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FREEDOM FROM RELIGION FOUNDATION,
& DR. SARI DWORKIN

Superior Court of California County of San Luis Obispo

FREEDOM FROM RELIGION
FOUNDATION, a Wisconsin corporation;
and DR. SARI DWORKIN, an individual,

Plaintiffs,

v.

CITY OF PISMO BEACH, a municipal
corporation; PISMO BEACH CITY
COUNCIL, the governing body of the CITY
OF PISMO BEACH; SHELLY
HIGGINBOTHAM, an individual in her
capacity of Pismo Beach Mayor; and PAUL
JONES, an individual in his capacity as
Pismo Beach City Chaplain; and DOES 1-
100, inclusive,

Defendants.

Case No.

PLAINTIFFS' EXHIBITS

Exhibit List

- Exhibit 1 Transcripts of invocations given at Pismo Beach City Council meetings from 2008 through October 2013
- Exhibit 2 Pismo Beach City Council proclamation to honor the City Chaplain's years of "ordained service"
- Exhibit 3 Excerpt from March 1, 2005, Pismo Beach City Council Agenda explaining the legal difficulties of the prayers and establishing a chaplaincy
- Exhibit 4 Excerpt from March 1, 2005, Pismo Beach City Council Minutes including objections to prayers and chaplains and the vote establishing the chaplaincy
- Exhibit 5 Atheists United of San Luis Obispo's May 15, 2012 letter to the Pismo Beach City Council protesting the sectarian prayers and chaplaincy
- Exhibit 6 FFRF's August 15, 2012 letter to the Pismo Beach City Council protesting the sectarian prayers and chaplaincy
- Exhibit 7 Excerpt from August 5, 2003 Pismo Beach City Council Minutes adopting a prayer policy and the policy itself
- Exhibit 8 Excerpts from Pismo Beach City Council Minutes where students attended the meetings
- Exhibit 9 Photographs of City Chaplain wearing his official city nametag with city seal and giving invocations behind an overlay of the official city seal and text noting invocation as an agenda item.

Transcripts of Invocations
Given at the Pismo Beach City Council 2008 - 2013

Unless otherwise indicated, the text below is the complete text of an invocation given by the City Chaplain Dr. Paul Jones.

Where only partial text was available, or where a stand-in for Jones gave the invocation, this will be indicated immediately after the date.

In every case, the mayor asks all attendees to stand during the invocation and remain standing while the same invocation speaker also directs the Pledge of Allegiance.¹ This direction from the mayor usually takes the form of:

“The next item on our agenda is the invocation, which will be given by [Jones or his stand-in]. Please stand and remain standing for the Pledge.”

In each instance, we endeavored to transcribe the prayers fairly and accurately. It is possible that mistakes have been made. Footnotes were used to note biblical authority or historical inaccuracies and are not part of the actual prayer.

¹ In the single instance of a non-Christian giving a prayer, Rajan Zed was not permitted to say the Pledge of Allegiance. The City Chaplain still handled that responsibility.

January 15, 2008

Will you please bow your heart with me in prayer? Our Heavenly Father, this is the first city council meeting conducted this new year, 2008. And tonight, we reflect on the many ways that you have blessed our great country and our beautiful city in 2007. Many good decisions have been made by our city council, and you have blessed us with your presence, with your divine protection and with prosperity. And tonight we say thank you for the many favors that you have given to us which we enjoy. Thank you especially for our continued liberty and freedoms.

Our founding fathers have declared in our Declaration of Independence the immortal phrase: “We are endowed by our Creator with certain unalienable rights, life liberty and the pursuit of happiness.”² This reinforces our strong beliefs that liberty and freedom are God’s gift to us and that religious liberty and religious expression are irreplaceable underpinnings to freedom in our democracy. I often look at the picture in my home of General George Washington at Valley Forge kneeling in prayer in the snow with his horse tied to the tree.³ General Washington knew it was not enough for an individual or a society to depend on their courage and their goodness, they must also seek help from God their preserver receive our sincere gratitude for the traditional values in our nation that have remained viable through the past centuries. Our American history teaches us that liberty and freedom prosper when religion and spirituality are vibrant and that religion and freedom prosper when we understand the rule of law under God is acknowledged.

And so, tonight, as we pledge our allegiance to our country and to our nation’s flag we say with understanding one nation under God with liberty and justice for all. We are grateful that each of us can be a part of this public city council meeting. We invoke your blessings upon each council member. They are our friends whom we have freely elected and whom we pray for by name daily, cause each of them to understand they cannot properly discharge their responsibilities or their assignments apart from your enablement. Give them and their support staff the strength and the security of your invisible presence. Give your divine direction in their thought processes for this will bring proper solutions to each problem and each need that they encounter and in addition it will benefit each citizen and each guest in our beautiful city. This invocation we pray in the name of our personal Savior and Lord. Amen.

² This is incorrect. The true wording is, “We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by *their* Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.” The clause refers not to *our* Creator, but to “their Creator.” The distinction is deliberate and important. If Jefferson, Adams, and Franklin wished to refer to a specifically Judeo-Christian Creator they would not have chosen the latter. “Their” is a possessive pronoun (e.g., “their car” or “their rights as individuals”) or an indefinite singular pronoun (e.g., “some left their book on the table.”). Either way, in this context the use indicates a choice; that each individual has their own, valid view of “their Creator” and it is not for the government to say which view is better. “The” is a definite article used with specifying or particularizing effect. If Jefferson, Adams, and Franklin wished to specify or single out a particular Creator, the proper phrase would be “the Creator,” or simply name the Creator. The use of “their” and not “the” before the noun indicates that the writers were not speaking about a specific god.

³ Historians agree that this did not happen. There is no contemporaneous report to verify it and the original report is from *The Life of Washington*, by Parson Mason Weems, who did not include the story until the 17th edition and also gave us the myth of the cherry tree. See Edward G. Lengel, *Inventing George Washington*, 13, 22-23, 76-86 (Harper Collins Publishers, 2011).

February 5, 2008

Will you please bow your heart in prayer? Our Heavenly Father: we pause tonight to express our gratitude for the gentle rains that has fallen on our community these past days. The ground has been saturated the surrounding hills have become lush green providing grazing future for cattle and likewise sheer beauty for us to enjoy. Rain was so needed on our California coast and you have sent rain and in some areas more than normal. We say thank you for enlarging our water supply.

Today is primary election day better known as Super Tuesday. The citizens of many states from our own California to Connecticut and from Idaho to Georgia are going to the polls to select candidates who will lead our nation. Pres. Calvin Coolidge said in 1926, "We live in a republic. This is government by representation. If we are to have any measure of self-government, the voice of the people is the rule. Therefore it is altogether necessary in each election that there should be a fairly full participation by all the qualified voters." We pray tonight for each of those who are seeking public office. May each of us, as citizens, not shirk our responsibility of citizenship and cast our vote, and God, cause Your Will to be done. Do not withdraw your present help from us but forgive our sins so that your divine favor will continue to be out poured upon our great nation. We are especially grateful for your protection upon our country these years since 9/11 and we are so grateful for the continuing efforts of our intelligence community whom you have used to protect our land and each American citizen.

We ask that you will unite our hearts and strengthen our hands to work together as Americans for the good of our city, our state and our nation. Continue to be our light and our guide our strength and our courage. And may we so honor you that your promise and Holy Scripture will be fulfilled in us for Scripture says, "No weapon that is formed against you will prosper."⁴ And tonight, we invoke your blessings upon our city council members grant to them and their support staff the strength and the security of your invisible presence. Give your divine direction for each decision that is made tonight. Bring proper solutions to each new need and to each difficulty that our council will encounter. May each citizen benefit as well as each guest who visits our beautiful city. This invocation we pray in the name of our Savior and Lord. Amen.

