

Prayers to Help Counter Fear Election Season

Justice Witness Ministries of the UCC is collaborating with Faith Formation Ministries during this election season to offer context, approaches to issues, wording, for prayers. Take and adapt! If you have a prayer you would like to submit for possible posting in this section of Worship Ways, please forward it to Sue Blain at blains@ucc.org.

Introduction:

Climate change, terrorism, people who are “not like us”: it’s a fear-filled world. In this election season, people may find themselves tempted to cast their vote for candidates who best address—by reinforcing--their worst fears. Fear often brings out our worst instincts regarding our neighbors.

But fear is a faith issue. 1 John 4:18 says, “Perfect love casts out fear.” Almost every encounter between God or an angel and a human being begins with the words, “Do not be afraid.” Many Psalms begin from a place of fear and despair but move into faith, hope, and love. Here are some ways to address fear in a pastoral prayer or prayer of confession:

Pastoral Prayer

Holy One,
We live in fearful times.
Suicide bombers, terrorists, climate change, economic crises—
these are overwhelming realities.
Hold us in our fears.

Sometimes candidates in elections may prey on these fears.
They paint pictures of disaster—especially if we vote for their opponents.
Help us to keep our heads in such moments.
Help us to listen to each other,
to hear past the hateful words to the underlying fear.
Hold us in your love, and remind us
that you never leave us. Ever.
Help us to live into our best selves,
even as others try to bring out our most fear-driven traits.
Keep us listening respectfully,
even to those with whom we disagree.
There is room for all of us in your creation.
Thank you for your love.
May it sustain us always in working for your realm. **Amen.**

Prayer of Confession

O God, who casts healing light into deep and shadowed places,
We confess to finding ourselves saying hateful things out of fear of the other—
those of different skin color, religion, sexual orientation, culture,
economic status, educational level, or ability.
Forgive us.

We are not being our best, most loving selves.
Fear does not bring out the qualities that you invite us to practice:
 compassion, generosity, mercy, and love of neighbor—
 even love of strangers.

There are countless ways to succumb to our fears.
Do not let them have dominion over us.
Keep reminding us of your commandment to live in love,
 even during times of adversity,
 as Jesus did.

Let us never give up hope in you,
our rock and our redeemer.
And let us never give up trying to be
our best, most loving selves,
as you would have us be.
We pray this in the name of Jesus,
who showed us the way. **Amen.**

Special prayer section in response to natural disasters.

When the earth shakes,
the lightning flashes,
the tsunami rolls across the waters;

when the snow whites out the roads,
the floods wash out bridges and homes,
the wildfires rage across the ridges;

when the tornados race through town,
the hurricanes churn up the coast,
the heat waves wipe out crops—

then, O God, be the hands and feet and heart of love in our midst.

Comfort the bereaved,
wrap the cold in blankets,
feed the hungry.

And teach us how to do the same—
to show up wearing your face of love.

God help us.
God bless us, even in the midst of such times. **Amen.**

Prayers to Counter Fear in Election Season were written by the Rev. Meighan Pritchard, UCC Environmental Justice Curriculum Trainer.

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