

We have told them to wait for freedom, justice and equality.
We foster in them *a denigrating sense of nobodiness.* **Lord, have mercy.**

Or perhaps we have kept silence ourselves
in the face of their struggle for full human life.
For it is not solely hateful words and actions,
but also appalling silence that follows the path of oppression. **Christ, have mercy.**

Perhaps our sin is to give in to weariness, discouragement, bitterness:
You have called us to be *drum majors for justice, peace and righteousness,*
Yet the work of peace and justice overwhelms us at times,
To build with God the Beloved Community seems impossible,
and we grow weary.
We cry, "Peace, peace,"
but there is no peace within us or around us.
We find ourselves on the path
of hatred and oppression, violence and war. **Lord, have mercy.**

ASSURANCE OF PARDON (*Isaiah 62:1-5*)

Sisters and brothers, God is at work in us and with us!
God has promised:
"I will not keep silent and I will not rest
until the vindication of my beloved people
shines out like the dawn and their salvation like a burning torch.
My people shall no more be termed 'forsaken'
and their land shall no more be termed 'desolate.'"
We remember that you have given your Beloved people a new name:
"My delight is in them."

**Thank you, God for delighting in us even now,
for forgiving us our slow action, our silence and our weariness,
for empowering our work
and inviting us once again
to create with you the Beloved Community you long for.**

*Phrases from the speeches of Martin Luther King, Jr. have been woven into the prayer texts. They are identified by italics. Texts of King's work are available in **A Testament of Hope: The Essential Writings of Martin Luther King, Jr.**, edited by James M. Washington; © 1986 Coretta Scott King. A brief essay on King's understanding of the term "Beloved Community" is available at <http://www.wilpf.org/mlk/sbelovedcommunity>.*

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God is still speaking,
**UNITED CHURCH
OF CHRIST**