⁴ Isaiah 54:17, "No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper; and every tongue that shall rise against thee in judgment thou shalt condemn. This is the heritage of the servants of the LORD, and their righteousness is of me, saith the LORD." This is a direct rebuke of the personal beliefs of all non-Christians.

February 19, 2008

Will you please bow your heart with me in prayer? Our Heavenly Father, just yesterday, we were privileged to celebrate a national holiday, President's Day. We especially directed our thoughts to two United States Presidents whose birthdays are in February, George Washington and Abraham Lincoln. These were men who honored God, and led our nation in righteous ways. Although our nation faced extremely troubled times, they led in integrity and in truth. They were men of character who were concerned about doing right more than securing high approval ratings. They read often the Holy Scriptures and found direction from them.⁵ They were men of prayer and understood that they were always answerable to you.⁶ As such, they were courageous to walk in obedience and to do what you required of them. The Bible teaches us "Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord."⁷ Give to our leaders the wisdom to know what is right, and the will to do it. Cause us to understand the words of Lincoln when he said, "I have been driven many times upon my knees by the overwhelming conviction that I have nowhere else to go. My own wisdom seemed insufficient for the day." And so tonight, we boldly declare our nation's motto, "In God, we trust."

Let us never forget that God promises security and stability to all who put their trust in him, and history teaches us that God chooses human instruments through whom he can infuse his life and his wisdom, with spiritual and civil authority.⁸ We are grateful for our City Council, and their support staff, and we pray that you would infuse in them your wisdom and your understanding. Many problems they face seem to defy a solution, but your wisdom causes confusion to fade into harmony, and when our hearts and minds are turned to God in childlike trust, it is then that God the invisible enables us to complete any assignment that he entrusts to us and to do it with courage and success. Tonight we invoke your invisible presence and will to be the resource that you give to each of the leaders of our city. May proper decisions be made tonight that will honor you and benefit the citizens and the guests of our beautiful city. This invocation we pray in the name of our personal Savior and Lord. Amen.

⁵ Unfounded.

⁶ Unfounded.

⁷ Psalm 33:12.

⁸ See Romans 13.

March 4, 2008

Will you bow your heart with me in prayer please? Our Heavenly Father, When we read and reread the words spoken by our national leaders of yesteryear, our hearts are filled with praise and thanks to you. It was Franklin Delano Roosevelt, our 32nd president of the United States, who declared in a nationwide radio broadcast in 1935, and I quote, “we can not read the history of our rise and development as a nation without reckoning with the place the Bible has occupied in shaping the advances of our republic. When we have been the truest and the most consistent in obeying its precepts, we have attained the greatest measure of contentment and prosperity.” And six years later on January 16, 1941 he stated, “The nation has placed its destiny in the hands and hearts of its millions of free men and women and its faith in freedom under the guidance of God.” Unquote. Our founding fathers understood and put into practice the words of the prophet Isaiah, written to his fellow citizens in chapter 54 verse 14 which says, “you shall establish yourself in righteousness in conformity with Gods’ will and order.”⁹

Grant that each of us, as citizens of our great nation and city tonight will determine to establish our lives and our lifestyles and righteousness conforming daily to your divine will and order. Our godly heritage revealed in the lives, decisions, and documents of so many who have helped to shape our nation from its earliest years give us boldness tonight to declare our nations motto, in God we trust.

We’re grateful to have freely elected our mayor and members of our city council. We pray for them and undergird both them and their support staff with our words and our prayers daily. History teaches us that good government originated in the heart of God and so tonight we invoke God’s divine wisdom and courage to be freely given to each of them so that they shall make good and right decisions. May each determination that is made bring esteem and righteousness toward God, and bring justice and fairness and worth to each citizen and guest visiting our beautiful city. Grant our council your continued blessings upon our intelligence community and grant your protection and your favor upon each of our leaders and our citizens. We thank you for hearing and responding to this prayer of invocation that we pray in the name of our personal Savior and Lord. Amen.

⁹ Isaiah 54:14, the prior verse reads “And all thy children shall be taught of the Lord.

March 18, 2008

Our Heavenly Father, we lift our hearts in gratitude tonight that we are privileged to participate in our public city council meeting. We offer praise to God for your continued protection over our nation and our city. We pray that your omniscience and knowledge will be granted to our intelligence community. As they continue to safeguard our country and our citizens. May no further terrorist plots be planned or carried out and may any plans made to do us harm be uncovered and defused before they can be realized. Cause righteousness to rein in our lives individually and in our government.

It was President Herbert Hoover, our 31st president who said, and I quote, “When there is lack of honor in government, the morals of the whole people are poisoned. There is no such thing as no-mans-land between honesty and dishonesty. Our strength lies in spiritual concepts. It lies in public sensitivity to evil. Our greatest dangers are not from invasion by foreign armies, but rather that we commit suicide from within by complacency with evil or by public tolerance of scandalous behavior.” unquote.

The power of prayer is at the dynamic force to repel unrighteousness, but the influence of prayer has been dramatically reduced in our public life, and the moral compass of the Holy Scriptures has been largely laid aside. Public morality is declining to dangerously low points. Help each of us to always seek to live justly and to pursue righteousness and be zealous for lifestyles that honor God. We’re most grateful for our nations motto that strongly instructs us, in God we trust. Thank you for each member of our city council and their support staff. Infuse in them your wisdom and your understanding. Give them your solution to every difficulty that they face. We invoke your irresistible presence and will tonight to become the resource that you graciously grant to each of the leaders of our city. May proper decisions be made that will honor you and benefit the citizens and the guest of our beautiful city. This invocation we pray in the name of our personal Savior and Lord. Amen

April 1, 2008

Will you please bow your heart with me in prayer? Our Heavenly Father, many of us alive today, including myself remember well the many battles of World War II. It was December 1944, our American forces were engaged in one of the largest land battles of the war. And commanding the one half million soldiers of US Third Army was General George Patton. History says he could be tough and stubborn and the very next moment, commune with God the divine. He'd been taught that courage is fear that has said its prayers. He and his chief chaplain wrote a prayer and George Patton signed it and sent it as a Christmas greeting to every commander and every soldier under his command, and I quote, "Almighty and merciful God, we humbly beseech you. Because of your great goodness, that you restrain the immoderate reins with which we've had to contend. Give us fair weather for battle, graciously hearken to us as soldiers who call upon you that armed with your power, we may advance from victory to victory and crush the oppression and wickedness of our enemies and establish your justice among men and nations. Amen."

And to the astonishment of Patton's soldiers the fog lifted, the rain stopped, and the weather cleared for the critical period December 20 to January 1. General Patton said to his chief chaplain, "Our prayers worked. I knew they would. I'm delighted by what I have seen as the work of divine providence helping the Third US Army up until this moment. A letter was sent by the chief chaplain to every commander of all four hundred and eighty six chaplains of the Third US Army, and it read, "Urge your men to pray. Not only in church, but elsewhere. Pray when driving, pray when fighting, pray when alone, pray with others, pray by night, pray by day, pray by .. for victory, pray for our army, and pray for peace. Be assured that this message on prayer has the approval the encouragement and the enthusiastic support of the Third US Army commander, General George Patton."

