

Prayers for Our Times

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Preface

I assembled these prayers for use on Election Day 2020 and after. Many of them are from *The Book of Common Prayer*. Some of them were culled from Episcopal Church websites and the National Association for Episcopal Schools. Where possible, I have included links to these websites. Our own diocesan website, <https://www.diocesewnc.org> has many helpful prayers and other resources for us to use. If you are like me, right now, the last thing I want to do is to look for more resources. I just want to pray. A compilation of prayers that I can hold, or page through on my device, is more helpful to me than a list of resources. If you are looking for prayers for the election and for our country, you'll find them up front. I've included prayers and reflections from past US Presidents that may be of interest. Prayers for the pandemic come next, followed by prayers for comfort, healing and action. It's not always easy to pray. Some prayers resonate more than others. Every day opens up new challenges and opportunities for prayer. The only thing that is important is the intent to pray—to be real with God about where we are, and what is weighing on our hearts. Let God's Spirit lead you with the rest.

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Prayers for Election Day

Almighty God, to whom we must account for all our powers and privileges: Guide the people of the United States in the election of officials and representatives; that by faithful administration and wise laws, the rights of all may be protected and our nation be enabled to fulfill your purposes; through Jesus Christ our Lord. (BCP, p. 822)

God of mercy, our nation is in a time of great transition. With all of the injustice and fear in our world today, we ask you to inspire us and guide us as we participate in [this year's] presidential election. We seek a government that upholds and protects human rights and justice for all its citizens, regardless of race, class, gender, or religion. Move and inspire us by your presence among us in the most vulnerable in our society. For their tears are your tears, their pain is your pain, their suffering is your suffering. In gratitude for the right to vote, we pray.

Anna Misleh (<http://jesuitresource.org>)

Loving God, I ask you to guide me during this important election season:

Help me to understand the Gospels, in which Jesus Christ reveals his path of love, mercy and compassion, especially toward those who are poor, sick or struggling in any way. Instruct me on what the church teaches on the important issues of our day: abortion, racism, migration, war and peace, health care, the death penalty, economic justice, care for the environment and on all those questions that I must ponder with your help. Enable me to form my conscience so that I may vote wisely.

Loving God, I ask you to help me to live peacefully with others:

Allow me to be open to the opinions of others with whom I disagree. Fill me with a spirit of charity toward those who may oppose me. Give me patience in times of struggle.

Loving God, I ask you to help me stand with those who are marginalized or persecuted:

Increase my courage so that I can stand up in times of danger. Create in me a new heart that I might be brave in times of turmoil. Make me someone who is ready to care for, advocate for and suffer with those on the margins.

Loving God, I ask you to aid our civic leaders: Grant them good health and a spirit of wisdom. Open to them paths of reconciliation. Teach them your ways of love, mercy and compassion.

Loving God, I ask you to bless our nation:

Crown it with your compassion. Support it with your care. And nurture it with your love. Amen. Fr. James Martin, SJ. *America, Oct 6. 2020*

Prayers from A Season of Prayer for An Election

For the Nation

Lord God Almighty, you have made all the peoples of the earth for your glory, to serve you in freedom and in peace. Give to the people of our country a zeal for justice and the strength of forbearance, that we may use our liberty in accordance with your gracious will, through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. *Amen.* (BCP, p. 258)

For Every Human Heart

Grant, O God, that your holy and life-giving Spirit may so move every human heart and especially the hearts of the people of this land, that barriers which divide us may crumble, suspicions disappear, and hatreds cease; that our divisions being healed, we may live in justice and peace, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen (BCP, p. 823)

For Those Who Influence Public Opinion

Almighty God, you proclaim your truth in every age by many voices. Direct, in our time, we pray, those who speak where many listen and write what many read; that they may do their part in making the heart of this people wise, its mind sound, and its will righteous; to the honor of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen. (BCP, p. 827)

For Times of Conflict

O God, you have bound us together in a common life. Help us, in the midst of our struggles for justice and truth, to confront one another without hatred or bitterness, and to work together with mutual forbearance and respect, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen. (BCP, p. 824)

For Guidance

O God, by whom the meek are guided in judgment, and light rises up in darkness for the godly: Grant us, in all our doubts and uncertainties, the grace to ask what you would have us do, that the Spirit of wisdom may save us from all false choices, and that in thy light we may see light, and in thy straight path may not stumble, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen. (BCP, p. 832)

