

Statement of the Evangelical Church Alliance Committee on Church and Society on Support of for the National Day of Prayer:

The Committee on Church and Society for the Evangelical Church Alliance, America's oldest association of independent Evangelical clergy, strongly supports the continuation of an annual National Day of Prayer and the issuance of a proclamation by the President recommending citizens pray in accordance with their faith traditions.

In the Declaration of Independence, America's Founders stated they undertook their solemn act "appealing to the Supreme Judge of the World" for the rectitude of their intentions. Such an appeal is the very definition of prayer. The call to prayer has continued throughout our nation's history by way of presidential proclamations including those from George Washington, Abraham Lincoln, Franklin Roosevelt and Ronald Reagan.

The U.S. Congress, representing the American people, has acted no less than four times over more than 200 years, affirming the place of prayer in our national life. The first such action predates the Constitutional Convention, when the Continental Congress asked the colonies to pray for wisdom as a new nation was formed. In 1952, Congress passed Public Law 82-324, calling for a National Day of Prayer; in 1988 Congress passed Public Law 100-307 designating the first day of May for such an observance; and in 1998, the Congress passed Public Law 105-225 directing the President to issue a proclamation announcing the National Day of Prayer as a time when "the people of the United States may turn to God in prayer and meditation at churches, in groups, and as individuals." A total of 135 national calls to prayer, humiliation, fasting and thanksgiving have been issued by the presidents of the United States between 1789 and 2009.

While many presidents have spoken to the National Day of Prayer, perhaps the most eloquent words came from President Abraham Lincoln in his 1863 proclamation, "For a Day of Humiliation, Fasting and Prayer". In the midst of our nation's greatest crisis, President Lincoln wrote in part,

"[I]t is the duty of nations as well as of men, to own their dependence upon the overruling power of God, to confess their sins and transgressions, in humble sorrow, yet with assured hope that genuine repentance will lead to mercy and pardon; and to recognize the sublime truth, announced in the Holy Scriptures and proven by all history, that those nations only are blessed whose God is the Lord .

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"We have been preserved, these many years, in peace and prosperity. We have grown in numbers, wealth and power, as no other nation has ever grown. But we have forgotten God. We have forgotten the gracious hand which preserved us in peace, and multiplied and enriched and strengthened us; and we have vainly imagined, in the deceitfulness of our hearts, that all these blessings were produced by some superior wisdom and virtue of our own. Intoxicated with

unbroken success, we have become too self-sufficient to feel the necessity of redeeming and preserving grace, too proud to pray to the God that made us!

“It behooves us then, to humble ourselves before the offended Power, to confess our national sins, and to pray for clemency and forgiveness.”

Nothing in the history of our country would suggest anything has changed in American culture, civilization or conduct that would render Lincoln’s words irrelevant in our times. In fact, the moral drift in the American way of life indicates the opposite is true; that we need God’s help as much as ever.

For these reasons and more, the Committee on Church and Society of the Evangelical Church Alliance supports a vigorous appeal by the President of the United States to the decision of the District Court for the Western District of Wisconsin which found the National Day of Prayer to be in violation of the Constitution. The Committee disagrees with this finding and, for the sake of our nation and its people, prays for its reversal.

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