So may each of us tonight, Our Father, as individual citizens be people of prayer. By night and by day, many unfavorable situations exist from time to time in the lives of our citizens, in the lives of our city but you have chosen human instruments through who you can infuse your divine life and wisdom with spiritual and civil authority. Teach us and the members of our city council that it is when our hearts and our minds are turned to God in childlike trust that your that you divinely enable us to complete any assignment from you with courage and with success. Tonight, we invoke your presences and Your Will to become the resource that you give to each of our elected leaders and their support staff. God bless the citizens and the guest of our beautiful city. God bless America and protect America. This invocation we pray in the name of our personal Savior and Lord. Amen.

April 15, 2008

Will you please join me in prayer? Our Heavenly Father, we offer our gratitude tonight that we are citizens of our great nation, the United States of America. Our country is the hope of the oppressed. Our country is the greatest force for good on the earth. By our actions we declare that freedom and liberty is on the march. The earliest history of our nation teaches us that our pilgrim founding fathers came here in search of religious freedom. Their faith and prayers and writings and lifestyles relate to us that we were founded and continue to be one nation under God. And one of the most unique important characteristics of our country is our own legacy of faith and trust in God, *Yet there are some among us who systematically try to censor or suppress our spiritual heritage*. It was in August of 1984 that then-President Ronald Reagan said, “Without God there is no virtue because there is no prompting of the conscience. Without God there is a coarsening of the society and without God democracy will not and cannot long endure. And then he concluded by saying, “If we ever forget that we are one nation under God, then we will be a nation gone under.” And so tonight, we reaffirm our nation's motto, In God we Trust. And we would pray that you would continue to guide our intelligence community as they seek to protect our nation and to protect us as citizens.

We acknowledge that your gracious guiding hand¹⁰ has been seen in our land and our city of Pismo Beach and we ask your blessings upon our mayor and the members of our city council. We have freely elected our fellow citizens. These are our friends who serve us on our city council and as such assume responsibility daily to pray for them by name. Our council members and their support staff seek earnestly to make Pismo Beach a better place to live and to enjoy life with our family and with friends and so tonight we would invoke the power of your eternal presence to cause their thought processes to respond to your divine guidance. May the decisions that are made tonight honor you and be for the betterment of each of us as citizens and all the guest who visit our beautiful city. This invocation we pray in the name of our personal Savior and Lord. Amen

¹⁰ Nehemiah 2:18, *see also*, 1 Chronicles 4:10 – “Jabez cried out to the God of Israel, ‘Oh, that you would bless me and enlarge my territory! Let Your Hand be with me, and keep me from harm so that I will be free from pain.’ And God granted his request.” The Christian bible continually references its god as “Your Hand”. *See, e.g.*, Psalm 21:7-8 “For the king trusts in the Lord; through the unfailing love of the Most High he will not be shaken. Your hand will lay hold on all your enemies; your right hand will seize your foes.”; Psalm 74:10-11 “How long will the enemy mock you, O God? Will the foe revile your name forever? Why do you hold back your hand, your right hand? Take it from the folds of your garment and destroy them!”; Micah 5:9 “Your hand will be lifted up in triumph over your enemies, and all your foes will be destroyed.”; Psalm 139:5, 10; Deuteronomy 3:24; Isaiah 26:11; 1 Kings 8:24; 2 Chronicles 6:15; Acts 4:29-30; Psalm 17:14; Job 1:11; Job 10:7.

May 6, 2008

Would you please bow your heart with me in prayer? Our Heavenly Father the beloved writer of Holy Scripture, St. Paul, wrote to those of his day, saying, “I urge you first of all to pray for all people. As you make your request, ask for God’s mercy and give thanks and pray for all who are in authority so that we may live in peace and quietness and in godliness and in dignity. For this is good, and this pleases God.”¹¹ St. Paul instructed each of us to pray for good government,¹² understanding that good government is the will of God, so we pray tonight for our president, our senators, the members of the House of Representatives. We also pray for our governor and state senators and state assembly persons. It is clear that these guarantee our freedoms of speech and assembly, as well as maintaining law and order, and allow unrestricted communication and travel.

We invoke your leadership upon each of them so they never ignore your guidance, nor spurn your holy presence in either their lives or their leadership. May their plans for integrity and fairness to all be evidenced in reality. Make each one to become righteous role models so that we and our children may emulate them as they seek to aid the poor, the addicted, and safety of hope to all those who are in despair. May each leader and citizen so earnestly seek God’s favor and righteousness that our intelligence community will be used of God to thwart any plot or any device that would harm our beloved nation or any of our citizenry. May we also join unitedly as one nation under God to boldly declare: in God we trust. May our dedicated young servicemen and women stationed around the world sense your presence and your protection as they guard us and guard our land, as they guard our freedoms and our way of life.

We pray tonight especially for the leaders of our city. Our City Council; these are our friends whom we have freely elected to govern us. We pray also for their support staff. May each of these leaders be led and energized by your spirit and by your principles of righteousness. Give them wisdom and courage to make right decisions. Stir and transform their minds, making them righteous and wise leaders. May truth and integrity always rise above personal gain. May they honor you, oh God, and benefit each citizen and each guest, and may each home and all those who live in it, and our beautiful city, be filled with your majestic presence and your glory. This invocation we pray in the blessed name of our Savior and Lord. Amen.

¹¹ 1 Timothy 2:1-3

¹² *Id.*

May 20, 2008

Will you please stand and bow your heart with me? Our Heavenly Father, we express our gratefulness for your blessings upon us and our beautiful city. At the same time, our hearts are strongly moved by those who suffer much in Asia today. In China, there's been a devastating earthquake affecting hundreds of thousands of people. And in Burma, the terrifying cyclone has caused upwards of one hundred thousand deaths and those missing. With as many as 1 million losing their homes, as entire villages were swept away. In this time of great suffering, we pray for the many victims. We remember also many of our own citizens in Oklahoma, and Missouri, and Georgia, where storms and tornadoes have caused damage and loss of life. Give strength and courage to those who have been so severely impacted. On May 11, 1950, by joint resolution of Congress, Memorial Day was instituted. The president was asked to call upon our citizens to unite in a day of prayer for permanent peace and freedom and justice.

Next Monday our country will again celebrate Memorial Day. Our fallen servicemen and women have given their lives to uphold the liberties that make our country a beacon of hope and freedom to people everywhere. In Arlington, and Gettysburg, and cemeteries of which few have heard, each small marker sanctifies the hallowed ground beneath and boasts the name of one who never sought fame, but served our country unselfishly, not needing to be known. Bless their memories and their loved ones.

Tonight we thank you for each member of our city Council and their support staff. Infuse in them your wisdom and your understanding. Give them your solution to each difficulty that they face, and we would invoke your eternal presence and will to become the resource that you graciously grant to each of the leaders of our citizens and our city. May proper decisions be made tonight that will honor you and benefit the citizens and guest of our city. This invocation we pray in the blessed name of our personal Savior and Lord. Amen.

June 3, 2008

May I ask you again this afternoon to bow your heart with me in prayer. Our Heavenly Father, it was June 28, 1787 that Governor Benjamin Franklin of Pennsylvania hosted the 55 delegates in Philadelphia to the Constitutional Convention. He said, "I have lived a long time, and the longer I live the more convincing proof I see of this truth; that God governs in the affairs of men. Without the concurring aid of God we shall succeed in building this republic no better than the builders of Babel. I therefore move that henceforth prayers, imploring the assistance of Heaven and its blessing on our deliberations, to be held in this assembly every morning before we proceed to business, and that one or more of the clergy of this city be requested to officiate in that service." James Madison concurred and such resolution was passed,¹³ and from that day until today, for the past 221 years, prayers have opened both houses of Congress daily; in the United States Senate, and in our House of Representatives. And it is in this spirit we pray this invocation tonight.

