

Resolutions To Action

LCWR Global Concerns Committee

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2020: Just When You Thought It Couldn't Get Worse

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EXPERIENCE

"2020—just when you thought it couldn't get worse..." This dark humor has gone viral (no pun intended) because it sums up the collective sentiment of Americans as we move into the final months of this dreadful year. Remember the first unfortunate major events of the year? Week One saw the illegal assassination of Iran's Qassem Soleimani, which set off a firestorm of global protest and heightened tensions with our nuclear opponent. During the first month we witnessed the deeply contentious impeachment trial and partisan acquittal of the current US president. Those seismic events seem like distant memories and minor blips compared to what would follow. Eight months later we've reached the dreaded benchmark of 200,000 Americans dead from the global COVID-19 pandemic—with 4% of the world's population the US has experienced 20% of the global deaths. A civil uprising for racial justice sparked by the

murder of George Floyd emerged in cities across the nation, inspiring the global community to take account of white supremacy's legacy in so-called civilized nations. By the time we reached September, every crisis in 2020—even the fires along the West coast—has taken on a partisan frame and made to fit within the caustic left-right narrative.

Now that it's October and we're in the final countdown to the general election, we're confronted by the inherent challenges of administering a national election during a pandemic. The media is warning about necessary steps and lacking resources to accommodate unprecedented voter engagement and mail-in-ballots. The president is preempting a loss by casting doubt on the validity of the outcome. Congressional inaction on desperately needed COVID relief—including funds to support state and local election officials—is the shameful backdrop that adds to the partisan vitriol. And just when you thought 2020 couldn't get worse... Justice Ginsburg passes away on the eve of Rosh Hashanah. The high

stakes are raised, and the deep partisan divisions are sharpening.

SOCIAL ANALYSIS

To offer some perspective, this has been a slow burn—over four years, we have become accustomed to bracing ourselves for the relentless onslaught of the news cycle—an ever-accelerating downward spiral closely covered by the media. Countless Americans are experiencing a new kind of despair, fraught with anxiety and financial pain, mired in violent

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rhetoric, grieving hundreds of thousands of unnecessary deaths, newly awakened to the injustices of our systems, and fearful of an unclear future. It is no wonder we expect the worst to come in the final months of 2020. The alarm bells are sounding, and we are collectively bracing ourselves.

This election has become the focal point for all of our national anxieties—one of the few consequential events in 2020 that we can anticipate. Americans are ready and eager to weigh in on a path forward through these painful times. Concerns about the resilience of our democratic systems have grown as they've been tested for four years and we've become keenly aware of their shortcomings. The "checks" seem weak and the "balances" can feel utterly out-of-balance. There are blatant efforts by forces working to suppress the vote by leveraging a highly contagious virus with age-old tactics of voter intimidation and administrative barriers. While both sides fear the potential loss of their candidate, many of us also carry deep misgivings—even dread—about the recent refusal by the president to assure a peaceful transfer of power if he loses.

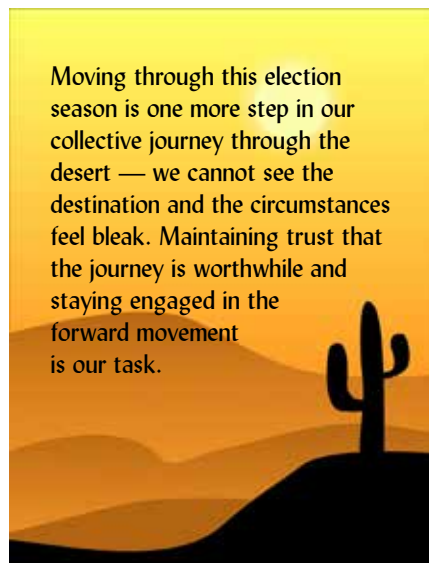
REFLECTION

It is so challenging to gain perspective—to see past our experience with this year of biblical proportions. Most election scenarios predict a messy, confusing, and protracted process. This president is unlikely to leave office gracefully if he loses. No matter how shell-shocked we feel about the last year—or the last four years—it is critical to remember that we do have processes to contend with these alarming possibilities

and there are ample guardrails built-in. What's most needed in this election is the steadfast confidence—insistence—that all votes will be counted and that the American people are prepared to wait for the clarity of an outcome. With all the forces at play working to undermine our confidence in the election, it is ours to hold firm, to remain calm, to hold the doubts at bay. "For God gave us a spirit not of fear but of power and love and self-control." (2 Tim 1:7)

Our systems have proven remarkably resilient over four years of stress-testing. Our civil servants have proven a steadfastness and devotion to their service when confronted by extremely challenging and discouraging circumstances. And perhaps most importantly: this is the moment the American people have been waiting for: the opportunity to choose again. We would be wise in heeding the words of St. Paul to the Hebrews: "We want each of you to show this same diligence to the very end, so that what you hope for may be fully realized." (6:11)

Moving through this election season is one more step in our



collective journey through the desert — we cannot see the destination and the circumstances feel bleak. Maintaining trust that the journey is worthwhile and staying engaged in the forward movement is our task. In fact, our faith already provides us with very practical, reflective tools to help move through this time of adversity. The expectant longing of Advent—clinging to the promise that light will appear in the darkness. The Lenten journey of penitence for our fallen state, of contrition for all the ways we have failed—and the desire for conversion. The observance of Good Friday—trusting that the paschal mystery of renewal is unfolding even when hope seems dead. The anticipation of the Easter Season—awaiting the moment when the Holy Spirit inspires people to a new vision, a new creation, a more perfect union. This election, the results will be determined by the voters and the outcome will be shaped by our collective will. So, take heart and do not fear. Vote early and help others to do the same. Acknowledge the challenges but keep them in perspective.

ACTION

- Anxiety is contagious and not helpful. Stay calm and pray with fervor.
- Spread the light and support our public servants at the USPS with a [blessing](#).
- Participate in LCWR's [election reflections' contemplative dialogue](#).
- Report misinformation designed to sow confusion among voters: you can take a picture of the ad or message and text it to (662) 667-1234 or [download the tool](#) to report straight from Facebook.