

Healing, Hope and Encouragement: Gathering for the National Day of Prayer

Gale Alves
May 2, 2020



The National Day of Prayer has long been observed in the United States on the first Thursday of May to encourage people of all faiths to pray for the nation. As our country is facing a great challenge at this time that has affected all of our lives, more and more people are turning to prayer. In observance of this special day, seven individuals representing four faith traditions gathered on Zoom to uplift the nation on May 2nd, 2020.

The prayer gathering, which was hosted by WFWP Colorado representative Gale Alves and her husband Antonio, focused on offering words of encouragement and prayers for the healing of our cities, nation and world, and to spread the spirit of hope, compassion and encouragement.

A representative of the Baha'i faith began by sharing that humanity is to come together as one family, and their faith inspires them to form deep and diverse relationships and to build communities that nurture the well-being of all people. In the Baha'i tradition, God's truth and providence is ever unfolding through messengers from God such as Moses, Jesus Christ, Muhammad, the Buddha and other founders of faith, and the Bab and Baha'u'llah are the latest divine messengers.



She then read a Baha'i unity prayer:

"O my God! O my God! Unite the hearts of Thy servants, and reveal to them Thy great purpose. May they follow Thy commandments and abide in Thy law. Help them, O God, in their endeavor, and grant them strength to serve Thee. O God! Leave them not to themselves, but guide their steps by the light of Thy knowledge, and cheer their hearts by Thy love. Verily, Thou art their Helper and their Lord." - Baha'u'llah

Three young missionary women of the Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter-day Saints went next. One read from the Book of Mormon:

"Wherefore, whoso believeth in God might with surety hope for a better world, yea, even a place at the right hand of God, which hope cometh of faith, maketh an anchor to the souls of men, which would make them sure and steadfast, always abounding in good works, being led to glorify God." - Ether 12:4

The two other missionaries spoke and prayed about hope and compassion. They said hope is often used to express uncertainty in the future. But they preferred the definition of "firmness" which conveys action and true, unwavering belief in God. They concluded by saying, "Hang on to hope and serve those around you. We have compassion and an anchor to keep us going during this time of Covid-19." They prayed for all of the victims of Covid-19 and for their families who could not gather for the funerals of their loved ones, and that all people could come to have a relationship with Jesus and turn to him for strength.

Gale Alves represented the Women's Federation for World Peace and first read the five principles that WFWP stands for:

1. We affirm women's value in the eyes of a loving Creator, and the God-given rights and dignity of women.
2. We believe in promoting healthy and virtuous relationships within the family.
3. We seek to embrace one global family and community through service, education, reconciliation, and celebration of unique differences.
4. We believe in empowering women to take the lead for the sake of world peace in all sectors of society.
5. We believe that the motherly heart of selflessness, compassion, and desire for mutual prosperity are crucial for creating genuine, sustainable peace.

Gale prayed that people isolated at home could use this time to think more deeply about life: What is it all about? What is our purpose? She also prayed that we would reflect on our relationships with our loved ones and ask ourselves how we can improve our love for our spouse, our children, our siblings and our parents.

A spiritual leader originally from India who has been studying and following Hinduism for many years, and is a leader along with her husband at the Hare Krishna Temple in Denver, could not be on the Zoom call, but shared these insights with Gale by phone, who in turn shared them with everyone:

"Be strong during this time! Always speak well of others. Speak kind words. Serve at least one meal to someone. This brings very good karma. Accept and be happy in all situations. Be happy and thankful to see the sky each morning. Be happy if it is a rainy day, a snowy day, a cloudy day, a windy day, a sunny day. Be thankful. Think good thoughts. Share your good thoughts and wealth with others. Say sweet words to your spouse every day. This time of Coronavirus is just temporary. Accept it and serve others. Everything will be well."

Vera Tsumagari from Red Hook, New York, spoke about the Blessing movement of the Family Federation for World Peace. The purpose of the blessing, she said, is to strengthen all marriages; to help couples of all faiths, cultures, and races rededicate their unions centered on God, and to invite Him more deeply into their marriages and families. "Heavenly marriages and families are the foundation for true peace in the world," she concluded.

Vera prayed for people to overcome all the pain of this world, for healing and strength, and that God himself could be comforted by the gathering of people of different faiths coming together in oneness.

And lastly, Antonio Alves, representing the Universal Peace Federation, read a passage from *As a Peace-loving Global Citizen*, the autobiography of the founder Rev. Sun Myung Moon:

"Love is powerful. If you grab hold of love and pull, you can pull the whole world to you, similar to the way that you can pull a person along simply by pulling on a single strand of his hair. We ourselves have no power. We lack even the ability to cause a single dandelion by the side of the road to bloom. So the only way we can live is to rely on each other's love. True love is a love that loves but then forgets even the fact that it loved, and then loves again. As we continue to love in this way, our selfish mind will disappear completely. The heart that sacrifices in this way is the heart of true love."

Antonio prayed that we could all practice true love in our daily lives and that everyone on this call could feel like one family.

Everyone was smiling at the conclusion of our National Day of Prayer experience. Elder participants were so happy to have the young LDS missionaries join us; they had beautiful spirits and were so sincere in their expression of faith. We all hope to have more interfaith encounters with one another in the near future.