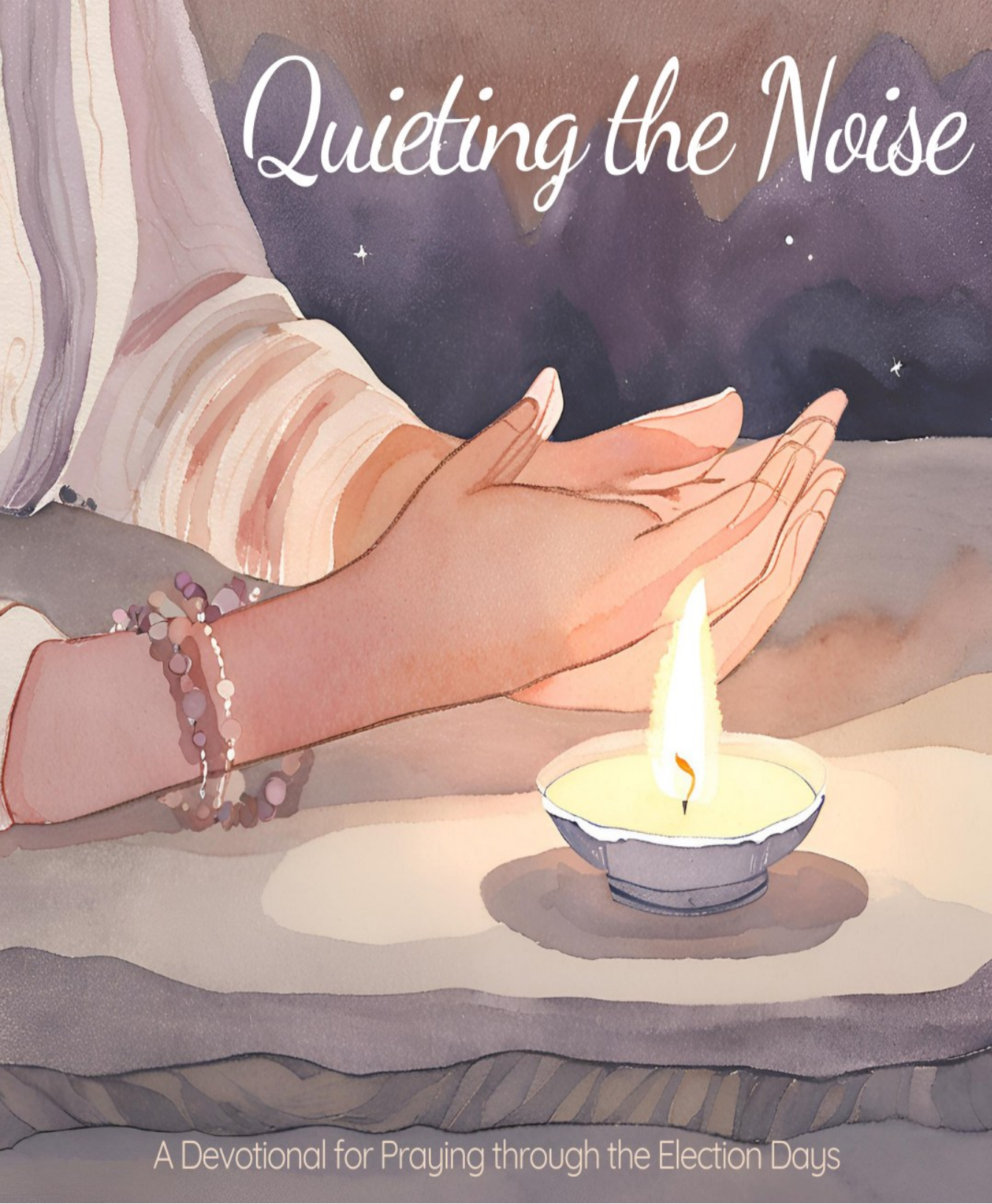


Quieting the Noise



A Devotional for Praying through the Election Days

Introduction

The upcoming elections have once again thrust our country into turmoil and uncertainty. We know that many are nervous, weary, and afraid about what the outcomes of various elections will mean for the future of our communities.

