

## CACC Election Prayers

### **Introduction**

The Capital Area Council of Churches shares these prayers in preparation for next week's election. We offer a prayer before an election, a prayer on election day, and a prayer after an election. Please note that you are able to pray the daily prayers and reflections at a time convenient for your schedule.

### **Prayer Before an Election**

At the time of Jesus, Israel was an occupied nation. Roman legions wandered freely. Eventually, the Romans crucified Jesus. Yet the Gospels are not filled with stories of Roman outrages, nor are Romans condemned by Jesus. Instead, he tells us how *we* should live, how *we* should love our enemies.

Today, 2,000 years later, the Roman empire is just a memory, while the followers of Jesus populate every continent on earth. There is a lesson here, especially as we prepare to cast our ballots in the coming election. Do we need to attack our political opponents more fiercely than Jesus criticized the Romans who occupied his nation?

In today's polarized political climate, it is all too easy to demonize those who disagree with us. Hot-button issues such as abortion, same sex marriage and climate change are used by politicians to divide the Christian community. Too often, we willingly oblige those who create this division.

This year, as we vote in local and national elections, let us ask God for guidance that we may focus on what is right, not on what is a diversion; on how we can build up the Kingdom of God, not on how we can tear it apart.

[Pause for reflection]

Loving God, you have called us to love our neighbors as ourselves and to love our enemies.

As we prepare to cast our ballots, helps us to keep these values in mind.

May we look for candidates who will unite us as a nation, and not drive us apart.

May we promote policies that help all of your children, and not just the well-being of us and our friends.

May we understand that mere differences of opinion about political philosophies do not require us to condemn each another.

And may our love of you be visible to all whom we encounter.

Amen.

## **Election Day**

David McCullough knows something about American history. As an author he has written books about the founding of our nation as well as biographies of some of our greatest presidents. He has received two Pulitzer Prizes, two National Book Awards and a Presidential Medal of Freedom. In a speech at Hillsdale College in 2005, he stated something that might be obvious, but is not always appreciated. It is that nothing ever had to happen the way that it happened. "History could have gone off in any number of different directions in any number of different ways at almost any point, just as your own life can. . . . And just as we don't know how things are going to turn out for us, those who went before us didn't know either."

Then he said this about the people who signed the Declaration of Independence: "Every single one had his flaws, his weaknesses. Some of them ardently disliked others of them. Each did things in life he regretted. But the fact that they could rise to the occasion as they did, these imperfect human beings, and do what they did is also, of course, a testimony to their humanity."

This election day, we do not know how things are going to turn out for us. As we look at ourselves and our politicians, let us remember that we each have our own flaws, our own weaknesses. We have our regrets as well. Still, like our predecessors in this great American experiment, we can also rise to the occasion. We can work with people we dislike.

[Pause for reflection.]

God of our fathers and our mothers,

Our ancestors built this great nation and left it to us as a blessing.

Our history is not perfect. Our mistakes are numerous.

There is much for which we must repent.

And there is much that must still be done if we are to live up to our ideals.

Your words, Lord, offer guidance.

On this Election Day, may we live with faith, hope and love.

Faith in you and your promises for our salvation;

hope in our ability to do what is right and to correct our errors,

and love for you, our neighbors, and even our enemies.

Amen.

## **Prayer After an Election**

When Abraham Lincoln delivered his second inaugural address on March 4, 1865, victory over the South was within days and slavery in the U.S. was near an end. Some people thought this would be an opportunity for the President, who had weathered relentless attacks on his leadership, to congratulate himself and “crow a little” about recent Union victories. The president, however, took a different approach. He delivered a message of unity at a time when many people wanted the South and Confederate leaders to be punished.

People from both the North and South had looked to God to support their cause. As Lincoln stated, “Both read the same Bible, and pray to the same God; and each invokes His aid against the other.”

His closing words offered comfort to a suffering nation and they are remembered to this day:

“With malice toward none; with charity for all; with firmness in the right, as God gives us to see the right, let us strive on to 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 his orphan -- to do all which may achieve and cherish a just, and a lasting peace, among ourselves, and with all nations.”

As polarizing as this Presidential election has been, it was nothing compared to the disaster that befell our nation during the Civil War. If people could reconcile after that tragedy, we should be able to come together after this election.

[Pause for reflection]

God of justice and of mercy,

Grant us peace in these days as votes are counted.

Help us to look at our political opponents and brothers and sisters in Christ,  
and not as enemies of the people;

as children of God, and not as traitors, subversives or unworthy of respect.

May winners not gloat in their victory,  
nor losers despair in their defeat.

Help us to heal our divisions so that we can build a nation of justice and mercy,  
caring for the least among us.

Guide our leaders to do what is right,

to promote the common good, and to unite us with a common purpose

that we may use our liberty in accordance with your gracious will.

Amen.