



Reclaiming Jesus: A Call to Prayer, Fasting, and Action

As the elders who wrote the declaration “Reclaiming Jesus: A Confession of Faith in a Time of Crisis,” to which 5 million people responded, we now issue “A Call to Prayer and Fasting.” We urge Christians to remain steadfast in their faith and engage with the deepening challenges our nation faces.

In 1863, at the height of the Civil War—the most divided time in American history—Abraham Lincoln proclaimed a national “day of fasting, humiliation, and prayer.” Today, we also believe our national crisis calls for prayer, fasting, humility, and repentance. With the season of Lent before us, we ask how we can apply Lenten spiritual practices to our lives and to the dangers facing our democracy.

We pray with those who suffered during the unconscionable government shutdown and with those who face poverty and hunger every day. We pray for those who live in fear of deportation and family separation. We pray for those who face violence—especially parents who fear for their children of color—and those who endure language of racial divisiveness. We pray for the soul of the nation and the resilience of our government’s processes. We pray for those who have lost hope.

Above all, we pray for God to take away our fear and stir within us certainty in the fact that Jesus Christ is Lord. We pray that all will come to know that Jesus is love and that this knowledge will permeate our lives. We pray that we may have wisdom to discern and speak truth, and courage to stand for it in our public squares. We pray that we may be bridges that bring God’s love to our angry national discourse. We pray for pure hearts.

Therefore, we are calling for national prayer and fasting beginning on Ash Wednesday, March 6, and continuing

through the season of Lent. We call upon church leaders, pastors, and local congregations to respond to the ongoing devastation that so many people face. We also call upon church leaders to stand up to the misuse and abuse of political power, in protection of the constitutional checks and balances of government and the common good.

We announce this “Call to Prayer, Fasting, and Action” to local cathedrals and churches, for Ash Wednesday services around the country. We call on clergy to pray and preach the gospel message and lead their churches to serve as the conscience of the nation. We call on clergy to foster dialogue that builds unity. We call on clergy to offer prayers that our political leaders will make decisions not for their self-interest but for what is right for our nation and those whom Jesus called “the least of these.”

Let us assemble for prayer in national and local worship spaces across denominational lines. Prayer turns us to God and fasting focuses our attention on repentance. Gathering to pray will anchor us for the days ahead. Our Lenten prayers in our homes and our churches can be weekly and daily, individual and corporate, personal and public. As we pray, let us also discern what our best responses should be in such a time as this. It is time to reclaim Jesus—and have Jesus lay his claim on us.

We must pray and ask God to take us deeper and prepare us to give a response that comes not from the Left or the Right, but because we are, first and foremost, followers of Jesus. Lent is traditionally characterized by prayer, penitence, and almsgiving—which is defined broadly as solidarity with the most vulnerable. Prayer and fasting will help us find the spiritual vigilance and availability that are necessary for action.

May God bless and keep us, guide and direct us, and prepare us to reclaim Jesus. ■

SIGNERS: Bishop Carroll A. Baltimore, President and CEO, Global Alliance Interfaith Network; Dr. Amos Brown, Chair, Social Justice Commission, National Baptist Convention USA, Inc.; Rev. Dr. Walter Brueggemann, Professor Emeritus, Columbia Theological Seminary; Dr. Tony Campolo, Cofounder, Red Letter Christians; Dr. Iva Carruthers, General Secretary, Samuel DeWitt Proctor Conference; The Most Rev. Michael B. Curry, Presiding Bishop and Primate, The Episcopal Church; Rev. Dr. James Forbes, President and Founder, Healing of the Nations Foundation and Preaching Professor at Union Theological Seminary; Rev. Wesley Granberg-Michaelson, General Secretary Emeritus, Reformed Church in America; Rev. Dr. Cynthia Hale, Senior Pastor, Ray of Hope Christian Church, Decatur, Ga.; Rev. Dr. Richard Hamm, former General Minister and President of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ); Rev. Dr. Joel C. Hunter, Faith Community Organizer and Chairman, Community Resource Network; Senior Bishop Lawrence Reddick, Christian Methodist Episcopal Church; Rev. Ray Rivera, President and Founder, Latino Pastoral Action Center; Fr. Richard Rohr, Founder, Center for Action and Contemplation; Dr. Ron Sider, President Emeritus, Evangelicals for Social Action; Rev. Jim Wallis, President and Founder, Sojourners; Rev. Dr. Sharon Watkins, Director, NCC Truth and Racial Justice Initiative; Dr. Barbara Williams-Skinner, Co-Convener, National African American Clergy Network; and President, Skinner Leadership Institute; Bishop Will Willimon, Bishop, The United Methodist Church, retired, and Professor of the Practice of Ministry, Duke Divinity School

#ReclaimingJesus

ReclaimingJesus.org