We're grateful for the privilege that we gather publicly in this Pismo Beach Council meeting. We freely elected our mayor and her colleagues to our City Council, and in obedience to Holy Scripture, we support them and undergird them and their staff with our prayers.¹⁴ We pray for each of them publicly tonight as we have prayed for each of them daily in our personal prayers. And we are reminded again that good government is not an idea that is generated in the heart of people, but good government is a principle that originated in the heart of God. So give to each of our Council persons tonight your divine wisdom to make good decisions, and we would pray that you would grant that each decision would honor God and be for the betterment of all the citizens of Pismo Beach and the guests who visit our beautiful city. We thank you for hearing our prayer. This invocation we pray in the name of our personal Savior and Lord. Amen.

¹³ This is simply not true. Franklin proposed the prayer and the motion died, it was so unimportant that the Congress did not even vote on the issue.

¹⁴ 1 Timothy 2:1-2.

June 17, 2008

Will you please bow your hearts with me in prayer? Our Heavenly Father, we are reminded tonight of the words that were prayed by President Abraham Lincoln in 1863. It was during that time during the Civil War when our beloved country so greatly needed your divine help and intervention, and President Lincoln prayed, and I quote, "It is the duty of Nations as well as men to hold their dependence upon the overruling power of God, and to confess their sins and transgressions and humble sorrow, yet with assured hope that general and genuine repentance will lead to mercy and to pardon, and to recognize the sublime truths announced in the Holy Scriptures and proven by all history, that those nations only are blessed whose God is the Lord." In this spirit we pray this invocation tonight we acknowledge your divine providence Our Father, and we do desire to do Your Will. We are extremely grateful for all of your benefits; for life, and for health, for friends, for prosperity, and we are so grateful that no attacks have been on our homeland since 9/11.

This is the first Council meeting since our recent election day, two weeks ago today, the great majority of our voting citizens saw the value of increasing our city sales tax by 1/2 cent. This brings us in line with all of our neighboring cities, and will provide our counsel with an additional \$1 million each year to help maintain our infrastructure. We pray that city councils in the future will continue the same degree of integrity as our current council manifests. For these additional funds, we give you thanks. And in heartfelt humility we invoke your divine wisdom to be graciously bestowed upon every member of the City Council. Grant that solutions to each problem and each need will come forth so that you, our God, will be honored, and we, your people, will be benefited.

We pray again tonight the prayer of President Theodore Roosevelt when he prayed, "We invoke the direction and the favor of almighty God for our guidance and we do invoke your favor." We declare our responsibility and our intention to pray daily for your leadership in the lives and the decisions of each council member and the staff that supports them. Fill city hall and these council chambers with the peace and the power of your divine presence. May each home, each citizen, and each guest feel the impact of your powerful presence in our city. Thank you for responding to our united prayers. This invocation we pray in the name of our personal Savior and Lord. Amen.

July 1, 2008

Will you please bow your heart with me in prayer? Our Heavenly Father, in 1789 President George Washington said, "It is the duty of all nations to acknowledge the providence of Almighty God. To obey his will and to be grateful for his benefits and humbly implore God's protection and favor." The Holy Scriptures speak regarding King David; that he led Israel with the integrity of his heart, and the skillfulness of his hands.¹⁵ And when Nehemiah was mayor of Jerusalem, the Bible says of his brother Hanani, that he was a faithful man who honored God more than many.¹⁶

The Bible and history continually teach us that God's favor accompanies righteousness and those who live without compromise. For those who practice righteousness shine like beacons of light. Such righteousness invariably affects positive social change. Cause each member of the City Council to humbly seek the blessings in favor of God, that they may properly discharge their responsibilities and the tasks that have been assigned to them. And as a result, may righteousness flow from City Hall and from these council chambers into each home in our beautiful city and in the lives of each of our citizens.

Thank you for your continued protection and provisions for our city and its citizens. We are grateful for this open Council meeting, where all may participate in the affairs of our city. Bless all who work at City Hall. Cause them to sense the strength and the security of your enabling presence. Grant our city Council and their support staff your divine direction in their thought processes. May they receive your solution for our problems and our needs that they encounter tonight. May each decision honor you and benefit our citizens and the guests who come to our city. This invocation we pray in the name of our personal Savior and Lord. Amen.

¹⁵ Psalm 78:72

¹⁶ The Bible says that Nehemiah put Hanani in charge *because* he "feared God more than most men do." Nehemiah 7:2.

July 15, 2008
(Dr. Paul Toms)

Eternal God, our Heavenly Father, we begin our meeting today seeking your hand of blessing and guidance¹⁷ and direction. And we're thankful that we're able to do this. In some places in this world where this is forbidden, we're grateful that we live in a place where freedom exists and reigns, and we can worship as we sense our duty and responsibility. Bless our meeting today. Bless these people who are elected and these who are appointed as officials for this community. We thank you for their willingness to serve. We pray that you will grant wisdom and understanding and a sense of your guiding hand and direction in these activities. And we would not forget to pray for people who are in special need. Some in our community are in harms way. Bless people who are fighting the fires. Bless people who are fighting wars. Bless people who are fighting hunger and depression and uneasiness about the future. Thank you that you are able to meet our needs, and we look to you for guidance and direction. So bless us today as we commend ourselves now into your loving care and seek your guiding hand of blessing and direction¹⁸ upon us. We pray in your Holy and Redemptive Name, amen.

¹⁷ See e.g., Isaiah 25:10, 66:14; Psalm 139:5.

¹⁸ See e.g., Isaiah 25:10, 66:14; Psalm 139:5.

August 5, 2008

Will you bow your heart in prayer please? Our Heavenly Father, James Madison was a principal author of the United States Constitution. He was a father of the Bill of Rights, he was the fourth president of the United States. It was he who said, "We have staked the whole future of American civilization not upon the power of government, far from it, we have staked the future upon the capacity of each and all of us to govern ourselves according to the Ten Commandments of God."¹⁹ For these are fundamental expressions of God's design for man. And to abandon our nation's moorings would be tragic. And so today we join our hearts with our American founding fathers of the past, whose vision and whose courage has shaped the future of our great country. And today in true repentance, we ask you, our God, to protect and to preserve our beloved country and cause our leaders to honor and to follow you.

Grant to each of our leaders nationally and locally clear courage and moral guidance as they make decisions that directly influence our policies and our laws. Is recorded in Holy Scripture that King Solomon declared in 930 B.C. "God is a shield to those who put their trust in him."²⁰ And again he wrote, "He who trust in the Lord shall prosper."²¹ And yet again he said, "Whoever trust in the Lord shall be safe and secure."²² And his father King David wrote before him, "He that trusteth in the Lord, mercy shall compass him about."²³ Our forefathers read and reread these portions of Holy Scripture and anchored their faith and their future to them. And as a result, president Abraham Lincoln in 1863 had the words in God we trust engraved on each US coin. And later this phrase was authorized to be printed on each piece of US paper currency. And in 1956, the United States Congress passed a resolution declaring our national motto: in God we trust. And so today we boldly affirm our national motto: in God we trust. And in this spirit we pray this invocation.

