

Founders Day 2018

The past year has been one of celebrating God's faithfulness over 125 years. What a wonder that He would choose ordinary people like our founders—and like us—to take forward the gospel. Last year I shared how celebration has long been a natural rhythm and discipline of communities that follow Christ. This year, I am more conscious than ever of the work that lies before us. After the rhythm of celebration comes the rhythm of work. We have celebrated a great harvest of the past. Now let us pray for the harvest of the future.

But how shall we pray? Let's stop and consider: *What are those things that will not happen in our global ministry unless his hand is on it?* Our answer to this question will be the focus of our prayers.

I have been meditating on the parable of the sower, an example of how we carry the gospel into communities where people are living and dying without Christ. Like the sower, we, too, should sow indiscriminately, scattering seed everywhere, in prayerful hope that some will land in fertile soil. This parable provides us an opportunity to pray for the people in our ministry contexts represented by the types of soil.

This year, I invite the mission family to take one hour each day for three days, December 3-5, to prepare for the next season of sowing. If possible, gather in person with your team. Alternately, join together by Zoom.

On Day 1, we will spend time giving thanks. We may not always cultivate enough gratitude; yet it is vital to clear our hearts of the discouragements that clutter our lives. On Day 2, we will pray as a sower might pray while scattering the seed of the gospel; as a gardener would pray tending the garden; and as a shepherd would pray. And on Day 3, we will end with praise and worship, drenching our hearts

with praises to God for what He is surely going to do with the seeds—*his seeds*—that we are sowing, sometimes with tears. (Ps. 126:5,6)

May the Lord fill you and revive you and your teams with his compelling love.

Joshua Bogunjoko



Prayers of Thanksgiving

Let the message of Christ dwell among you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom through psalms, hymns, and songs from the spirit, singing to God with gratitude in your hearts. Col. 3:16

Let's begin our Founders Days bringing offerings of thanks to God. Together let us remember his mercies, recount his benefits, and recall his care. A heart of thankfulness not only honours God, it blesses us. It weeds out discouragements, plants new seeds of trust, and prepares the way for hope and power to flow into our lives again.

Today we invite you to prepare a program that is tailored to your team and ministry context. There are many verses about giving thanks, many worship songs for singing thanks, and many activities for expressing thanks towards God and others. Here are some suggested activities.

- Take time personally and as a group to list things for which to thank God. These can be personal, for your ministry, your country, etc.
- Write down things you are thankful for on paper or sticky notes. Tape these to a wall in your office, home or place of ministry. Leave them up for a week, stopping to read what others are thankful for, and adding more things as you think of them.
- Spend a few minutes writing down things about your teammates for which you are thankful. Send them thank you cards or a paper where everyone has written what they are thankful for about that colleague. *"Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful."* Col. 3:15
- Share with your group something the Lord has done in 2018 for which you are thankful. *"I will give thanks to you, Lord, with all my heart; I will tell of all your wonderful deeds."* Ps. 9:1
- Spend time singing songs and hymns of thanksgiving. There are many!

Verses of thanksgiving: 1 Chron. 16:34, 1 Chron. 29:13, Ps. 9:1, Ps. 50:23a, Jonah 2:9, Col. 4:2, 1 Thess. 5:16-18, 2 Thess. 1:3, Rev. 5:13, 1 Cor. 15:57, 2 Cor. 9:11, Col. 3:16, 17.



Prayers of Intercession

Yesterday we spent time together giving thanks. Today we will spend time in intercession, using the biblical images of the sower, the gardener, and the shepherd.

PRAY LIKE THE SOWER

“A farmer went out to sow his seed. As he was scattering the seed, some fell along the path; it was trampled on, and the birds ate it up. Some fell on rocky ground, and when it came up, the plants withered because they had no moisture. Other seed fell among thorns, which grew up with it and choked the plants. Still other seed fell on good soil. It came up and yielded a crop, a hundred times more than was sown.’ When he said this, he called out, ‘Whoever has ears to hear, let them hear.’” Luke 8:5-8



Hard Soil

Pray for regions of the world where hearts have been hardened against the Word of God and the gospel of his Son.