With this all in mind, the pastoral team has created this devotional booklet for you to use in the lead-up to November 5th and the days after.

As people of faith and people of prayer, our calling is to remain committed to the lessons of Jesus and the hope that his death and resurrection brings to our world, regardless of political outcomes. We pray that this book can be a source of comfort and inspiration to you during these uncertain times.

Peace and Grace,

Pastor Gary

Gary Sandberg
Lead Pastor

Pastor Nate

Nate Preisinger
Pastor

Deacon Debra

Debra Alba
Deacon

Janet

Janet Mortinsen
Director of Pastoral Care



October 27th, 2024



Focus on Christ

By: Pastor Nate

“Fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith.” - Hebrews 12:2

Our world is so filled with images and causes vying for our attention and allegiance. The weeks leading up to the November elections are perhaps the most saturated with this type of content. Vote for this candidate, not that one! Vote in support of this cause, but vote against that one! The commercials, the flyers, the billboards, all of it can be overwhelming and immensely hard to sift through.

It is so important at times like these for us to remember that our commitment is to Christ and no others. Christ is our Savior, our Lord, Our King. Looking to Jesus and keeping our eyes fixed on him during times like these is an essential practice for guiding us amidst the noise. Jesus is the pioneer and perfecter of our faith, and he has already revealed to us the causes and commitments that are most important. In this election season, may our focus be on Christ and may the lens of our faith provide us with clarity amid all the noise.

Prayer: Dear Jesus, give me the discipline to keep my focus on you so that I am be guided by my faith in all that I do. Amen.

October 28th, 2024



Humility in Discussion

By: Pastor Gary

“Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves.” - Philippians 2:3

Two song titles come to mind: “O Lord it’s Hard to be Humble” and “Humble Thyself in the Sight of the Lord”. The first is true, the second is needed in an election season.

If you cannot imagine humbling yourself in front of a person who espouses a different political viewpoint, then just imagine humbling yourself before God. Not agreeing with someone does not mean that we have nothing to learn from them. The first step is to admit that we may still have something to learn. Charged issues are complicated. When I learn new things from another I may not be swayed in my position, but I will be better informed. And, likely, I will see another in a new light. We may share the same passion while simply supporting a different approach to address the issue. When I humble myself I am better able to value your passion. It may even be my own.

Prayer: God, when I find it difficult to humble myself in front of another human, remind me to humble myself before you, and in that way be more open to value others. Amen.

October 29th, 2024



Gratitude for Democracy

By: Deacon Debra

“You, my brothers and sisters, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the flesh; rather, serve one another humbly in love.”

- Galatians 5:13

At Gettysburg Abraham Lincoln honored the soldiers that sacrificed their lives in order “that government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth”. He well understood the fragility of living in a democracy. This government, “by the people” can be fickle. We each have the opportunity to actively participate in the life of our community. We have a multi-party system. We have the right to vote. Freedom of expression exists. The current state of our democracy may not be ideal, but we have the opportunity to voice our dissent and engage in civil discourse.

Prayer: Loving God, We are grateful for the opportunity to vote, to express our love for you through the choices we make for our greater community. Amen.

October 30th, 2024



Respectful Dialogue

By: Janet Mortinsen

“Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry.”- James 1:19

The Greek philosopher, Epictetus, is credited with the quote, “We have two ears and one mouth so that we can listen twice as much as we speak.” This can serve as a reminder of the importance of active listening especially when engaging in dialogue with those whose viewpoints differ from ours. Perhaps we should approach these conversations not with the goal of changing someone’s point of view but to understand theirs. Understanding other’s opinions can lead to affirming or maybe even modifying our own decisions.

At the conclusion of each of our worship services we say, “Embrace healthy dialogue that promotes unity over division.” Listening to and accepting other viewpoints even when we disagree is a way to demonstrate respect for one another.

Prayer: Dear God, allow me to keep an open mind when listening to others. Give me the grace to give others the gift of being heard. Amen.