For Our Own Work for the Common Good

Almighty God, our heavenly Father, you declare your glory and show forth your handiwork in the heavens and in the earth. Deliver us in our various occupations from the service of self alone, that we may do the work you give us to do in truth and beauty and for the common good; for the sake of him who came among us as one who serves, your Son Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, for ever and ever. Amen. (BCP, p. 261)

For Sound Government

O Lord our Governor, bless the leaders of our land, that we may be a people at peace among ourselves and a blessing to other nations of the earth. *Lord, keep this nation under your care.*

To the President and members of the Cabinet, to Governors of States, Mayors of Cities, and to all in administrative authority, grant wisdom and grace in the exercise of their duties. *Give grace to your servants, O Lord.*

To Senators and Representatives, and those who make our laws in States, Cities, and Towns, give courage, wisdom, and foresight to provide for the needs of all people, and to fulfill our obligations in the community of nations. *Give grace to your servants, O Lord.*

To Judges and officers of our Courts give understanding and integrity, that human rights might be safeguarded and justice served. *Give grace to your servants, O Lord.*

And finally, teach our people to rely on your strength and to accept their responsibilities to their fellow citizens, that they may elect trustworthy leaders and make wise decisions for the well-being of our society; that we may serve you faithfully in our generation and honor your holy Name. *For yours is the kingdom, O Lord, and you are exalted as head above all.* Amen. (BCP, p. 822)

Presidential Prayers and Reflections

Thomas Jefferson--A Prayer for the Nation

Almighty God, Who has given us this good land for our heritage; We humbly beseech Thee that we may always prove ourselves a people mindful of Thy favor and glad to do Thy will. Bless our land with honorable ministry, sound learning, and pure manners. Save us from violence, discord, and confusion, from pride and arrogance, and from every evil way. Defend our liberties, and fashion into one united people, the multitude brought hither out of many kindreds and tongues. Endow with Thy spirit of wisdom those whom in Thy name we entrust the authority of government, that there may be justice and peace at home, and that through obedience to Thy law, we may show forth Thy praise among the nations of the earth. In time of prosperity fill our hearts with thankfulness, and in the day of trouble, suffer not our trust in Thee to fail; all of which we ask through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen. (1801)

Abraham Lincoln—A Prayer for Peace

Fondly do we hope, fervently do we pray, that this mighty scourge of war may speedily pass away. Yet if God wills that it continues. . . until every drop of blood drawn with the lash shall be paid by another drawn with the sword... so still it must be said that the judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether.

With malice toward none, with charity for all, with firmness in the right as God gives us to see the right, let us finish the work we are in, to bind up the nation's wounds, to care for him who shall have borne the battle, and for his widow and

for his orphans, to do all which may achieve and cherish a just and a lasting peace among ourselves and with all nations.

Ronald Reagan—A Prayer for Healing

Let us, young and old, join together, as did the First Continental Congress, in the first step, in humble heartfelt prayer. Let us do so for the love of God and His great goodness, in search of His guidance and the grace of repentance, in seeking His blessings, His peace, and the resting of His kind and holy hands on ourselves, our nation, our friends in the defense of freedom, and all mankind, now and always.

The time has come to turn to God and reassert our trust in Him for the healing of America... Our country is in need of and ready for a spiritual renewal. Today, we utter no prayer more fervently than the ancient prayer for peace on Earth.

If I had a prayer for you today, among those that have all been uttered, it is that one we're so familiar with: "The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make His face to shine upon you and be gracious unto you; the Lord lift up His countenance upon you and give you peace...." And God bless you all. (1986)

George Herbert Walker Bush

My first act as President is a prayer. I ask you to bow your heads.

Heavenly Father, we bow our heads and thank You for Your love. Accept our thanks for the peace that yields this day and the shared faith that makes its continuance likely. Make us strong to do Your work, willing to heed and hear Your will, and write on our hearts these words: "Use power to help people."

For we are given power not to advance our own purposes, nor to make a great show in the world, nor a name. There is but one just use of power, and it is to serve people. Help us to remember it, Lord.

The Lord our God be with us, as He was with our fathers; may He not leave us or forsake us; so that He may incline our hearts to Him, to walk in all His ways... that all peoples of the earth may know that the Lord is God; there is no other (1989)

Barack Obama—National Day of Prayer (2016)

In times of steady calm and extraordinary change alike, Americans of all walks of life have long turned to prayer to seek refuge, demonstrate gratitude, and discover peace. Sustaining us through great uncertainty and moments of sorrow, prayer allows us an outlet for introspection, and for expressing our hopes, desires, and fears. It offers strength in the face of hardship, and redemption when we falter.