Dear Heavenly Father, we pray for regions of our world that have hardened against You. *[Pause to name specific locations.]* We pray for communities where You are not known, where You are least known, or where You were once known but are no longer. We pray for nations where even a hint of the Kingdom of God incites contempt and hatred. We pray against the persecution and violence that comes and snatches away the gospel seed. We pray that you will turn these hard soils into fertile, wet soils where your truth can take root.

Dear Heavenly Father, we pray for those around us whose hearts are so hardened that the gospel sits on top of the soil, unable to sink in at all. *[Pause to consider specific people.]* Please arrange circumstances that will soften their hearts, creating opportunities for the gospel to penetrate a little deeper. In faith, we believe there is no soil too hard for the Holy Spirit to loosen and till in preparation for the Word of the Kingdom. We also pray in Jesus' name against the sin, pride and fear that could come and snatch away the gospel—or snatch away our desire to even try to sow in such places.



PERSONAL OR GROUP:

Dear Heavenly Father, please reveal to me attitudes, behaviours and situations where I have become hardened against your love and against the conviction of your word. *[Pause silently to listen to the Holy Spirit.]* Please forgive me (us) for when this hardened soil becomes a barrier to intimacy with You and to nourishing relationships with co-workers,

neighbours, and those you have called me to serve. I now invite You to break up the soil and enrich it again, so that I can hear and obey your voice, and walk in your love once more. Come, Holy Spirit.

SONG: *Here I Am to Worship*

Rocky Soil

Dear Heavenly Father, we pray for regions of the world that have access to the gospel, but where the soil is shallow and stony. *[Pause to name specific locations.]* In these places, people profess joy and eagerness towards your Word, yet it has not taken root to produce perseverance and fruit when the scorching sun comes. For these places we pray in earnest faith the words of Jeremiah 17:7-8, that [name of place] would become like a tree planted by the water, sending out its roots by the stream. It does not fear when heat comes; its leaves are always green. It has no worries in a year of drought and never fails to bear fruit. Lord God, we bless that [name of place] with this prayer, and we raise our eyes to see your answer coming!

Dear Heavenly Father, we pray for those in our community and context whose hearts are shallow, stony soil towards the gospel. *[Pause to consider specific people.]* Please forgive our neighbors for their response to your gospel; we plead with You to pursue them, just as You pursue us, for your name's sake. We pray that through awareness and repentance, the stones in their hearts would be rejected and removed. In your mercy, enrich their soil so that one day, they will have the capacity to fully receive the gospel and welcome its transforming power.

PERSONAL OR GROUP:

Dear Heavenly Father, I know there are areas of my life where I have allowed the gospel to penetrate only in a shallow way. *[Pause silently to consider these areas.]* Our hearts are cluttered with rocks of complaints and stones of discontent. This prevents authentic, lasting transformation and harms our relationships. There are passages of scripture that I read eagerly but apply shallowly. There are scriptures

that I even share with others to exhort them, but I, myself, have not submitted to their truth. Open my eyes to see these stones, grant me grace to reject and remove them, and plant your gospel freshly in my soil, so that my once-stony ground can produce a lush crop.

SONG: *Mighty to Save*



Thorny Soil

Dear Heavenly Father, we pray for regions of the world where the soil is receptive and even fertile for the gospel, but where thorns choke the plants from maturing and bearing fruit. [Pause to name specific locations.] We pray for places where riches, pleasures, lusts and materialism grow unchecked in society and have seeped into the Church. Father, we pray for your Church in thorn-

thick societies, that you would uproot the briars amidst them and protect gospel communities so they can flourish and grow to maturity.

