LEADER: We were not made for mortality but for immortality;  
PEOPLE: our souls are ever in their prime,  
and so the faltering of our physical bodies repeatedly takes us by surprise.

The aches, the frailties, the injuries, the impositions of vexing disease and worsening condition are unwelcome evidences of our long exile from the Garden.

Even so, may the inescapable decline of our bodies here not be wasted. May it do its tutoring work, inclining our hearts and souls ever more vigorously toward your coming kingdom, O God.

While we rightly pray for healing and relief, and sometimes receive the respite of such blessings, give us also patience for the enduring of whatever hardships our journeys entail.

For what we endure here, in the deterioration of bone and joint, blood and marrow, muscle and ligament, vitality and mobility and clarity, is but our own small share of the malady common to a frayed creation, yet yearning for a promised restoration. Give us humility therefore in our infirmities, to ask and to receive, day by day, your mercies as our needs require. Where our dependence on others increases, let us receive their service as a grace rather than a shame. Let us trace in the hands of our caregivers the greater movement of your own hands, for you ever meet us and uphold us in our weakness.

MY HEART IS STRUCK DOWN LIKE GRASS AND HAS WITHERED; I FORGET TO EAT MY BREAD. BECAUSE OF MY LOUD GROANING MY BONES CLING TO MY FLESH.
PSALM 102.4–5
And in those moments when our bodies betray our trust, work in us by our own hard experience a more active and Christlike compassion for the sufferings of others.

Give us also a sense of humor to wink at our weaknesses now, knowing that they are but the evidences of a perishable body that will at your beckoning rise again imperishable, and that the greater joke is the one played upon death.

By the inevitable dwindling of our strength, may the mettle of our true hope at last be proved, rising as the memory of a song stirring deep in the bones, a martial melody of which our difficulties are but the approaching drumbeat, reminding us that this flesh and blood are soon to be transformed, redeemed, remade. The infirmities we incur today are but the expected buffetings of a battle at which victorious end our birthright will be forever reclaimed.

So may the decline of our bodies incline our hearts and souls ever more vigorously toward your coming kingdom, O God. Ever more vigorously.

Amen.