Every day, women and men use the wisdom gained from humble prayer to spread kindness and to make our world a better place. Faith communities at home and abroad have helped feed the hungry, heal the sick, and protect innocents from violence. Nurturing communities with love and understanding, their prayer inspires their work, which embodies a timeless notion that has kept humanity going through the ages — that one of our most sacred responsibilities is to give of ourselves in service to others.

The threats of poverty, violence, and war around the world are all too real. Our faith and our earnest prayers can be cures for the fear we feel as we confront these realities. Helping us resist despair, paralysis, or cynicism, prayer offers a powerful alternative to pessimism. Through prayer, we often gain the insight to learn from our mistakes, the motivation to always be better, and the courage to stand up for what is right, even when it is not popular. . .

. . . On this day, may our faiths enable us to sow the seeds of progress in our ever-changing world. Let us resolve to guide our children and grandchildren to embrace freedom for all, to see God in everyone, and to remember that no matter what differences they may have, they, just like we, will always be united by their common humanity. (2016)

Prayers for a Time of Pandemic

For Endurance

Sustaining God, loving Father, we ask for your presence and guidance as we respond to the spread of the novel Coronavirus in the world, our countries, our communities and our schools.

We ask your blessing upon all in authority over us that they may make wise decisions and act decisively to protect us and maintain the good order of the societies and economies in which we live and work. We ask your blessing upon our armed forces, police and first responders, and especially upon all who are called professionally and vocationally to give of themselves so bravely and selflessly to heal and care for us should we fall ill: our doctors and nurses, and all who support them.

We pray especially for those who are more vulnerable: the elderly and the infirm, the poor and the homeless, and for all who live alone. We pray for all who are now seriously ill and for the souls of those who have died. May they rest in peace with you.

During this time of physical isolation and continuing distance, help us to keep our relationships and our community strong; bless the love which binds us together and make it stronger. Bless . . .all who support us; guide ...teachers and students in their new adventure of “distance learning;” keep everyone safe at home and at school; and give us your gifts of faith—of perspective, gratitude, and courage—so that we may face our own challenges gracefully, and respond generously to the challenges of others. Save us from pride and selfishness, and from the panic and fear which act against your love for us.

And help us to use this time of uncertainty to grow closer to you, to acknowledge our need for you and our need for each other so we may live with the unanswered questions which confront us with the hope and confidence that come from believing in you—as Spirit inspires us, and as your Son as shown us, even on his Cross, which redeems and saves us all.

So may he walk with us on our new path in this dark forest, and may we see with him your light shining before us, your angels as they guard and care for us, and may we pray with him as he taught us:

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth, as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen.

The Rev. Dr. D. Stuart Duncan
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For Order in the Liturgies of our Lives

Gracious God, our heavenly Father, your Word brought order out of chaos and orders our life in a sabbatical rhythm of day and night, work and rest. The liturgies of life have been disrupted by the urgencies of the moment. We are enveloped by a flood of formlessness and emptiness. Speak your Word into this present chaos and bring order to our lives. Let your Spirit blow across the face of the Deep and renew the face of the earth. Instill in us the rhythms of Word and prayer, work and rest, singing and stillness. Restore the liturgy of our lives and return us to the holy Liturgy of your gathered people; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Holy Trinity Lutheran Church, Hacienda Heights, CA
<https://htlcms.org/let-us-pray/prayer-in-a-pandemic/>

For Those Who Work Outside Their Homes at this Time of Sickness

God, Creator and Provider, in this time of trial we pray for all those who must go to their workplaces, whom sometimes we take for granted: Those who work in restaurants, grocery stores, school kitchens, food banks, waste collection, maintenance, etc. Bless their lives and the lives of their families. Renew their strength so that they can do their best work. Give them generous hearts to help every person with kindness and not to be indifferent to their needs. Above all, give them, O Lord, profound faith to believe your word and a resolute will to act correctly and do good. When they are confused, guide them; when they feel weak, strengthen them; when they are weary, renew and fill them with the light of your Spirit. As they finish their shifts today, take them in safety to their homes.