Dear Heavenly Father, we pray for those in our community and context who live lives marked by excess and amusements. [Pause to consider specific people.] We plead for your mercy in cultures and communities where the lust of the flesh, the lust of

the eyes, and the pride of life distract and divert, amuse and engross.

You have said that 'the world and its desires pass away, but whoever does the will of God lives forever.' (1 John 2:17) In your powerful name, we pray for the death of desires that are worldly, and the discovery of desires that are eternal.

PERSONAL OR GROUP:

Dear Heavenly Father, I know there are areas of my life where I have settled for the gospel's power only in limited ways, where I have not been single-minded in my resolve to bear the fruits of discipleship, where I have not submitted myself, as Jesus did, to your will. Forgive me where I have justified partial growth instead of dying to myself to follow fully after You, my Lord and Saviour. Instill in me a distaste for the thorns I have hidden and harboured. Nurture in me a contentment for the slow journey of personal discipleship. Teach me the patience of the farmer in who "waits for the land to yield its valuable crop, patiently waiting for the autumn and spring rains." (James 5:7)



Good Soil

Dear Heavenly Father, we praise you for regions, countries and communities of the world where your gospel seed has taken root, grown to maturity, and is bearing fruit today. *[Pause to name specific locations.]* We praise you for every place where your Church serves its neighbors and sows the gospel, both locally and globally.

There is no place on earth where your gospel flourishes today that was not once held in darkness. There is no place on earth where your gospel flourishes today that did not once receive the ministry of a sower. We praise you that your name is preached, your Word is obeyed, and your love is experienced among untold numbers of communities today. We praise you for evidence of your presence in the details of our days and across the lengthening arc of history. Now we pray that this good soil will produce more fruit and raise up more workers to go where the soil is hard, rocky and thorny.

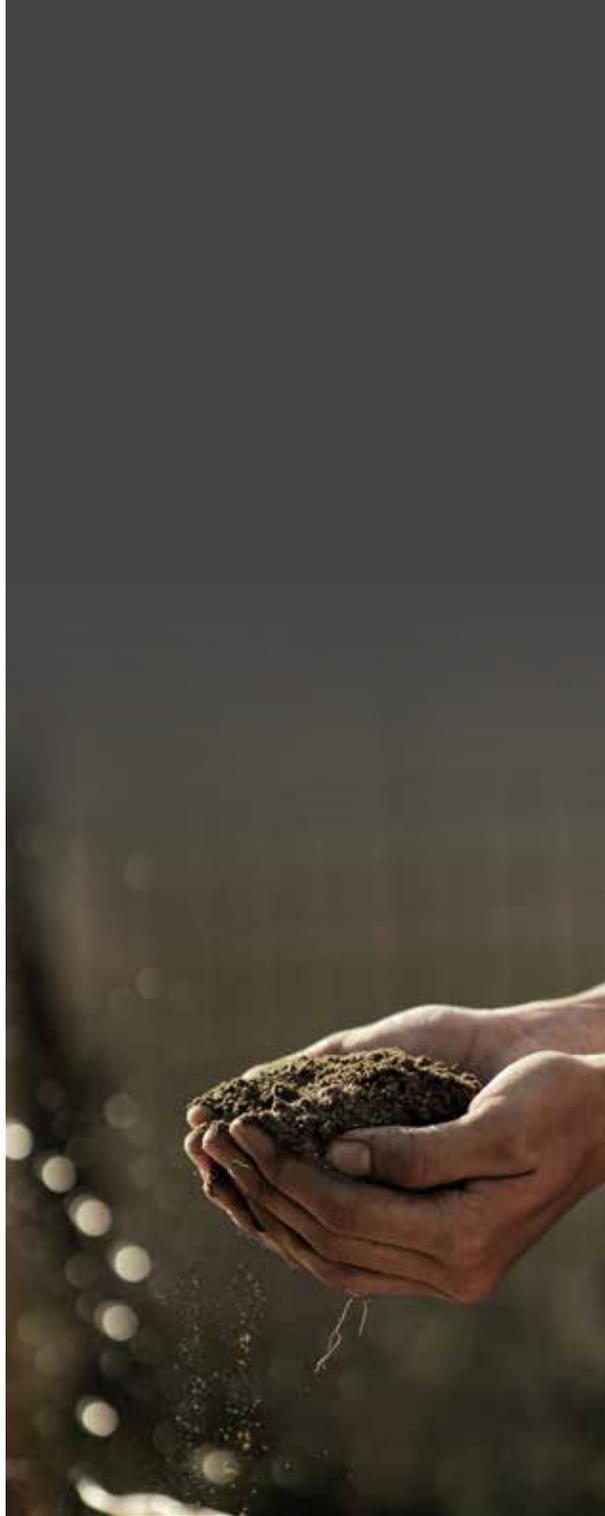
Dear Heavenly Father, we praise you for those in our community and context who are growing in faith and in obedience to You. *[Pause to consider specific people.]* We praise you for believers who are crossing barriers today with the gospel, despite frustrations and hardships. We praise you for every person who is using their gifts and skills to express your love and compassion somewhere in the world. Some may feel that the gospel seed they sow is tiny. But you have promised that the mustard seed—less than all the

