

Pastoral Prayer
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Susan Cooke Kittredge
Charlotte Congregational Church, UCC

Thank you, God, for the beauty of this land. In a political landscape of acrimony and discord, you do your best to call us beyond bickering, leading us to point fingers not at each other but at the beauty of your creation. You've done well at getting our attention, and we are chagrined that it takes such a spectacular display to turn us from our spitting, to open our eyes and still our tongues. For those nevertheless intent on marching forward in our own self-centered way, for those of us who cannot lift our heads to the hills for one reason or another, you have the leaves fall where we will see them, at our feet. So if we steal a moment from all that nags at us and manage to go out for one short walk, you lay a red carpet before us. You rejoice at our having come, you turn yourself inside out like the dog who greets us at end of day.

And yet we notice leaves with black blotches on them, maples mostly, some trees not vibrant but spotted. Tar spot fungus we are told, not fatal but a blight of sorts that lives in fallen leaves. So it is with our lives, with a country, a world where all is not always radiant. People are hungry, sad, angry, neglected, abused, blighted by poverty, condemned by racism, prejudice and greed to live on the margins of brilliance, to be wounded leaves in a forest of plenty.

Guide us, O Holy One to pause in our delight and reverence and consider the afflicted leaves in our world and in our lives. May each fallen leaf inspire our prayers for healing and reconciliation.

Amen.