

Hello everyone! And welcome to our Wednesday Word devotion for today, January 20, 2021. Thank you so much for tuning in and for taking this time out of your day to focus on God and focus on your faith.

I think many of us today are thinking about the presidential transition of power and the inauguration of President-elect Biden. Given the recent events in our country, we know this transition of power is unlike any other. We may be feeling anxious, or fearful, or just hoping to God that things go smoothly. And because I'm recording this ahead of the inauguration, I have no idea what's actually going to happen on this day, other than vows being taken by the newly elected leaders of our country.

So in the midst of these unknowns, and to help shift the focus of our anxiety, I invite you to join me in a time of scripture and prayer today. In any moment or season when we are anxious or fearful or unsure, we can always lean on God and the power of the Holy Spirit, to hear our prayers, help us carry our burdens, and help renew and heal us in the places that feel so fraught and tender. I'll read a few verses of Scripture, and lead you in four prayers from the ELCA resources and leaders.

So, please join me in taking a deep breath, and starting our first prayer, written by the NWSWI's very own Bishop Laurie Skow-Anderson. Let us pray.

Gracious God, the anger and hostility in our own country is rising. Some fear more violence and attacks. Many are anxious. Lord we pray that you would give us wisdom and courage for the facing of these days ahead. We pray for a peaceful transition of power in our country. We pray for both the outgoing and incoming presidents. Loving God, lift us up, show us how to make a way for peace, work for justice, love our neighbor, repair the breach, and create the beloved community, in Jesus' name, AMEN.

A reading from Isaiah 41:8-10:

*But you, Israel, my servant,
Jacob, whom I have chosen,
the offspring of Abraham, my friend;
you whom I took from the ends of the earth,
and called from its farthest corners,
saying to you, "You are my servant,
I have chosen you and not cast you off";
do not fear, for I am with you,
do not be afraid, for I am your God;
I will strengthen you, I will help you,
I will uphold you with my victorious right hand.*

The Word of the Lord.

Let us pray:

O God, full of compassion, we commit and commend ourselves to you, in whom we live and move and have our being. Be the goal of our pilgrimage, and our rest by the way. Give us refuge from the turmoil of the world, beneath the shadow of your wings. Let our hearts, so often a sea of restless waves, find peace in you, O God; through Jesus Christ our Lord, Amen.

A reading from Mark 4:37-41:

A great windstorm arose, and the waves beat into the boat, so that the boat was already being swamped. But Jesus was in the stern, asleep on the cushion; and they woke him up and said to him, "Teacher, do you not care that we are perishing?" He woke up and rebuked the wind, and said to the sea, "Peace! Be still!" Then the wind ceased, and there was a dead calm. He said to them, "Why are you afraid? Have you still no faith?" And they were filled with great awe and said to one another, "Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?"

Let us pray:

Gracious and holy God, lead us from death to life, from falsehood to truth. Lead us from despair to hope, from fear to trust. Lead us from hate to love, from war to peace. Let peace, justice, and mercy fill our hearts, our world, our universe; through Jesus Christ our Savior and Lord. Amen.

A reading from Psalm 46:1;8-11:

*God is our refuge and strength,
a very present help in trouble.
Come, behold the works of the Lord;
see what desolations he has brought on the earth.
He makes wars cease to the end of the earth;
he breaks the bow, and shatters the spear;
he burns the shields with fire.
"Be still, and know that I am God!
I am exalted among the nations,
I am exalted in the earth."
The Lord of hosts is with us;
the God of Jacob is our refuge.*

Let us pray:

Everlasting God, source of all liberty, before whom every earthly ruler must bow and bend the knee, we lay our nation before you as we transition presidential power. Breathe upon us your Spirit of wisdom and discernment. Grant all who seek public office the mind of Christ, who came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life for the freedom of the oppressed. Hold before us those who face uncertain futures, or who have no voice in our political process. Uphold and safeguard all who work to ensure a peaceful transition of power. Spare us from the crushing weight of cynicism. Give us grace to speak courageously, but with love, without which our words are noise and we are nothing. Gather us together under the cross, where, in all of our difference, we can stand as one people, redeemed in Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen.

Peace be with you dear friends, have a beautiful rest of your day. Amen.