seeds on the earth—grows up and becomes a great tree, with branches where birds come and lodge in the shade. (Matt. 13:31,32) Give us, now, abundant fruit—many times what was sown—to the praise of your name and for the spread of your Kingdom.

PERSONAL OR GROUP:

Dear Heavenly Father, I praise You for the grace you daily give me to be and to make disciples. Because of the gift of the indwelling power of your Holy Spirit, I have come thus far. I say with the songwriter, 'Through many dangers, toils and snares I have already come. 'Tis grace has brought me safe thus far, and grace will lead me home!' Make me like a flourishing tree, rooted in a good soil beside streams of water, producing abundant fruit, for your glory's sake. Amen.

SONG: *Amazing Grace*



Care Like The Gardener

Dear Heavenly Father, You have called the whole earth to repentance. Yet countless individuals and communities resist You today. Sometimes this is because they don't know who You truly are. Their image of You is distorted or incomplete. Forgive us for when we have contributed to this distortion, when we have been imperfect reflections of You. Other times they resist because

they are living and dying behind barriers to the gospel that no one has yet crossed. Lord, we humbly ask you to delay your judgement, to lengthen your patience! You are a patient God, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance. (2 Pet. 3:9) Please grant us this so that we, like the gardener, can resume our work with greater love and boldness, in whole-hearted hopes of harvest.

- We pray for more workers to cross barriers into communities where You are least known.
- We pray for local believers—even where there are only a few—to be mobilised, equipped, and filled with your Spirit to proclaim your name.
- We pray for our faithful workers now serving in places where there is no repentance. For them, we pray for patience that is joyful, love that is persistent, and resilience that is trust-filled.

Then he told this parable: "A man had a fig tree growing in his vineyard, and he went to look for fruit on it but did not find any. So he said to the man who took care of the vineyard, 'For three years now I've been coming to look for fruit on this fig tree and haven't found any. Cut it down! Why should it use up the soil?' 'Sir', the man replied, 'leave it alone for one more year, and I'll dig around it and fertilize it.'" Luke 13:6-8



