



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
**May 6, 2020**

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## **UCC sharing 46 prayers online in 24 hours during May 7 Interfaith Day of Prayer**

On the National Day of Prayer, the United Church of Christ is releasing 46 original prayers written by people of many faiths, in a multitude of voices. Religious scholars, deployed military, social activists, educators, authors, poets, a politician and a migrant living in sanctuary have authored appeals that touch on the need for the divine in this time of the novel coronavirus pandemic. The church's interfaith "prayer warriors" range in age from a 95-year-old former UCC officer to a 7-year-old child.

They pray as one for moral and spiritual renewal – for a country grappling with greed, for politicians more concerned with economic stability than human life, for a world at war with a deadly virus.

"A virus invisible to us, yet very present with us brings sickness. We cannot ignore or avoid its presence," writes the Rev. Geoffrey Black, a past UCC general minister and president (2009-2015). "Now we are awakened to the uncertainties of time and place."

As retired Episcopal Bishop Gene Robinson asks, "Do you mean for this virus to be a wake-up call about how we're treating the most vulnerable among us – even the earth itself – long before the virus?"

These quotes are from two of 46 prayers to be shared online at [UCC.org](http://UCC.org) and on the [UCC Facebook page](#) beginning at midnight EDT Wednesday, May 6, and continuing for 24 hours through midnight Thursday, May 7. Readers will be able to access a new prayer every hour from midnight through noon. The frequency of the prayers will increase to every half-hour through 6:30 p.m. From 6:45 p.m. until midnight, a new prayer will be presented every 15 minutes. The Rev. Traci Blackmon, UCC associate general minister, kicks off the series with an additional introductory prayer on Facebook at 6 p.m. Wednesday.

Rooted in firm belief in the power of their intercessions, the prayer warriors ask for strength, offer thanks, and look for grace and guidance in the days ahead.

"Send fresh your anointing of grace and mercy upon those who believe, yet doubt your presence. Guide us, Father Mother God, always with your light so that men and women will see you and your glory through all that we do and all that we are," writes Dr. Pernessa Seele, an immunologist, CEO and Founder of Balm in Gilead, Inc., a faith-based organization that works for improved public health systems and the elimination of health disparities.

"SpiritGod, we stand in need of your healing spirit," writes human rights activist Ruby Sales, founder and director of Atlanta's SpiritHouse Project. "Touch our hearts, and in the place of

greed that makes us gobble up everything for ourselves, replace it with compassion and generosity.”

The prayer warriors also express grief for what has been lost and look with hope at the new normal that will emerge after COVID-19.

“Sovereign God, help us focus less on constraints and fear; but rather consider that we are all a part of a new vision for the hope of many nations and the healing of our world,” writes Rev. Dionne Boissière, chaplain of the Church Center for the United Nations.

Presiding Episcopal Bishop Michael Curry prays: “Help us to place our hands in your hands and in the hands of each other that we may walk together and work together until our nightmares are ended and your dream for us and all your creation is realized on earth as it is in heaven.”

“Blessed are you, O God,” prays Rabbi Jonah Dov Pesner, director of the Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism. “Bring life even where there is death.”

The Rev. Mitri Raheb, a Palestinian Christian, sends his prayer from Bethlehem, calling for wisdom. “While states and countries are building walls of separation and promoting segregation in the name of security and self-protection, open our eyes in this time of a global pandemic, to recover our common humanity, dignity and equality.”

As a church of extravagant welcome, the UCC is inviting people of all faiths to add their prayers to the stream of UCC posts on Facebook.

“Although May 7 is National Day of Prayer, this call for prayer is from a higher power than Congress,” Blackmon said. “The voices gathered here are representative of the world’s horrors and our hopes. I am deeply grateful and strengthened to know that this call to pray is reverberating around the world. In this space the number of people who’ve answered the call to contribute to this communal cry serves to remind us that God is indeed still speaking and we have the power to heal the world.”

UCC leaders contributing prayers include General Minister and President John Dorhauer and his four living predecessors – Black, John Thomas, Paul Sherry and Avery Post, who is 95 – as well as Associate General Minister Karen Georgia Thompson. Religious traditions represented in the prayers include Baptist, Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), Evangelical, Lutheran, Methodist, Unitarian Universalist, Islam, Judaism, Sikhism, Baha’i and Dutch Reformed. Among the North American contributors are people from African American, Asian American, European American, Indigenous and Latinx communities.

A complete list of prayer contributors appears below.

