



December 1, 2008

Dear President-Elect Obama,

On behalf of the 2.3 million members of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), I want to convey our hopes and prayers for you as the 44th President of the United States of America.

We are approaching Advent in the life of the church – a season of expectancy and hope as we prepare, once again, for the new King. As you know, this King did not come in any of the worldly ways, but as a very vulnerable baby born to very ordinary people. Even in his birth, Christ was showing us that the first shall be last and last shall be first.

As a country, we are in the midst of crises large and small. The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) has lifted up concerns about war, immigration, health care, globalization, care for the planet, racism, the Middle East, and justice in our courts. Now, it is an economic crisis that demands our attention. Our hope is that this current crisis does not become king, consuming us entirely and overshadowing the issues of ordinary people.

I have been told that every crisis holds a message. In my humble opinion, the message for this particular crisis is that our country and its economy cannot be built just on selling goods or even manufacturing goods. Our country's economy must be built on achieving good.

We are prepared to help you and your administration achieve that good. We will add feet, hands, and voices to our prayers to seek justice for the least of these. We will seek the Spirit's aid as we learn to sacrifice our own material wants for a society that makes its royal calling the well-being of every woman, man, and child.

Offering encouragement is something that Presbyterians have done to each of the forty-three Presidents who preceded you. Please know always that your faith and spirit are being supported with the individual and congregational prayers of the church all across the nation. Your job as President is lonely, but you are not alone.

I have enclosed a prayer attributed to Augustine of Hippo over 1600 hundred years ago. May you find comfort and courage in it as you approach your presidency.

Yours in Christ,

Gradye Parsons
Stated Clerk of the General Assembly



God of life,
there are days when the burdens we carry
are heavy on our shoulders and weigh us down,
when the road seems dreary and endless,
the skies gray and threatening,
when our lives have no music in them,
and our hearts are lonely,
and our souls have lost their courage.
Flood the path with light,
turn our eyes to where the skies are full of promise;
tune our hearts to brave music;
give us the sense of comradeship
with heroes and saints of every age;
and so quicken our spirits
that we may be able to encourage
the souls of all who journey with us on the road of life,
to your honor and glory. Amen.