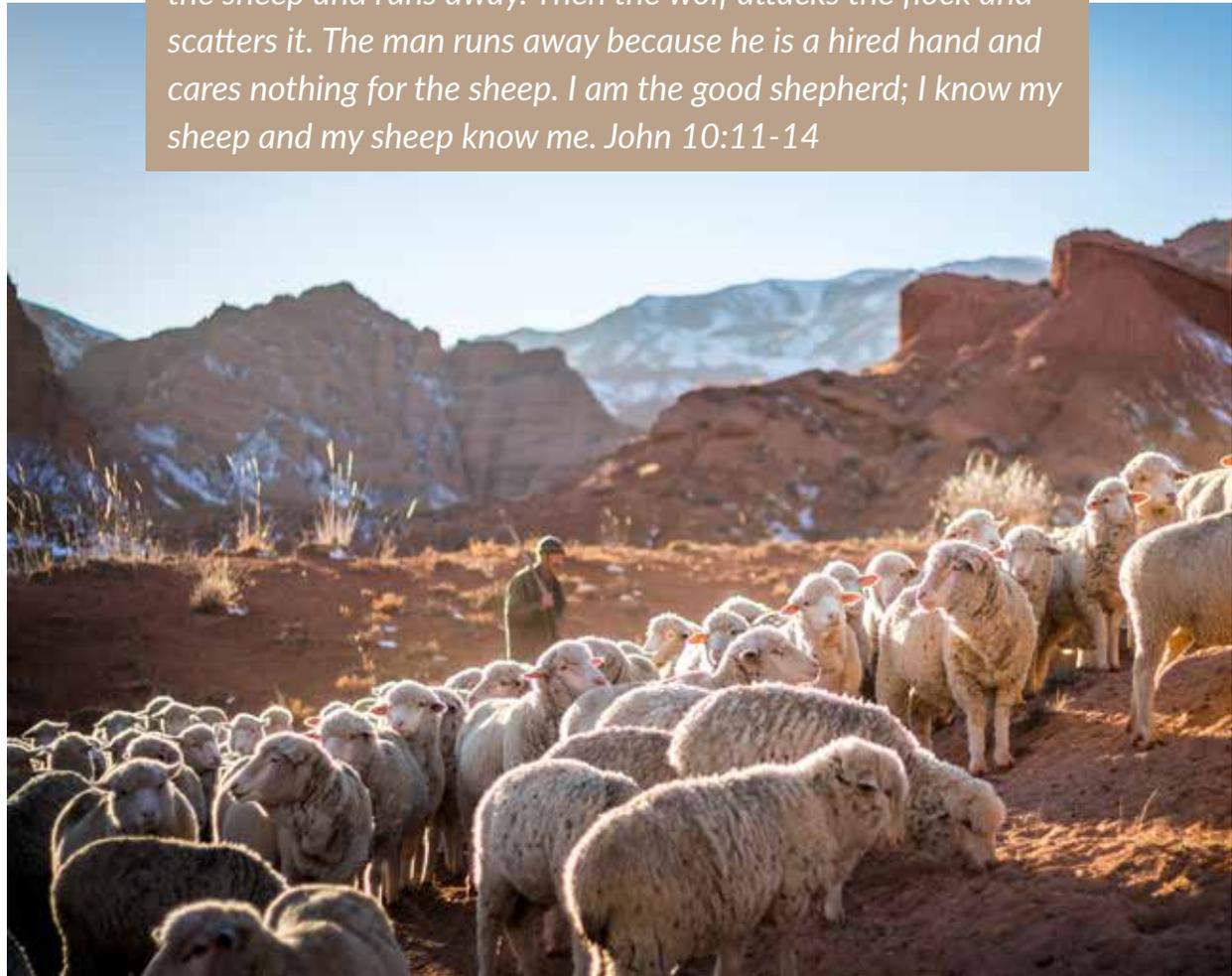
Serve Like The Shepherd

Dear Heavenly Father, You have not called us to safe, predictable places, because the lost do not live in safe, predictable places. You have called us out into hard places, barren places, even dangerous places. We know our souls have an enemy who prowls like a roaring lion, looking for someone to devour. Teach us to recognise and resist the devil, whom You have defeated. Forgive us when we dismiss your call because it is too hard. Forgive us when we rationalise that there is nothing in those barren, desolate places for us when, in fact, there are people in them for You! Grant our desire to live engaged in the neighbourhoods, homes and lives of precious people who are living and dying without You.

