

February 11, 2021

Oh Loving God of Each and Every One of Us,

As the Lenten season draws near, we come to you tonight and always confessing our need for you and your inclusive love that transforms everything. We do so mindful of the six plus week journey ahead of remembering our sin, brokenness, and mortality, but also with the hope and faith of forgiveness and resurrection that we'll celebrate on Easter Sunday.

But tonight, we gather as your people confessing that we need you and your love, Oh God.

We need your love because we so often limit it.

We limit it by creating and assigning labels to people in ways that benefit us, especially those of us in positions of power and privilege. We label people as black, white, or brown. We become obsessed with where people are born assigning ultimate value and labels based on what side of human created borders they were born. Instead of learning each other's names, we spend more time being concerned about the title that precedes each others' names or the letters that follow them. Sometimes, oh God, we are even arrogant enough to label some people saved and some others as damned taking away what only you have the right to determine.

Tonight, as we come to learn from, with, and about the transgender community, we confess that gender is yet another category that we have created that artificially labels your created people. This has caused great harm. It has caused the loss of life.

We confess that we are obsessed with labels because it is so often easier for us to label one another than it is to actually get to know one another. We label because with labels we can claim power and deny it from others. We label because we want to know who is "in" and who is "out."

Any yet we confess and proclaim with relief that with you and your love, no one is "in" and no one is "out." We simply are. The only label you place on us is "beloved child of God," the God who created and loves each and every one of us.

So help us God. We want to do better. We know with your help, we can.

So as we've gathered tonight and as we'll do in coming weeks, help us to come tonight with eager and open hearts and minds. Challenge and inspire us tonight. Help us to leave tonight, yes with more information, but also as changed people. Let the stories and information we'll hear tonight change us. Let it motivate us to do better. Break our hearts tonight if that is what is needed to love like you and then inspire and convict us to act on that love.

Indeed, help us to shed the labels that we have used as crutches to interact with one another and instead help us to simply love, label free. With your help and the support of others on this

call tonight we can do this. Our siblings who are part of the transgender community need us to do this. Their lives so often depend on it.

So with your help, let it be so.

In the name of Your Son, Jesus, who looked and looks beyond every label we create to be with each of us, we offer this prayer together.

Amen.

Offered by the Rev. Nathan Adams,  
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