

Compiled by the Braver Faith team, October 2024

While Braver Angels is a civic organization that is not affiliated with any religion, it is a movement that resonates with faith communities. They can and should offer their expertise, witness and commitment to the urgent enterprise of reconciliation and depolarization – embracing their identity, belief system and mission. The newly created Braver Faith team of Braver Angels has put together resources for religious communities to use as America prepares for the November election. These prayers and sermon talking points draw from the Christian, Jewish, and Islamic traditions (we hope to include other traditions in future resources). Feel free to use, edit, or share them.

Consider taking this pledge

Regardless of how the election turns out, I will not hold hate, disdain or ridicule for those who voted differently from me. Whether I am pleased or upset about the outcome, I will seek to understand the concerns and aspirations of those who voted differently and will look for opportunities to work with people with whom I disagree.

Reflection: It may be that many of us will be filled with all sorts of reactive feelings in the initial wake of the election that may include disdain or ridicule (and perhaps even hate) for people who voted the other way. More often than not, we have no control over those visceral feelings. The pledge challenges people to not hold on to them, which is something we have the ability to control; and is a witness we need to make.

Pre-Election Prayers

A Multifaith Prayer:

O God, as we approach our November election, so many find ourselves increasingly gripped by fear, distrust and anger. We ask you to help heal our nation from its dangerous divide. We pray that you give us the clarity to see that your Truth manifests in many forms. We pray that you remind us that we are called to love one another, as we are each made in Your image. Guide us in creating an environment of honor and hope, even when – and especially when, we don't see life through the same eyes. Lighten the burdens that have been placed upon us so that we may be bearers of Your light. Bless us with the wholeness of health, the sweetness of faith, the richness of wisdom and the calming coolness of your peace and mercy.

Written by the Rt. Rev. Mark Beckwith, Bishop of the Episcopal Diocese of Newark, NJ, retired Rabbi Matthew Gewirtz, Senior Rabbi, Temple B'nai Jeshurun, Short Hills, NJ, Imam W. Deen Shareef, Masjid Waarith ud Deen, Irvington, New Jersey

From the Jewish tradition:

May it be Your will, at this season of our election, to guide us towards peace. By voting, we commit to being full members of society, to accepting our individual responsibility for the good of the whole. May we place over ourselves officials in all our gates...who will judge the people with righteousness (Deut 16:18), and may we all merit to be counted among those who work faithfully for the public good. Open our eyes to see the image of God in all candidates and elected officials, and may they see the image of God in all citizens of the earth. Grant us the courage to fulfill the mitzvah of loving our neighbors as ourselves, and place in our hearts the wisdom to understand those who do not share our views. As we pray on the High Holidays, "May we become a united society, fulfilling the divine purpose with a whole heart." And as the Psalmist sang, "May there be shalom within your walls, peace in your strongholds. For the sake of my brothers and sisters and friends, I will speak peace to you." (Ps. 122:7-8)

ברוך אתה יי אלהינו מלך העולם שמצפה מאיתנו לעסוק בעבודת אזרחות המדינה

Baruch Atah Adonai, Eloheinu melech haolam,
she-me'tzapeh me'itanu l'asok b'avodat ezrachut ha'medina.

Blessed are you, Adonai our God, Sovereign of the Universe,
who expects us to engage as citizens in our country.

From the Muslim tradition:

O! Creator, Sustainer, and Evolver, give us the wisdom to choose what is best and the grace to accept what You have decreed as just. Teach us how to reconcile our disappointments with an enduring hope that You will compensate us with the blessing of Your Soothing Mercy.... Amen

O! Lord, Cherisher, and Sustainer of all systems of knowledge, make agreeable to us what You have approved as good. Lighten the burdens that have been placed upon us. Purify and strengthen our resolve to fight against the sicknesses of our sins. Increase in us the knowledge that distances us from the errors that result in harm, and draws us closer to that which brings us good and a sense of gratitude. Confer upon us the wholeness of health, the sweetness of faith, the richness of wisdom, and the calming coolness of Your peace and Mercy.... Amen

From the Christian Tradition

May the God who said, "let light shine out of darkness" shine in our hearts. May we be guided by the one who came as Prince of Peace, who humbly served all who came to him, who embodied holy love. And may the grace of Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with us all

Lord, Make me an instrument of your peace. Where uncivil words prevail, show me how to model love. Help me remember the God-given dignity of all and invite others to do the same. Show me how to build bridges and see first what unites us rather than what separates us. Let me seek to understand before asking to be understood. Grant me a listening heart filled with empathy and compassion. Let me never tolerate hateful ideas. May I invite all to charity and love. Lord, help me to imitate your compassion and mercy. Make me an instrument of your peace. Amen.

Pre-Election Sermon Talking Points

From Martin Luther King

- "...the end is reconciliation; the end is redemption; the end is the creation of the Beloved Community. It is this type of spirit and this type of love that can transform opponents into friends. It is this type of understanding goodwill that will transform the deep gloom of the old age into the exuberant gladness of the new age. It is this love which will bring about miracles in the hearts of men (and women)."
- "Power without love is reckless and abusive. Love without power is sentimental and anemic. Power at its best is love implementing the demands of justice, and justice at its best is power correcting anything that stands against love."

From Rabbi Jonathan Sacks, The Dignity of Difference

- We are enlarged, not diminished, by the fact that 6,000 languages are spoken in the world today.
- The test of faith is whether I can make space for difference. God confers on life a dignity and sanctity that transcends difference.
- Optimism is that things will get better. Hope is the faith that, together, we can make things better. It takes courage to have hope.
- A primordial instinct, going back to humanity's tribal past, makes us see difference as a threat. That instinct is massively dysfunctional in an age in which several destinies are interlinked. God has given us only one world to live together, and it is getting smaller all the time.

Words attributed to St. Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274)

- Diversity is the perfection of the universe From the Bible
- “So when you are offering your gift at the altar, if you remember that your brother or sister has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar and go; first be reconciled to your brother or sister, and then come and offer your gift.” (Matthew 5:23-24). This is the scriptural basis for the exchange of the Peace, a feature in many Christian liturgies. It is a symbolic act of reconciliation.
- “Lord, if another member of the church sins against me, how often should I forgive? As many as seven times? Jesus said to him, “Not seven times, but I tell you, seventy-seven times.” (Matthew 18: 21-22)
- Esau forgives his brother Jacob, years after Jacob stole his birthright (Genesis 33:4)
- Joseph forgives his brothers who sold him into slavery (Genesis 45: 4-15)

From the Qu’ran

- O believers! Stand firm for Allah and bear true testimony. Do not let the hatred of a people lead you to injustice. Be just! That is closer to righteousness. And be mindful of Allah. Surely Allah is All-Aware of what you do. (The Table: 8)
- And hold firmly together to the rope of Allah¹ and do not be divided. Remember Allah’s favour upon you when you were enemies, then He united your hearts, so you—by His grace—became brothers. And you were at the brink of a fiery pit and He saved you from it. This is how Allah makes His revelations clear to you, so that you may be ‘rightly’ guided. (The Family of Imran: 103)

From the Hadith Literature

- “Shall I not inform you about something more excellent in degree than fasting, prayer, and charity? They (the people) said, ‘Yes.’ He (the Prophet) said: ‘Reconciliation of (the differences between) people, for hatred and discord among the people are destructive.’” (Sahih - Bukhari, Muslim)
- “Allah is merciful and loves mercy. He grants mercy to those who show mercy to others. So, show mercy to those on Earth, and the One in the heavens will show mercy to you.” (Sahih - Muslim)