We are grateful that all of us may be a part of this public city Council meeting and we invoke your blessings upon each council member. These are our friends. We have freely elected them to serve us and we pray for them by name daily. Cause each of them to understand that they cannot properly discharge their responsibilities or their assigned task apart from your divine enablement. Bless them and their support staff with the strength and the security of your invisible presence. And grant to each of them your divine direction in their thought processes. This will bring proper solutions to each need and each problem that they encounter and will benefit each citizen and each guest in our beautiful city of Pismo Beach. This invocation we pray in the name of our personal Savior and Lord. Amen.

¹⁹ This quote is false, or at least not attributable to James Madison. David Barton is responsible for putting this quote into Christian pop-culture.

²⁰ Proverbs 30:5, "Every word of God is flawless; he is a shield to those who take refuge in him."

²¹ Proverbs 28:25, "A greedy man stirs up dissension, but he who trusts in the LORD will prosper."

²² Proverbs 29:25

²³ Psalm 32:10

August 19, 2008

Will you please bow your hearts with me in prayer? Our Heavenly Father, the first president of the United States said, "It is the duty of all nations to acknowledge the providence of Almighty God. To obey his will and to be grateful for his benefits and to humbly implore his protection and favor." Years later, James Madison, the fourth president of the United States, said, "Before any man can be a member of civil society he must be considered as a subject of the governor of the universe." The founding leaders of our country believed wholeheartedly the words of Holy Scripture recorded in Psalm 33, "The word of the Lord is right," "the earth is full of the goodness of the Lord," and "blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord."²⁴ Because of this legacy left to succeeding generations, we understand more fully why our U.S. Congress voted the motto of our nation to be: in God we trust. As American citizens of this generation we forthrightly proclaim, "In God we trust."

Cause us, Lord, to ever be mindful that no one is secure in their own accomplishments. Our positions and our achievements never make us invincible. God promises security and stability to those who choose to put their trust and their confidence in him. May we always seek to live justly and righteously and be zealous for the things that honor God. Thank you for each member of our City Council and their support staff. Infuse in them your wisdom and your understanding. Give your solution to every difficulty and every need that they face. We invoke your irresistible presence and will tonight to become the resource you graciously grant to each of the elected leaders of our city. May proper decisions be made tonight that will honor you and will benefit the citizens and the guest of our beautiful city. We pray especially your blessings upon our mayor, who is out of town, and upon our mayor pro tem, as she leads our council meetings tonight. Give healing to all who were ill on our staff and in our city. This invocation we pray in the name of our personal Savior and Lord. Amen.

²⁴ There is no evidence to support this claim. The quotes are a mash of several verses: 4, 5, and 12. Others include verse 8, "Let all the earth fear the LORD; let all the people of the world revere him." Verse 10, "The LORD foils the plans of the nations; he thwarts the purposes of the peoples."

September 2, 2008

Will you please bow your hearts in prayer with me? Our Heavenly Father, as we bow our hearts in prayer tonight, we remember the many of our fellow Americans whose lives have been so greatly impacted by the hurricane Gustav. Many who live in the Gulf Coast on the southern border of our nation have evacuated their homes and headed for higher ground and safety. Many will be returning home shortly. Thank you that the newly constructed levees held so that destruction was far less than might have been anticipated. Give to each of these your strength and your courage as they begin their lives anew. Today with all our hearts we boldly affirm our nation's motto: in God we trust. These very words are written over the entrance of US capitol building, and the Ten Commandments are engraved in bronze on the floor of our National Archives, where our Declaration of Independence and U.S. Constitution are on display. Our founding fathers carved words of praise to God in nearly every building and monument and memorial in our capital city of Washington D.C.²⁵ They did not want future Americans to ever forget that it was God who gave us liberty. For our godly heritage, we give you our thanks. And in heartfelt humility we ask tonight for your continued presence, protection and favor upon our nation. Bless all those in our intelligence community who serve untiringly to thwart any enemy attacks.

We invoke your divine wisdom to be bestowed tonight on each member of our City Council. We ask you to provide solutions to each problem and each need, so you will be honored and we will be benefited. We declare our responsibility to pray daily for your leadership in the lives and decisions of our council members and their support staff. We pray that you would fill City Hall and these council chambers with the peace and the power of your divine presence. And may each home and each citizen and each guest feel the impact of your presence in our city. We pray especially for those who are ill or facing situations in which they have never been involved in heretofore. We invoke your divine presence and power to strengthen and to energize them and their families. This invocation we pray in the name of our personal Savior and Lord. Amen.

²⁵ "In God We Trust" was carved into the Capitol, despite a lawsuit, in October, 2009. The cornerstone to the National Archives was laid in February, 1933, the same decade as Supreme Court constructed. "History of the National Archives Building," *National Archives website*, <http://www.archives.gov/about/history/building-an-archives/building.html> (last accessed, Feb. 1, 2013).

September 16, 2008

Let us bow our hearts in prayer. Our Heavenly Father, in our great country we recognize that prayer is a gift from God to every human being. It is a gift that permits us to come before God as a creator, with heartfelt worship and request as well as our deepest hopes. Prayer reminds us that when we bow our hearts or fall on our knees, we are all equal in the eyes of the living God, the Almighty. In prayer, we are assured that we are never alone, whether it be in times of personal difficulty or individual suffering. This is why Benjamin Franklin proposed that the Constitutional Convention of 1787 began each day with prayer. And out of this group of public leaders, who gave themselves to public prayer, was born the Constitution of the United States, 221 years ago tomorrow; September 18, 1787.²⁶ And no legal document has ever been written by man that has done so much good for so many people, and has become the envy and the hope of every generation. Our founding fathers left us a legacy and a testimony to the role of God in America's history. And the Holy Scriptures strongly teach us tonight: "blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord."²⁷ So once again we give our personal affirmation of our nation's motto: in God we trust.

And in the dignity of this council meeting we invoke your divine wisdom and guidance to be upon our mayor and her colleagues, as well as their support staff. May righteousness always fill our City Hall and these council chambers so that each decision will be a good decision and this will honor you, our God, and improve the lives of each citizen and guest in our beautiful city. Tonight we remember our fellow Americans in Galveston and Houston Texas, who have suffered so much, and many who have lost everything in hurricane Ike. Let them be strengthened and encouraged by our prayers and by your abiding presence. In this invocation we pray in our Savior's Name. Amen.

²⁶ This is simply not true. Franklin proposed the prayer and the motion died, it was so unimportant that the Congress did not even vote on the issue.

²⁷ Psalm 33:12

October 7, 2008
(recording partially missing)

... a public tolerance of scandalous behavior." End quote. The power of prayer is the dynamic force that repels unrighteousness, but the influence of prayer has been dramatically reduced our public life, and the moral compass of the Holy Scriptures has been largely laid aside. Public morality is declining to dangerously low points. Help each of us to always seek to live justly and to pursue righteousness and to be zealous for lifestyles that honor God. In the coming election in the next few days, in our city, may our ballots be cast for leaders whose lifestyles have pursued integrity and righteousness. We are most grateful for our nation's motto that strongly instructs us that; in God is our trust.

Thank you for each member of our City Council and their support staff. Infuse in them your wisdom and your understanding. Give them your solution to every difficulty they face. We invoke your irresistible presence and will tonight, to become the resource that you graciously grant to each of the citizens of our city. May proper decisions be made tonight that will honor you and benefit the citizens and the guest of our beautiful city. This invocation we pray in the name of our personal Savior and Lord. Amen.

