

God ascended on high,

- For your universal love that permeates every particle of the cosmos, we praise you.
- For the steadfast faithfulness of your courtship with planet earth, we celebrate.
- For the intricacy with which you have knit each of us together, we marvel.
- For your merciful patience that out matches our stubbornness, we are relieved.
- For the sharpness of your truth that pierces all that is fake and false, we shudder.
- For your justice that is oftentimes wounded yet shall not be overcome, we rejoice.

We gather in this space to draw on your love, O God.

We gather in this space to be operated on by the scalpel of your truth.

We gather in this space to be washed by your mercy and enthused by your justice.

We gather to be reminded of who you are for we confess that we not only forget who you are but we have a tendency to create you in our own image. Shaped by our prejudicial fears and self-interested desires. Remind us today that you are no-one's private mascot to be stroked to secure success. Remind us today that you are the great lover of the world – the whole world. That there is a wideness in your love and depth to your justice that we cannot measure or plumb...but which Jesus embodied and revealed. Revealed in his words and his ways. Open us to his word today and teach us his ways.

We gather to admit that when we forget who you are ... we forget who we are called to be.

When we forget you are loving ... we forget we are loved...and when we forget we are loved ... we struggle to love. Instead, we strive for affirmation through endless performance – this exhausts, more than it satisfies. We wear ourselves out on a never-ending hamster wheel of comparison and competition. Christ have mercy.

When we forget you are the creator of all creation, we forget to care for the soil from which you molded us, the air you breathed into us, the water that flows through us. Instead, we thoughtlessly destroy what you have given to sustain us...and then when we suffer the consequences we cry out: "Why have you forsaken us? Christ have mercy.

When we forget you are merciful...we forget we are forgiven... and we pretend to be innocent – we pretend to be who we are not (again this is exhausting) ... Instead of forgiving as we have been forgiven, we project our own wrongdoing onto others becoming experts in blame and condemnation. Specializing as individuals in the confession of other people's sins. And as a society we search for scapegoats to hold liable – making the already vulnerable more vulnerable. Victimized the victims. Christ have mercy.

When we forget you are just – we forget that you do not have favourites and we begin to believe that you love us more than others – that we are somehow closer to your heart – special and chosen and therefore deserve more blessings – and soon we design society accordingly – feeling justified and righteous – blind to our discriminating policies – believing we have done your will on earth as it is in heaven. Christ have mercy.

When we forget your truth....we forget that it is the truth that sets us free ... so we turn to other things – most often money, believing that if we had just a little more then we will be free. But more proves never enough. And soon we are possessed by what we possess – our hearts entrapped by our treasure. Christ have mercy.

Living God by your Spirit restore our memories today. Restore our minds today. Give us the mind of Christ to recall who you are. Call us back to our true selves. That we may partner you – like Jesus did – in your healing and liberating work in the world.

Amen.