October 31st, 2024



Seeking the Common Good

By: Pastor Nate

“But seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the Lord on its behalf, for in its welfare you will find your welfare.”

- Jeremiah 29:7

Throughout the scriptures we are told, in many different ways, that God is concerned with the welfare of all people. In the Old Testament, the prophets are constantly trying to redirect the leadership in Israel to be more attentive to the suffering of the orphans and widows. Later on in the New Testament, Jesus expands these commands by reaching out to people in Gentile areas and by caring for lepers, prostitutes, and others who were shunned by society. It is evident that God harbors compassion for all people and that God calls us to also care for the common good.

As we approach the upcoming election, let us pray for leaders who will guide our school boards, towns, courts, and country in a way that appeals to the needs of all people.

Prayer: Gracious God, thank you for caring for all the people of the world. Guide us to care for the needs of others, and guide our leaders to be people of care and compassion. Amen.

November 1st, 2024



Seeking Truth
By: Pastor Gary

“Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.”
- John 8:32

The truth is that I have an entire life history that brings me to this moment. It affects how I think and how I will vote. But we do not share a life history. Mine is mine alone, and yours is yours alone. My life history sometimes makes me complacent, and sometimes makes me combative. The truth is...you may be right, even if I disagree with you. True freedom may not be believing that I am always right. True freedom might be knowing that sometimes you are right. I may not agree with you, but it sure feels good to live free.

Prayer: God, help me to know freedom, even when it means that a different opinion than my own may be right. Amen.

November 2nd, 2024



Guidance in Loving Our Neighbors

By: Deacon Debra

“Jesus says, ‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment.

And the second is like it: Love your neighbor as yourself”

- Matthew 22:37-39

During this political season yard signs for favored candidates and Halloween decorations abound! Surprisingly, or not surprisingly, the two can often be found intermingled. I especially find humor in the yards decorated as cemeteries with headstones and candidate yard signs. I’m not sure of their intent, but they’ve definitely caused me to laugh out loud on more than one occasion. Prior to this election season I did not know the political leanings of my neighbors. I actually prefer not knowing. I don’t want anything to stand in the way of how I see or treat them.

*Prayer: God of Grace, Help us to love and respect our neighbors,
regardless of their political views. Amen.*

November 3rd, 2024



Prayer for Leaders
By: Janet Mortinsen

“First of all, then I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions and thanksgivings be made for everyone, for kings and all who are in high positions, so that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and dignity.” - 1 Timothy 2:1-2

In our contentious political atmosphere, there are negative slurs about leaders and parties resulting in a polarizing mood in our nation. Quiet, peaceable and dignity are perhaps not the words we would use right now. 1 Timothy reminds us that as Christians we are called upon to pray for all leaders. Prayers can be offered for those in office or running for office for their safety and strength. Those in public service sacrifice time with their families and their privacy. They also assume an enormous amount of responsibility.

We can also pray for God to grant leaders wisdom to serve wisely and to have a heart for justice for all. God is our authority and prayers to this effect seems to acknowledge that God will be the one to bring about change for the good of all people.

Prayer: Dear God, we lift up those currently in office and future leaders that they are able to carry the weight of their responsibilities. May they feel inspired and led by Your word to make decisions that benefit those they serve. Amen.

November 4th, 2024



Seeking God's Will

By: Pastor Nate

"Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven."

- Matthew 6:10

When we pray the Lord's Prayer on Sunday mornings or during our personal devotional life, we ask for God's will to be done on earth as it is in heaven. These words, that Jesus first taught his disciples, ask God to help make our present reality look more like God's Kingdom of grace and love. This is God's will and hope for our world and our lives.

As Christians, we are called to be workers for this Kingdom. We seek God's will in all of our important decisions, and strive to be people of love and grace. This mindset is an ongoing process that we are called to enter into every day. As we consider the future leadership in our communities, our Christian duty is to prayerfully discern which leaders will best enact God's will so that God's Kingdom of love and grace might start to break in on earth, as it is in heaven.

Prayer: Mighty God, as we consider our important role in electing leaders for our communities, may we seek Your Will; tune our hearts and minds to your rhythms of love and grace. Amen.