October 21, 2008

Will you please bow your heart with me in prayer? Our Heavenly Father, American history relates that following the Revolutionary War, delegates from all of the colonies met in convention in Philadelphia, 1787. When the convention seemed on the verge of disbanding, with nothing having been accomplished, colonial statesman Benjamin Franklin addressed the convention, and I quote, "In the beginning of the contest with Britain, we daily had prayer in this room for divine protection. Have we forgotten this powerful friend? Or do we imagine that we no longer need his assistance? I have lived a long time, and the longer I live the more convincing proofs I see of this truth; that God governs in the affairs of men. I therefore, henceforth, move that prayers imploring the assistance of heaven be held in our assembly every morning before we proceed to business." End quote. And your wisdom did appear,²⁸ and by September 12, 1789, 39 persons representing 13 colonies affixed their signatures to a completed document; the Constitution of the United States. And our Constitution still functions today, 219 years later, giving stability and determination for every citizen.

Our Father, today is the last Pismo Beach City Council meeting before the coming election. Two weeks from today, November 4th, as United States citizens, we will be electing a new president, a full House of Representatives, and numerous senators. In our city of Pismo Beach, we will be electing our city mayor, and two council members. Cause each of our citizens to accept their responsibility and privilege to vote, and help us as individual citizens to elect leaders whose lifestyles and judgments have pursued integrity and righteousness. For King Solomon wrote in the Holy Scriptures, "Righteousness exalts a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people."²⁹ We pray today for our servicemen and women serving us around the globe, protect them with your eternal power. We invoke your divine presence so that it may fill City Hall daily as well as our city council chambers tonight. Give to each member of our City Council and their support staff your wisdom and your understanding for matters at hand tonight and in the future. God bless and protect America and our citizens in guest who visit our beautiful city of Pismo beach. This invocation, invoking your divine leadership tonight, we pray in the name of our personal Savior and Lord. Amen.

²⁸ Ben Franklin's proposal was ignored by the Congress, never even receiving a vote.

²⁹ Proverbs 14:34.

November 18, 2008

Will you bow your heart with me in prayer? Our Heavenly Father, Karl Marx once said, "If we can rip history away from people, they will easily be conquered. For we know that a bouquet of roses die when cut off from their roots."³⁰ So we clearly understand that no liberty and no freedom is secure when our roots are removed. Those roots that have been determined by God. Ethics, morals, standards of behavior, these are determined by God rather than majority of people. So tonight, enable each of us to stand firm for our godly convictions, understanding it is an honor and a privilege to stand for right. May the deep abiding sense of God's holiness and God's righteousness always determine our sense of right and wrong. Tonight we strongly affirm our nation's motto; in God we trust.

Help us to maintain these and this firm conviction in our hearts and in our lifestyles. For only then we will not be helpless or defenseless as we face the future; we will do it with confidence. Since our council last met, we have elected a new president nationally as well as new leaders locally. We pray for your wisdom and understanding to be granted to our current President, George W. Bush, as he completes his presidency, and may your wisdom and understanding be granted in like manner to President-elect Obama as he assumes his role to lead our nation.

Bless also those who have been elected to serve us in our beautiful city. We thank you for the privilege of meeting together in this council meeting conducted openly in public for the benefits of our citizens. We ask that your invisible presence will fill our City Hall daily, as well as our council chambers tonight. We pray for each of our council members. These are our friends, we have freely elected them to serve us, and to govern us. We pray for them publicly tonight because we pray for them by name daily in our private prayers. Grant that each of our city council members, our mayor, and their support staff will be generously given your divine wisdom and guidance for the matters at hand tonight and in the future. God, bless America and protect our President, our military forces, our citizens of Pismo Beach, and the guests to visit our beautiful city. We invoke your divine leadership tonight upon all who lead our city. This invocation we pray, in the name of our personal Savior and Lord. Amen.

³⁰ No source can be located for this quote, it appears fictional.

December 2, 2008

Will you please join your heart with me in prayer? Our Heavenly Father, we are grateful for the work that has been accomplished by our current council in the previous councils before them. May your blessings rest upon these dedicated citizens. Tonight, our newly elected council persons will be sworn in. We receive our reelected Mayor and each member of our newly elected City Council as God's gift to us. We have freely elected them to lead us and to govern us. Cause each of them to understand that their example to their family, their example to their business, and their example to our community makes each of them a leader. And as such, may they always lead with integrity and transparency. For integrity and character is our highest honor. Each member of our City Council is an example to our community, when they are in session as the council, or when they move among us in our community. So teach us and you that our personal example has everything to do with righteous influence. May they remain calm and controlled even in difficult times, and as they do, may they manifest such uprightness; demonstrating that in reality they are key pillars in our community. Let your unseen and irresistible presence among us cause the work of our City Council and their support staff to be structured, to be efficient, and father may it always be productive. Let there never be division or confusion, but may they move together in such unity so as to function in the power of one.

We pray the prayer president Theodore Roosevelt in behalf of our new council when he prayed, and I quote, "We invoke both the direction and the favor of Almighty God for our guidance." And tonight, once again we reaffirm to you our nation's motto; in God we trust. May the continued nearness of your presence and your divine guidance cause each decision that is made, first to honor you, and then to cause our beautiful city to be a better place to live and to enjoy life. Each of these: benefits for our city, all who live in it, and those who visit here. For these benefits we ask, we do it in the name of our personal Savior and Lord. Amen.

December 16, 2008

Will you please bow your heart with me in prayer? Our Heavenly Father, it is Christmas time in our city, and our surrounding community. Shops and stores are filled with carols and beautiful music of Christmas. We want to thank you that you have prospered so many, that we may purchase gifts for those we love and who are so dear to us. Allow your favored to rest upon our business community, who have planned so earnestly and worked so diligently to sell their goods and services; and then probably send sales tax and bed tax to our city treasury. For your favor, we are grateful.

Let us understand anew that the message of Christmas is simple and wonderful; God wants to enter into all of life circumstances. And God does not choose a beginning point for his wonder-workings apart from human beings. Everyone is important. We pray especially for those families among us tonight whose lives have been impacted by the economic slowdown. We pray that you will graciously provide for them and their families as only you know how. At this Christmas time, we also pray for all of our military personnel, as they serve the noble causes of freedom and liberty around the world. May each one who is deployed be safe and secure, and may their loved ones have God's comfort and presence, as families are separated one from the other.

When our next city Council meeting convenes, Christmas lights will be out, Christmas trees will have faded, Christmas ribbons will have been forgotten, and Christmas carols and cards will have been packed away. But the babe who was born in Bethlehem's manger will yet remain among us.³¹ He will comfort when we are sorrowful. He will provide meaning when life seems so useless and so empty. He will bring light when the way seems dark, and he will provide joy when circumstances are grim. And long after the carols have hushed and the gift certificates have been cashed, the babe that was born in Bethlehem's manger will continue to bring happiness and satisfaction.³²

And tonight, we pray especially for those in our city who are ill, who are shut in, somewhat lonely. We think of two such persons who have been so active in city activities but are not among us today; Elaine Anthony's leg has been amputated below the knee and she is in a rest home in Morro Bay. Her husband Art has serious problems with his throat and voice. We pray you will bring healing, and hope, and restoration, and may these and many others sense our love for them. Tonight we invoke your divine presence to fill City Hall daily and these council chambers especially tonight. Give your wisdom to our mayor, and her colleagues, and their support staff for the matters that are hand tonight and in the future. God bless America, protect our great country, protect the citizens in Pismo Beach, and protect the guests who visit our beautiful city. This invocation we pray, this holy Christmas season, in the name of our personal Savior and Lord. Amen.