- We pray for courage to serve as you served, grace to suffer as you suffered, and perspective to count it all joy.
- We pray for bold witness in contexts undergoing persecution, so that even the chief enemies of your work will, like Paul, fall to their knees in repentance.
- If we cannot be sinless in this broken world, then we pray for greater capacity to repent. May our habit of repentance be caught by those we serve.

SONG: Saviour, Like a Shepherd Lead Us

I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. The hired hand is not the shepherd and does not own the sheep. So when he sees the wolf coming, he abandons the sheep and runs away. Then the wolf attacks the flock and scatters it. The man runs away because he is a hired hand and cares nothing for the sheep. I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me. John 10:11-14

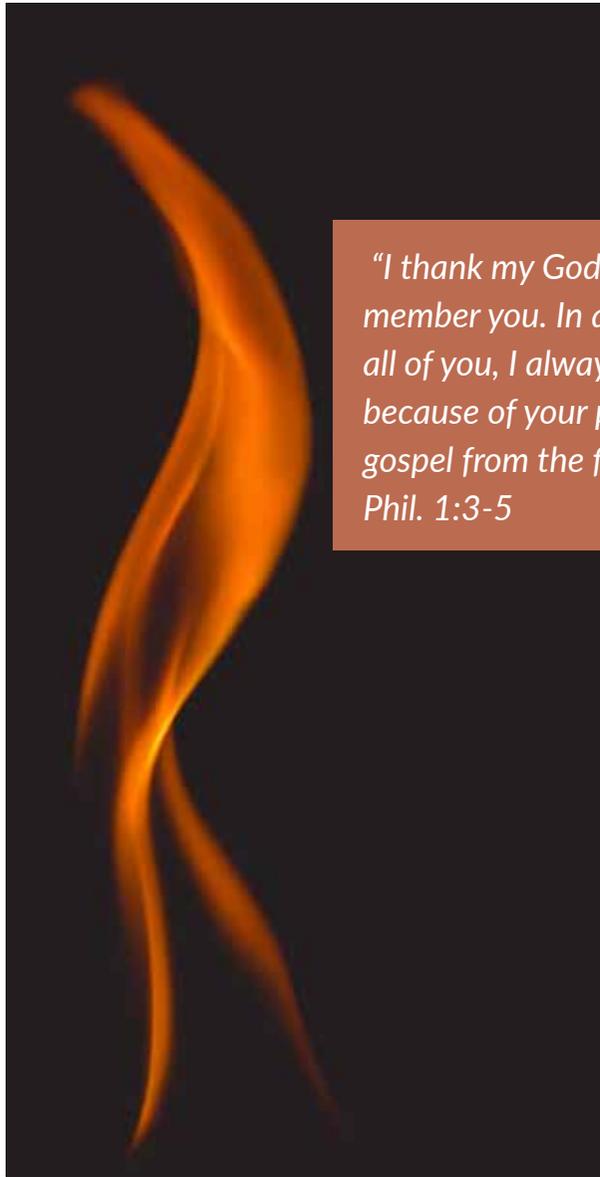


Prayers of Praise

On Day 1, we spent time together giving thanks. Yesterday we spent time in intercession, using the biblical images of the sower, the gardener and the shepherd. Today, let's spend time praising the Lord. Let's praise Him for churches that are mobilised, for the indwelling power of the Holy Spirit, and for all that He will do through us in the coming year.



Praise For Mobilised Churches Near You



*"I thank my God every time I remember you. In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy because of your participation in the gospel from the first day until now."
Phil. 1:3-5*

We praise you, Lord, for the body of Christ everywhere! We praise you where partnerships flourish, where skills join skills in strength, and where diversity is harnessed under your Lordship to further the work of the kingdom. In

c o m m i s s i o n i n g missionaries from the very first church in Acts 13, You did not extract individuals from the church and insert them into disparate posts; rather, You challenged the whole Church to obey your call. Two

thousand years later, we partner with churches everywhere in order that they will accomplish their commission in this new generation.