November 5th, 2024



Prayer for Wisdom

By: Pastor Gary

“If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to you.” - James 1:5

Does God really supply wisdom? If so, to whom? If I am honest, I spend a lot of energy working to convince God to agree with me. Or a least to convince myself that God, of course, already agrees with me. I spend an inordinate amount of time in convincing, and far too little time in seeking wisdom. That does not mean that I do not pay attention to the issues. I believe that I am quite learned about them. But that may be different from wisdom. Wisdom, true wisdom, comes from God alone. Honestly, I'd like to convince you that I am right. But my time might be better spent asking God for wisdom.

Prayer: God, I'm asking. Let your wisdom be known through me. Amen.

November 6th, 2024



Patience

By: Janet Mortinsen

*“With the Lord, a day is like a thousand years,
and a thousand years are like a day.” - 2 Peter 3:8-9*

We live in a very fast-paced world. Have a question? Do a quick search online. Don't know how to get somewhere? Look at your favorite app. If you need to contact someone – text – you don't even have to wait for them to pick up the phone. Election cycles seem to begin earlier and earlier, and we are bombarded by ads that come in a variety of ways. We seem eager just to be done with the election. And then who knows how long it will take for results to be finalized?

God works on a different timeline than we do. As people of faith, we can work on our patience by trusting that God has us in his hands. We can take a deep breath, say a prayer and try to live in the moment even if that moment is uncomfortable for us. As we are reminded in Ecclesiastes 3:1, “For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven.”

*Prayer: Dear God, as we live in this season of our life, grant us the humility to be patient with ourselves, others and the uncertainty of what is ahead.
Allow us to have faith and trust in You. Amen.*

November 7th, 2024



Overcoming Fear
By: Deacon Debra

*“For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power
and of love and of a sound mind.” - 2 Timothy 1:7*

In these weeks of constant polls and political analysis allow yourself time to turn off the endless news cycles and take time to lean into God’s creation. Open your windows. Go for a walk. Visit a park, the zoo or the botanical gardens. Relish the wonder of God’s creation and remember that our creator called everything they created, ‘good’. There is wonder and awe all around us. Relish it. Find beauty and humor in it. Take it all in and give thanks to God for these days and this season. Be reminded that you are not alone. God loves you.

Prayer: Great Comforter, provide us with courage and reassurance. Help us to lean into your presence and grace. Amen.

November 8th, 2024



Prayer for Unity

By: Pastor Gary

“Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace.” - Ephesians 4:3

I love being in the company of like-minded people. It is so easy, and so affirming. I am just not certain that the Spirit is actually present. After all, why would we need the Spirit. We are a homogeneous group without a care amongst us. I love being in the company of people who think differently than me, but who treat me with respect just as I treat them with respect. I am certain that the Spirit is present. It is only through the power of God's Spirit that true unity can be known, and that peace will be achieved. A bond of peace, shared between political opposites, has a power that God desires for us. That bond of peace is as close to us as the Spirit of God - it is literally within us. We are intrinsically bonded together, for peace. Let's harness the power of the Spirit.

Prayer: God, help me to utilize the power of unity that you have already put within me, that I might be an instrument of your peace. Amen.

November 9th, 2024



God's Sovereignty

By: Pastor Nate

“Let every person be subject to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except from God, and those authorities that exist have been instituted by God.” - Romans 13:1

God has a long-term plan. This is the unrelenting message of our faith. God has a long-term plan for us and for all of creation and so even though there may be setbacks along the way, God is still in control and guiding the arc of history. Regardless of the outcomes in the elections, God is still in control and at work bringing about the full redemption of all creation. Our hope for the future is not built upon who is in political power. As the old hymn says, “Our Hope is built on nothing less, than Jesus' blood and righteousness”. Because of what God has done for us, the long-term plan for our lives and world is already guaranteed. May we continue to trust in this assurance whatever may come.

Prayer: All-Powerful Lord, through the ups and downs, successes and failures, victories and defeats, help me to trust in you above all else. Guide me ever towards your promised future where all is redeemed in you. Amen.



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