³¹ Luke 2:12.

³² Luke 2:12.

January 6, 2009

May I ask that each of you bow your heart in prayer with me? Our Heavenly Father, today is the first Council meeting in this new year of 2009. Many matters will be agendized and call for thoughtful attention in the coming months. Some matters will be difficult to make an easy and simple decision, but I well remember the day that President Franklin Roosevelt died in April 1945. Vice President Harry Truman was immediately sworn into office as our new president and he addressed the combined US Congress two days later April 16, 1945 with these words, "At this moment I have in my heart a prayer. Almighty God, as I have assumed my heavy duties, I humbly pray the words of King Solomon: 'Give, therefore, your servant and understanding heart to govern your people, that I may discern between good and bad. For who is able to govern this so great a people?'"³³ And then Mr. Truman continued, "I ask only to be a good and faithful servant of my Lord and my people." King Solomon, the world's wisest political leader, also taught us that the hand of the diligent makes one rich, and he who walks in integrity walks securely.³⁴

So let each of us hear clearly God's call to daily live in integrity, and to live righteously. For this will produce true freedom and true fulfillment, and it will produce lasting and eternal values. Thank you for the leadership of police chief Joe Cortez and our City Police Department these past seven years. As he enters his retirement years, let your blessing be upon him and upon his family. Our new police chief is to be sworn in today. Cause your special favor to rest upon him as he seeks to maintain law and order in our city. May your continued protection rest upon our city as the rule of law under God is acknowledged. We invoke your wisdom to guide the thought processes of our mayor, her colleagues, and their support staff tonight and in the future. May your solutions to each problem that they encounter benefit each citizen and guest and our beautiful city in 2009. This invocation we pray in the name of our personal Savior and Lord. Amen.

³³ 1 Kings 3:9

³⁴ Proverbs 10:4-9.

January 20, 2009

Our Heavenly Father, today as American citizens, we witness the inauguration of the 44th President of the United States, Mr. Barack Obama. You alone know the many great responsibilities that he now faces, including our national economic downturn. We pray for him again this afternoon, as we have prayed for him already this morning, and will pray for him each day, that he may daily seek your face for your wisdom and for your guidance for the solution of our nation's affairs. Isaiah the great prophet of yesteryear, spoke often to his nation, and to ever succeeding generations regarding the greatness of God's might, and the strength of God's power.

Our national leaders have received vision and courage from these words. Grover Cleveland, the mayor of Buffalo and later the governor of New York, was elected 24th president in 1893. Our nation then faced conditions similar to those we now face. History teaches us that there was a treasury crisis, and many farm mortgages were foreclosed on. There was high unemployment. But in his inaugural address, President Cleveland clearly stated, "Let us not trust in human effort alone, but humbly acknowledge the power and the goodness of Almighty God, who presides over the destiny of nations, and who at all times has revealed in our country's history, himself. Therefore let us invoke his aid and his blessings upon our labors. I know there is a supreme being who rules in the affairs of men, whose goodness and mercy has followed the American people. He will not turn from us now if we humbly and reverently seek his powerful aid."

And so tonight, with great courage and with great confidence, we as American citizens boldly declare our nation's motto: in God we trust. By your great power, and by your great might, continue to protect our nation and its citizens from those who seek to do us harm. Bless our intelligence community with your favor and your fruitfulness. We invoke the dignity of your divine presence to fill these council chambers tonight. Give your direction and your eternal counsel to our mayor, and her colleagues, and their support staff. May each decision that is made bring honor to you, and bring fulfillment and satisfaction to all who live in our beautiful city and who visit here. This invocation we pray in the name of our personal Savior and Lord. Amen.

February 3, 2009
Rebecca McMurry

Will you all bow your heads? Our Heavenly Father, our U.S. history has taught us that justice John Jay, the first U.S. Supreme Court Chief Justice, authorized prayer to be prayed to open U.S. Court sessions. In this spirit, we offer to you this prayer of invocation. We are grateful for the privilege of public gathering in our Pismo Beach City Council meeting this evening. We have selected our mayor and her colleagues to our City Council. In obedience to Holy Scripture, we support them with our prayer, in order that we may live a quiet and peaceful life in all godliness.³⁵ We pray for them publicly tonight, having prayed for them by name in our personal prayers. May each member of our City Council accept their responsibility to lead each of us as citizens with single-mindedness of purpose, and humility of spirit; only then can we confidently anticipate favor and guidance of our eternal God. Guide us with your eternal wisdom tonight, to make wise decisions that will honor you and better conditions for citizens of our beautiful city. Tonight, we also lift up in prayer our city chaplain, Dr. Paul Jones, and ask that your healing touch be placed upon him this night, and that he be made whole and well this very moment. With your almighty help, we can resolve every problem that confronts us. Thank you for hearing our prayers. We ask these things in the name of our Lord. Amen.

³⁵ 1 Timothy 2:1-2, "I urge, then, first of all, that requests, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for everyone—for kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness."

February 17, 2009

Will you please bow your heart with me in prayer? Our Heavenly Father, Thomas Jefferson was the primary author of our Declaration of Independence, and the third president of the United States. In a prayer March 4, 1805, he prayed, "Almighty God, may we always prove ourselves to be a people mindful of your favor and glad to do Your Will. Save us from violence, and confusion, and pride, and arrogance, and from every evil way. Endow with your spirit of wisdom, those we entrust with the authority of government, that there may be justice and peace, and through obedience to Your Word, we may show forth your praise among the nations of the world. God, who gave us life, gave us liberty, can the liberties of a nation be thought secure when we remove the conviction in the minds of people, that these liberties are the gift of God?"³⁶ We thank you, Our Father, for the freedoms and liberties that we as Americans enjoy tonight. We're mindful that they are gifts of God. Help us to dedicate ourselves individually, to honor righteousness, and always be glad to do Your Will. Let us always affirm our nation's motto wholeheartedly; in God we trust.

We are privileged to meet together in this public City Council meeting. We are grateful for every member of our City Council; these are our friends whom we have freely elected to govern our city, and we pray for them daily by name, that they may lead us in integrity and transparency. We invoke your divine wisdom upon each of them and their support staff. May Your Will be done, and may your name be honored in each decision that is made. Be mindful, with your enablement and your assistance, of each individual, and each business that are affected by the current economic conditions in our city and our land. And accept our thanks for the intelligence community, continue to work though them, and cause us to live righteous lives daily, so that we may enjoy your protection from all who would do us harm. This invocation we pray in the name of our personal Savior and Lord. Amen.

³⁶ According to the Thomas Jefferson Foundation, which runs and maintains Jefferson's estate at Monticello, "This prayer was not written or delivered by Thomas Jefferson. It is in fact from the 1928 United States *Book of Common Prayer*." <http://www.monticello.org/site/research-and-collections/national-prayer-peace>

March 3, 2009

Our Heavenly Father, President Calvin Coolidge, the 29th president of the United States, once said, "If American democracy is to remain the greatest hope of humanity, it must continue abundantly in the faith of the Bible." In the Bible, Isaiah the Prophet declared' "The ways of the Lord are righteousness, and the righteous will walk in them."³⁷ The Bible constantly encourages righteous living on the part of each of us. Help us to display the character of God in our daily living and in our lifestyles. This will cause us to be an expression of God's love, and God's compassion, and all we do. May we determine to live and walk in obedience to the Bible. This will cause us to pursue righteousness and value godliness, as each of us seeks God's presence to surround us, and to surround our city, and our country. This will produce reality for the present and promise for our future.