All this we pray in the name of your Son Jesus, to whom be honor and glory for ever. *Amen.*

Francisco Valle Barahona (p. 5, Prayers and Liturgies for the Covid-19 Pandemic, https://episcopalchurch.org/files/prayers_and_liturgies_for_the_covid-19_pandemic.pdf)

For our Church or Community

Loving God we pray for this church/community in this time of crisis. Deliver us from simply desiring to go “back to normal,” and give us grace instead to be open to the opportunities that your Spirit brings in this time of separation. Grant that we may come out of this crisis with open eyes, more fully available to the needs of those most vulnerable and those whose labor we have always depended upon. Give us creative hearts to embrace and carry forward the new ways we have found to connect with one another; and in your good time bring us safely back together as a people renewed in the knowledge of your faithfulness and abiding love, and strengthened for the work ahead. We pray in the name of Jesus. *Amen.*

Kathleen Staudt, (p. 2-3 Prayers and Liturgies)

For Hope

Bountiful God, source of the greatest good for all of us: Guide us in the right direction towards a better future for your creation. Help us to overcome our own limitations during this pandemic, and grant us steadfast love to look after each other. Give us humbleness of heart to accept that without you we cannot be real stewards of your creation. Show us ways to spread the gospel that will touch hearts and change minds for a better tomorrow for all humanity, the preservation of every creature, and the planet. In the name of your beloved Son, we ask it. *Amen.*

Alejandra Trillos (Prayers and Liturgies, p, 6)

Prayers for Comfort, Healing and Action

Psalm 23, King James Version

The Lord is my shepherd;

I shall not want.

He maketh me to lie down in green pastures.

He leadeth me beside the still waters.

He restoreth my soul;

He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his Name's sake.

Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil;

For thou art with me;

Thy rod and thy staff, they comfort me.

Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies;

Thou anointest my head with oil;

My cup runneth over.

Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life,

And I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

From Psalm 42

Like as the hart desireth the water-brooks, so longeth my soul after thee, O God.

My soul is athirst for God, yea, even for the living God;

When shall I come to appear before the presence of God?

My tears have been my meat day and night

While daily they say unto me, Where is now thy God? . . .

Why art thou so full of heaviness, O my soul,

And why art thou so disquieted within me?

O put thy trust in God;

For I will yet thank him, which is the help of my countenance, and my God.

Psalm 126

When the Lord restored the fortunes of Zion,
Then were we like those who dream.
Then was our mouth filled with laughter,
And our tongues with shouts of joy.
Then they said among the nations,
“The Lord has done great things for them.”
The Lord has done great things for us,
And we are glad indeed.
Restore our fortunes, O Lord,
Like the watercourses of the Negev.
Those who sowed with tears,
Will reap with songs of joy.
Those who go out weeping, carrying the seed,
Will come again with joy, shouldering their sheaves.

For Trust in God

O God, the source of all health: So fill my heart with faith in your love, that with calm expectancy I may make room for your power to possess me, and gracefully accept your healing; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen. (BCP, 461)

For Pain

Lord Jesus Christ, be near me in my time of confusion and anger and pain; sustain me by your grace, that my strength and courage may not fail; heal me according to your will; and help me always to believe that you hold me in your love now and for all of eternity, my Lord and my God. Amen (adapted from BCP, 461)

For Peace

Most holy God, the source of all good desires, all right judgments, and all just works: Give to us, your servants, that peace which the world cannot give, so that our minds may be fixed on the doing of your will, and that we, being delivered from the fear of all enemies, may live in peace and quietness; through the mercies of Christ Jesus our Savior. Amen. (BCP, 123)

For Aid Against Perils

Be our light in the darkness, O Lord, and in your great mercy defend us from all perils and dangers of this night; for the love of your only Son, our Savior Jesus Christ. Amen. (BCP, 123)

For “What to Do”

O Lord, mercifully receive the prayers of your people who call upon you, and grant that they may know and understand what things they ought to do, and also may have grace and power faithfully to accomplish them; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, One God, now and for ever. Amen. (BCP, 231)

For Peace

Almighty God, kindle, we pray, in every heart the true love of peace, and guide with your wisdom those who take counsel for the nations of the earth, that in tranquility your dominion may increase until the earth is filled with the knowledge of your love; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, One God, now and for ever. (BCP, p. 258)

For Social Justice

Almighty God, who created us in your own image: Grant us grace fearlessly to contend against evil and to make no peace with oppression; and, that we may reverently use our freedom, help us to employ it in the maintenance of justice in our communities and among the nations, to the glory of your holy Name, through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, One God, now and for ever. (BCP, p. 260).

A Prayer Attributed to St. Francis

Lord, make us instruments of your peace. Where there is hatred, let us sow love; where there is injury, pardon; where there is discord, union; where there is doubt, faith; where there is despair, hope; where there is darkness, light; where

there is sadness, joy. Grant that we may not so much seek to be consoled as to console; to be understood as to understand; to be loved as to love. For it is in giving that we receive; it is in pardoning that we are pardoned; and it is in dying that we are born to eternal life. (BCP, p. 833)