

## A BETTER WAY WITH WORDS

O God, you know us and need not be told what is in any person; we come in the hope that the prayers in us that you have already heard may find their way to our lips, that we may better understand ourselves.

The words in which we clothe our needs are so used, patched, and torn that we would not come into your presence except that our poverty matches your invitation 'come as you are.'

The mighty music of your creation calls us to rejoice in you. In this congregation for worship, help us to empty ourselves of the fears that stalk, the guilt that cripples, the self interest that stunts our growth, and the propensity for self-justification that blinds.

Enable us to open our minds to the stimulation of your word, and our emotions to the warmth of your love.

We would learn the art of speaking well in love. Our minds are so nimble in anger and our tongues so facile in hate. We find just the right word when we want to hurt, and we can hardly turn off the torrent of words when we want to abuse. Why, O God, this faltering in tenderness and this stumbling in affection? We are so often like juveniles at camp who cannot say a word at evening devotions, but once the lights are out are bursting with wit and wisecracks.

May we find in the person of Jesus, in the lives near us and in the world around us the eloquence of your love for the world. May your willingness to care, give birth in us a rejuvenated living, a joy in bearing burdens, and a fulfillment wherein we are unafraid to speak in peace. Amen.

### *EUGENE MAY*

November 1, 1959, First Christian Church, Bluefield, West Virginia.

"Eugene May was a student of prayer. His prayers echoed with phrases, words, and images from the rich tradition of Christian prayers, ancient and modern," explained Raymond Williams. "His prayers touched and inspired Lois and me as we sat as young people in the pews of the First Christian Church in Bluefield, West Virginia. Some years later we asked Mr. May to let us have copies of his morning prayers, and he made photocopies from his files. These texts were guides for oral presentation that in the original form had marks for pauses and handwritten additions. One has to listen for his quiet, even voice and sense his integrity in order to understand the power in these prayers. He did not contemplate that these would be published, and we pray that we are not betraying his trust in presenting them for wider distribution."