We pray abundant blessing on every church that partners with SIM, whether in prayer, in resourcing, in sending workers and in doing ministry. I pray abundant blessing on my local church, [name your church]. We pray for more churches to be mobilised into the blessing of missions.

We pray for a spirit of mutuality and trust when it comes to resources, a spirit of welcome and abundance when it comes to diverse people and skills, and a spirit of servanthood when it comes to leadership. May all the peoples praise you, God; may all the peoples praise you. (Psalm 67:3)

We praise you for pastors and church leaders who shepherd your people. For them, we pray renewed vision, protection from sin, encouragement, and effectiveness in service.

Renew our love for the local church, even where it is imperfect. Renew our hope for the Church's role in the world, even where it is fragile. Renew our gratitude for the Church, even when we feel discouraged or hurt.

No ministry can be fully itself by itself. It must draw its purpose and power from fellowship with Christ's body. Therefore, we praise You for koinonia relationships with local bodies of believers in our many contexts. We praise You in your sanctuary! (Psalm 150:1)

SONG: Shout to the North and the South

Praise For The Enabling Power of the Holy Spirit

“After they prayed, the place where they were meeting was shaken. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the Word of God boldly.” Acts 4:31

We praise You, Lord, for the enabling power of the Holy Spirit. Without your Spirit, we would neither perceive nor accomplish your will.

In Acts 4:23-31, we see your followers draw together in prayer during a time of persecution. Your response was to fill them with your Holy Spirit. And then they witnessed *boldly*. Lord, we, too, long to witness boldly.

These early believers simply had to put their faith in You in order for You to fill them. Their faith preceded their action. Who they were in Jesus Christ preceded what they did for Him. This is difficult for us because we sense we are a sent people, a people always going and doing. Teach us, then, to be people of faith.

We praise you for the early believers' dependence on You that caused them to unify their voices together in prayer. Grant us this spirit of dependence on You and unity with each other.

We praise you for how they acknowledged and submitted to your sovereignty. We pray for this perspective and this spirit of submission, too.

We praise you for their knowledge of the Scriptures, for their awareness of history which is often marked by rebellion against you. Grant us this knowledge of Scripture and the correct perspective it gives us.

We praise you for their astonishing prayer for boldness amidst their own persecution. Grant us, too, this astonishing prayer for boldness amidst our own troubles and suffering. We pray for the grace to sincerely request your healing and power to be displayed among those who hold You now in contempt.

SONGS: *Spirit of the Living God, Fall Afresh on Me; There's a Sweet, Sweet Spirit in this Place*

All Praise to God Alone

Hymn for SIM 125th

With thanks we look behind us
And see what God has done -
Redeeming us from sin and death
Through Jesus Christ, his Son.
In faith, we look before us
And trust what God will do
As we are sent throughout the earth
Proclaiming the good news.

In love, He left his Father
To seek and save the lost,
Exchanging Heaven's pleasure for
The anguish of the cross.
In love, we leave our comforts
And count this world as loss
To share with those who have not heard
The wonders of the cross.

All praise to God; All praise to God alone!

By prayer, He faced affliction,
Fulfilled his Father's plan,
Knowing in the face of death
That He would live again.
By prayer, we cross the barriers
Of nation, tongue, and tribe
And make disciples of the Lord
To see Him glorified.

All praise to God; All praise to God alone!

In hope, we trust his promise
Our mission will not fail
For Christ the King will build his church
And hell cannot prevail
In hope, we see the ending,
The Lamb upon his throne,
And all the saints before Him sing,
"All praise to God alone!"

All praise to God; All praise to God
All praise to God; All praise to God Alone!

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UMtLwT2I5xk>

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