

INAUGURAL OF JAMES E. CARTER
January 20, 1977

Invocation by Bishop William R. Cannon
The United Methodist Church

O God, whom people of different persuasions call by different names, yet on whom we all alike rely for our lives, our land, and for the opportunity for happiness, Grant us, we pray Thee, a new and vital realization of Thy sovereignty and our dependence, of what it means to be creatures responsible to their creator and of our obligations—both as individuals and as a society—to Thee.

Save us as a nation from the arrogant futility of trying to play God, as if we knew everything there is to know, as if our wealth was so great that we can satisfy the needs of people everywhere over the world and buy their favor and support, as if our power was limitless, so that we can manage and direct the affairs of humankind.

The truth is that we are not able to properly manage and control ourselves, to guarantee to every American the full advantage of the fruits of his labor, so that each one of us may sit under his own vine and under his own fig tree and none shall make us afraid. The management of the world is Thy business, not ours, O God. Give us the humility and the good sense to see this.

Help us to deal with others as equals, seeking advice as well as giving it, receiving help from them as well as lending them our aid. Teach us that the only abiding influence we can ever have in the world is the influence of a good example.

We ask Thy forgiveness for those sins that marred our national character and impaired the effectiveness of our government in recent times. Help us as a people to confess our sins, not to blame our politicians alone for them. In their evil and wrongdoing, Thou dost hold before our face a mirror in which we see our own misdeed writ large.

Teach us that a democracy is not sacred just because it is a democracy, and that a government of the people, by the people, and for the people is no better than the people themselves.

Let this, the first administration in the third century of our national existence, be the beginning of a new era, a time of rectitude, righteousness and prosperity for all our citizens based on their own toil and productivity, and peace.

Bless our outgoing President, Gerald Ford. Give him the satisfaction of knowing that he rendered inestimable services to our country under trying circumstances.

Bless the Congress of the United States, the newly designated Cabinet and all others either elected or appointed to public office.

Lend Thy favor and Thine aid to Vice President Walter Mondale that he may support and complement in unselfish service the work of the President and thereby make his own role in government indispensable.

Pour out the abundance of thy grace, we pray Thee, upon Jimmy Carter, about to be inaugurated President of the United States. We pray for his family, especially Rosalynn his wife, that they may support him in this most difficult task. We thank Thee for his brilliant mind, his signal accomplishments in public service, his exemplary Christian life and his devotion to Thee and Thy people. Give him the wisdom, the strength, and the goodness to take his place among the greatest of our Presidents and grant him, like Solomon, an understanding heart to govern Thy people rightly.

Make our people governable, O God. Save our nation from factionalism and from the divisiveness of those who exert pressure on government for their own interests, seeking selfish gain more than the common good.

Make us, we pray, one people under Thee, united for the good of the nation and for the service of the world. Help us together to build a nation here on earth that in this manner of life anticipates Thine everlasting kingdom in Heaven.

All this we ask in the name of Jesus Christ, Thy son and our savior. Amen.