted this past year prompting a miraculous turnout during a pandemic building our trust in each other to live into the scared trust of citizenship.

And now, You place Your trust upon this body.

A trust to let go of long-held opinions and faulty assumptions to discover possibility.

A trust to let go of the false dichotomies of right or wrong, left or right, Republican or Democrat, rich or poor, lgbtq+ or heterosexual, bipoc or white.

In Your sight and wisdom, we are a continuum of people...all held within Your embrace.

Help us find Your wisdom in our inner being and a renewed heart with a sustaining spirit...to care deeply in this moment for all those who live in Wisconsin...not only those in our own districts.

In seeking Your common good for all Wisconsinites may we remember the words of Jesus regarding the poor always being with us...until we embrace His profound understanding that well-being trickles up, not down.

In a year like no other...with broken open hearts, let our eyes see through their eyes, our hearts hurt like their hearts.

Our hopes align with their hope...Your hope.

Surely You are in this place.

What would You have us do?

What is Your hope for us?

Help us free ourselves to do justice and love kindness

and walk humbly...

with all our brothers and sisters.

In You all things are possible.

We pray in the name of the One who loves us. Amen.