
On Ancestors and Elections

Joel Miller

In the United States, election day most often follows the first Sunday of November, when many Christian congregations observe All Saints' and/or All Souls' Day. In our congregation, we light candles to remember loved ones who have died. The prayer below combines gratitude for ancestors with prayers for the well-being of the nation. While elections are focused on leadership and change in the coming months and years, this prayer invites the church into a wider scope of time and concern. The first half of the prayer could be used any time of year as a lead-in to a pastoral prayer, and the second half could be adapted for the wider election season.

O Great Love, Eternal flame, who lit the stars,
who ignites the passion of prophets,
whose incandescence shone through Jesus,
whose blaze persists:

We give thanks for the life we hold within us,
for breath and awareness, for thoughts and aspirations;
for the glow of relationships, the affection of family, friends, and
pets,
the warmth of sanctuary.

We give thanks for these lights, lit:
lives that touched our own,
ancestors from whom we draw wisdom and strength.
May they continue to be a blessing, and may we join them in blessing
the world.

Joel Miller is the lead pastor of Columbus (Ohio) Mennonite Church. This prayer was informed in part by his training and participation in Peacekeepers at the Polls, an effort in Ohio to staff clergy and others trained in de-escalation tactics at voting locations to ensure safe and fair elections in 2020.

We pray for our world.
Where there is injury, we pray for healing.
Where there is violence, a just peace.

We pray for our nation.
With election day nearing, our prayers are for the common good,
for fair access to voting.
We pray for poll workers and vote counters putting in long hours.
We pray for humility and wisdom for ourselves.
We pray for courage to stand up.
We pray that our partisanship might be with the poor and with the planet.
We pray for all the officials who will serve in the year to come. May they lead with integrity.

May we never simply rely on election results to bring about hoped-for change.

May we continue to cultivate beloved community
within the conflicted parts of ourselves,
within our congregation,
within our neighborhoods and city.

Have mercy on us, O God, according to your steadfast love.

We pray all these things in the strong and enduring Spirit of Jesus that is with us even now. Amen.

Permission is granted to use and adapt this prayer.