### **Prayer contributors, Interfaith Day of Prayer, United Church of Christ, May 7, 2020**

Rev. Dr. **Jim Antal**, United Church of Christ minister, climate justice activist and author  
 Imam **Naeem Baig**, Outreach Director, Dar Al-Hijrah Islamic Center, Falls Church, Va.  
 Bishop **William J. Barber II**, Founder, Moral Mondays; co-architect, The Poor People’s Campaign  
 Rev. **Cameron Barr** (vice-chair) and **Yvette Wynn** (chair), United Church of Christ Board  
 Rev. **Geoffrey A. Black**, former General Minister and President, UCC (2009-2015)  
 Rev. Dr. **Traci Blackmon**, Associate General Minister, UCC  
 Rev. **Louie Blue Coat**, Eagle Butte, S.D.; Council for American Indian Ministry, UCC  
 Rev. Dr. **Allan Boesak**, Dutch Reformed Church minister, anti-apartheid activist, South Africa  
 Rev. **Dionne Boisierre**, Chaplain, Church Center for the United Nations  
**Annabelle Callahan**, age 7, Philadelphia

Sister **Simone Campbell**, Executive Director, NETWORK Lobby for Catholic Social Justice  
 Rev. **Minerva Carcaño**, Bishop, California Nevada Conference, United Methodist Church  
 Dr. **Iva Carruthers**, General Secretary, Samuel DeWitt Proctor Conference, Inc., Chicago  
 Rev. Dr. **Benjamin F. Chavis Jr.**, former Executive Director, Commission for Racial Justice, UCC  
 Most Rev. **Michael Bruce Curry**, Presiding Bishop and Primate, The Episcopal Church  
 The Rev. **Leah Daughtry**, Bishop and Presiding Prelate, The House of the Lord Churches, Brooklyn, N.Y.  
 Rev. Dr. **Yvonne Delk**, past Executive Director, UCC Office for Church in Society  
 Rev. **John Dorhauer**, General Minister and President, UCC (2015–present)  
**Deployed Medical Corpsman** (name withheld), U.S. Navy Reserve  
 Mrs. **Marian Wright Edelman**, Founder and President Emerita, Children’s Defense Fund  
 Rev. Dr. **Yvette Flunder**, Presiding Bishop, The Fellowship of Affirming Ministries  
**Alex Garcia**, living in sanctuary, St. Louis  
 Rev. Dr. **Susan Frederick Gray**, President, Unitarian Universalist Association  
 Rev. Dr. **Emma Jordan-Simpson**, Executive Director, Fellowship of Reconciliation USA  
**Valerie Kaur**, Founder, Groundswell Movement  
 Rev. **Sharon MacArthur**, Interim Minister, Community Church of Honolulu, UCC  
 Rev. Dr. **Otis Moss Jr.**, Pastor Emeritus, Olivet Institutional Baptist Church, Cleveland  
 Dr. **Margaret Noodin**, Professor and Director of Electa Quinney Institute, University of Wis.-Milwaukee  
 Rev. **Terri Hord Owens**, General Minister and President, Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)  
 Rabbi **Jonah Pesner**, Director, Religion Action Center of Reform Judaism  
 Rev. **Avery D. Post**, former UCC President (1977-1988)  
 Rev. Dr. **Mitri Raheb**, Founder, Diyar Consortium, Bethlehem, Palestine  
 Rt. Rev. **V. Gene Robinson**, former Bishop, Diocese of New Hampshire, The Episcopal Church  
**Karin Ryan**, Senior Policy Advisor for Human Rights, The Carter Center, Atlanta  
**Ruby Sales**, Founder and Director, The SpiritHouse Project, Atlanta  
 Dr. **Pernessa C. Seele**, Founder, Balm of Gilead, Inc.  
**Julia A. Shearson**, Executive Director, Council for American-Islamic Relations–Ohio, Cleveland Office  
 Rev. Dr. **Paul Sherry**, former President, UCC, 1989-1999  
**Bryan Stevenson**, Esq., Founder and Executive Director, Equal Justice Initiative, Montgomery, Ala.  
 Rev. Dr. **John Thomas**, former General Minister and President, UCC, 1990-2009  
 Rev. **Karen Georgia Thompson**, Associate General Minister, UCC  
**Jim Wallis**, Founder and Editor, Sojourners  
 U.S. Sen. **Elizabeth Warren**, Massachusetts  
 Rabbi **Arthur Ocean Waskow**, Founder and Director, The Shalom Center, Philadelphia  
 Dr. **Barbara Williams-Skinner**, CEO and Co-Founder, Skinner Leadership Institute, Washington, D.C.  
 Rev. Dr. **James Winkler**, President and General Secretary, National Council of Churches  
 Rev. Dr. **Jeremiah Wright**, Pastor Emeritus, Trinity UCC, Chicago

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*The [United Church of Christ](#), a mainline Protestant denomination, has nearly 900,000 members and 5,000 congregations nationwide. Headquartered in Cleveland, it is a church of many firsts: the first mainline denomination to ordain a woman, the first to ordain an openly gay man and the first predominantly white denomination to ordain an African American. More on the UCC’s ecumenical and interfaith ministries is [here](#).*