

## A DEVOTIONAL FOR THE ELECTION SEASON

Grace Episcopal Church Clergy

Devotional Two: Habits of the Heart

By Mother Jenny Montgomery

*Put away from you all bitterness and wrath and anger and wrangling and slander, together with all malice, and be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ has forgiven you.*

*Ephesians 4:31-32*

### FOR REFLECTION

As the political tension in our country grows, Parker J. Palmer, writer, teacher and activist, in his book Healing the Heart of Democracy identifies five habits of the heart that he believes are crucial to sustaining a democracy (pp. 43-47):

- ❖ We must understand that we are all in this together.
  - “Despite our illusions of individualism and national superiority, we humans are a profoundly interconnected species.”
- ❖ We must develop an appreciation of the value of “otherness.”
  - “The good news is that ‘us’ and ‘them’ does not need to mean ‘us versus them’
- ❖ We must cultivate the ability to hold tension in life-giving ways.
  - “When we allow tensions to expand our hearts, they can open us to new understandings about ourselves and our world, allowing us to enhance the lives of others.”
- ❖ We must generate a sense of personal voice and agency.
  - “Insight and energy give rise to new life as we speak and act, expressing our version of truth while checking and correcting it against the truths of others.”
- ❖ We must strengthen our capacity to create community.
  - “Without a community, it is nearly impossible to exercise the ‘power of one’ in a manner that multiplies.”

How do these habits of the heart challenge you?

Who represents “otherness” for you?

What feelings arise as you consider using your personal voice and agency?

What next steps might you take to more fully embrace these habits?

## JOURNALING PROMPT

“A Great Need”  
by 13<sup>th</sup> Century poet Hafiz

Out  
Of a great need  
We are all holding hands  
And climbing.  
Not loving is letting go.  
Listen,  
The terrain around here  
Is  
Far too  
Dangerous for  
That.

What images come to your mind as you reflect on this poem? Draw or describe them.

What feelings arise as you imagine letting go of the hands you are holding?

What feelings surface as you imagine holding tightly to the hands of others?

Experiment by writing your own poem based on these themes or write a prayer.

## SCRIPTURE

Psalm 67

1 O God, be merciful to us and bless us,  
show us the light of your countenance and come to us.

2 Let your ways be known upon earth,  
your saving health among all nations.

3 Let the peoples praise you, O God;  
let all the peoples praise you.

4 Let the nations be glad and sing for joy,  
for you judge the peoples with equity  
and guide all the nations upon earth.

5 Let the peoples praise you, O God;

let all the peoples praise you.

6 The earth has brought forth its increase;

may you, O God our God, bless us.

7 May you bless us,

and may all the ends of the earth stand in awe of you.

*An Inclusive Language Psalter, Based on the Psalms from the 1979 Book of Common Prayer (BCP)*

## PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE FOR AN ELECTION

*By Rev. Shannon Kelly, Director Department of Faith Formation, The Episcopal Church*

Loving God, creator of this world who is the source of our wisdom and understanding, watch over this nation during this time of election. Help us to see how our faith informs our principles and actions.

We give thanks for the right to vote. Help us to hold this privilege and responsibility with the care and awareness it merits, realizing that our vote matters and that it is an act of faith.

Guide us through this election as a nation, state, and community as we vote for people to do work on our behalf and on the behalf of our communities. Help us to vote for people and ballot initiatives that will better our community and our world so it may reflect the values Christ taught us.

Help us create communities that will build your kingdom here on earth – communities that will protect the poor, stand up for the vulnerable, advocate for those who are not seen and heard, and listen to everyone’s voice.

We pray for this nation that is deeply divided. May we come together for the common good and do as you have called us to do – to act justly, love mercy, and walk humbly with you through creation.

Help us act out of love, mercy and justice rather than out of arrogance or fear.

Lord, continue to guide us as we work for the welfare of this world. We pray for places that are torn by violence, that they may know peace.

We pray for communities who are struggling with inequality, unrest, and fear. May we all work toward reconciliation with one another and with God.

Help us to listen in love, work together in peace, and collaborate with one another as we seek the betterment of our community and world.

## CLOSING PRAYER

For the Human Family

O God, you made us in your own image and redeemed us through Jesus your Son: Look with compassion on the whole human family; take away the arrogance and hatred which infect our hearts; break down the walls that separate us; unite us in bonds of love; and work through our struggle and confusion to accomplish your purposes on earth; that, in your good time, all nations and races may serve you in harmony around your heavenly throne; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Further Reading:

Palmer, P. J. (2014). *Healing the heart of democracy: The courage to create a politics worthy of the human spirit*. John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

## GRACE EPISCOPAL CHURCH

3601 Russell Road • Alexandria, VA 22305

703.549.1980 • [welcome@gracealex.org](mailto:welcome@gracealex.org)

Facebook.com/GraceEpiscopalChurchAlexandriaVa

Instagram: @GraceEpisAlexVA

YouTube: @GraceEpisAlexVA