

The Mission of the Lord's Prayer

**Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come,
your will be done, on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins
as we forgive those who sin against us.
Save us from the time of trial
and deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours
now and for ever. Amen.**

Jesus Christ gave us our mission when he said, "Go and make disciples of all nations." (Matthew 28:18). Our mission field includes the ten mile radius around Highland United Methodist Church, home to approximately 62,000 people. Eighty percent of these are unchurched. I have met some of them. Recently at a funeral in Milford, a little girl spotted my Bible and said, "What is that?" "It's a Bible," I responded. She came back, "What is a Bible?"

The unchurched of our neighborhood don't know what a cross is—except as an item of jewelry, or a Bible, or a church. They do not know God or Jesus. If I am to win this little girl to faith in Christ, I'm going to have to start with basic information in words she can understand.

Which brings me to the Lord's Prayer. We've adopted a new version of it for worship on Sundays. We did this for mission. It's important that our prayers be understood by the people we are trying to reach. It's crucial that we speak in the language commonly used by the people in our neighborhood. The Lord's Prayer is essential to teach new believers and a fundamental of Biblical worship.

The Prayer was originally spoken by Jesus in Aramaic—the language of Palestine in his day. Matthew and Luke rendered the prayer into Greek. All English translations are based on the New Testament Greek. For centuries two major

English versions of the prayer were used, one from the King James Bible dating from 1611 and the other from the Book of Common Prayer published in 1668. The 1668 Book of Common Prayer version is the one most church people are familiar with. The version we are introducing was produced in 1985 by an international consultation of scholars representing all the major denominations: Catholic, Protestant and Orthodox. Their goal was simple: produce a contemporary version that would honor the traditional form, eliminate misunderstandings and provide a prayer that all churches could pray together.

Language changes. No one uses "thee" anymore and this can be confusing to a non-believer. It is a simple thing to render this with a contemporary "you". The word "hallowed" was kept because it is still in use today as in "hallowed ground" or "hallowed memory" and there is no other available synonym. "Trespases" is replaced by "sin." "Sin" is the word that Luke used in his gospel. (Lk 11:4) "Sin" is also unmistakable and requires no explanation unlike "debt" or "trespass".

The phrase "Lead us not into temptation" causes confusion and misunderstanding. The Greek word here is *peirasmos* and two errors are to be avoided when translating it. One is to believe that God would entice people to sin.

(See James 1:13) The second is to limit its meaning to situations of being lured into sin. *Peirasmos* refers broadly to circumstances of extreme suffering and persecution that might cause one to renounce his faith. "Trial" is a more accurate word capturing the original meaning and being far more accessible to the unchurched. In 1668 "temptation" had this broader meaning but in 2017 it means exclusively the enticement to sin. The phrase "Save us from the time of trial" requires no

explanation and restores Jesus' original meaning lost to modern ears unaware of language shifts since 1668.

Change is hard. I am not here to serve me. I am here to serve my King and bring his Gospel to the 80% of my neighbors who don't know him. I have got to teach myself to speak their language.

In Hope and Confidence,

Pastor Tom