We hear again the prayer of President Theodore Roosevelt, who prayed, "We invoke the direction and the favor of God the Almighty for our guidance." So we pray each citizen of our beloved city will seek the guidance of God in our lives and in our actions. We pray earnestly this day for each individual and each family whose lives have been negatively impacted and disrupted by our current economic downturn. Many are earnestly praying and seeking for answers and solutions. Fulfill the promise of the Bible to them; that God would be a shelter to your people and strength to those who put their trust in you.

Cause each lady and gentlemen who we have elected to our City Council, and their support staff, to be sincere and upright. May their convictions be firm and straight as the columns of our National Cathedral. We invoke your divine wisdom and guidance for each matter brought before our City Council tonight. May each decision honor God and benefit each citizen and each guest. This invocation, in which we invoke your invisible presence and your leadership, we pray in the name of our personal Redeemer and Lord. Amen.

³⁷ Isaiah 26:7

March 17, 2009

Will you please bow your heart with me? Our Heavenly Father, it was Franklin Roosevelt, our 32nd US president, who said, "We cannot read the history of the rise and development of our nation without reckoning the place the Bible has occupied in shaping the advances in our republic. Where we have been the truest and the most consistent in obeying its precepts, we obtain the greatest measure of contentment and prosperity." And so, Our Father, your faithfulness to us has been as dependable as the sun that rises each morning. The hillsides and the meadows in our region are lush with new green growth because of the recent rains that you have sent. We are most grateful. Grant that we may sow righteousness in our lives, that we may reap your faithfulness and your mercy. May we never resist God's will in our lives but, rather, may we value godliness and pursue righteousness each day. For the Bible teaches us that righteousness and right living are essential to a healthy society. May we seek the Lord and obey the Bible, so as to walk daily in the purity of God's ways. Cause us to make godliness, as recorded in the Scripture, to be our life's standards. Then, God will be our strength, he will be our shelter, and he will dwell among us and he will cause us to prosper. Is in this spirit we boldly affirm our nation's motto: in God we trust.

We give you thanks for the leaders and the actions of our current City Council. Cause our mayor, her colleagues, and their support staff to sense your divine leadership and wisdom in each decision that they make. Continue to provide your understanding and your resources to accomplish Your Will in our beautiful city, even as Your Will is done in heaven. We pray especially for our mayor who is not with us tonight, but is on business in our nation's capital. Give her your favor. May she increase in wisdom and in favor with God, and with man, as she carries out her duties in Washington D.C. May a spirit of unity continue to prevail at all levels of our city government. We invoke your unseen presence in every deliberation tonight. We remember again, publicly, those who are hurting because of the economic downturn both in our nation and our community. Some have had their work hours reduced. Others have lost their jobs. And some of the businesses in our community are suffering economically. We ask you to bring a speedy solution. And cause each of us, as individuals and as a nation, to repent of our sins and turn wholeheartedly to honor you and to serve you. This invocation we pray in the name of our Blessed Redeemer and Lord. Amen.

April 7, 2009

Will you bow your hearts with me in prayer please? Our Heavenly Father, we lift our hearts and gratitude tonight that we are privileged to participate in our public City Council meeting. We offer praise to God for your continued protection over our nation and our city. We pray that your omniscience and your knowledge will be granted to our intelligence community, as they continue to safeguard our country and our citizens. May no further terrorist plots be carried out, and may any plans made to do us harm be uncovered and defused before they can be realized. Cause righteousness to reign in our lives individually, and in our government. It was President Herbert Hoover, our thirty first president who said, "When there is a lack of honor in government, the morals of the whole people are poisoned. There is no such thing as no man's land between honesty and dishonesty. Our strength lies in spiritual concepts. It lies in public sensitivity to evil. And our greatest dangers are not from invasions by foreign armies, but rather that we commit suicide from within by complaisance with evil and by the public tolerance of scandalous behavior." The power of prayer is the dynamic force that repels unrighteousness. But the influence of prayer has been dramatically reduced in our public life, and the moral compass of the Holy Scriptures has been largely laid aside. Public morality is declining dangerously. Help each of us to make sure that we live justly, and pursue righteousness, and be zealous for lifestyles that honor God. We are most grateful for our nation's motto that strongly instructs us: in God we trust.

Thank you for each member our City Council and their support staff, infuse in them your wisdom and your understanding. Give them your solution to every difficulty that they face, and we invoke your irresistible presence and will tonight that it will become the resource that you graciously grant to each of the leaders of our city. May proper decisions be made tonight that will honor you and benefit the citizens and the guest of our beautiful city. This invocation we pray in the name of our personal Savior and Lord. Amen.

April 21, 2009

Would you please bow your heart with me in prayer? Our Heavenly Father, our third president, Thomas Jefferson, spoke to our nation in 1781. He said, "God who gave us life, gave us liberty, can the liberties of a nation be thought secure when we removed their only firm basis; a conviction in the minds of the people that these liberties are a gift of God."³⁸ And it was our 24th president, Grover Cleveland, who said, "Above all, I know there is a supreme being who rules the affairs of men, and whose goodness and mercy have always followed the American people. And I know he will not turn from us now if we humbly and reverently seek his powerful aid." This is the spirit in which we pray this invocation tonight. We're grateful that our United States Congress passed a resolution in 1954 stating: We are one nation under God. And two years later in 1956, stated our national motto will be: in God we trust. And so again tonight we boldly affirm our nation's motto: in God we trust.

We invoke your blessings upon the city of Pismo Beach, all who live here, and all the guests to visit here. Release your blessings upon all who work at City Hall, and serve our community so faithfully. Cause each one to sense the strength and the security of your invisible presence, and give your eternal wisdom to our friends, whom we have freely elected to serve us on our City Council. From day-to-day, help them as they endeavor to make Pismo Beach a better place to live and to enjoy life. Especially tonight, give your divine guidance in the thought processes of our mayor and each of her council colleagues. May the decisions that are made honor you and be for the betterment of all of our citizens and our guests. This invocation we pray in the name of our personal Savior and Lord. Amen.

³⁸ Jefferson actually wrote this in two separate places more than 10 years apart.

- 1) "The god who gave us life gave us liberty..." is from *A Summary View of the Rights of British America* (1774). "But let them [members of the parliament of Great Britain] not think to exclude us from going to other markets, to dispose of those commodities which they cannot use, nor to supply those wants which they cannot supply. Still less let it be proposed that our properties within our own territories shall be taxed or regulated by any power on earth but our own. The god who gave us life gave us liberty at the same time: the hand of force may destroy, but cannot disjoin them."
- 2) "...can the liberties ... Gift of God" is from *Notes on the State of Virginia*, Query XVIII (1785). "For in a warm climate, no man will labour for himself who can make another labour for him. This is so true, that of the proprietors of slaves a very small proportion indeed are ever seen to labor. And can the liberties of a nation be thought secure when we have removed their only firm basis, a conviction in the minds of the people that these liberties are the gift of God? That they are not to be violated but with his wrath? Indeed I tremble for my country when I reflect that God is just: that his justice cannot sleep for ever . . ."

May 5, 2009

Will you please bow your heart in prayer? Our Heavenly Father, President Calvin Coolidge, our 30th President of the United States, said, "If American democracy is to remain the greatest hope of humanity, it must continue abundantly in the faith of the Bible." And the leaders of our nation later believed this strongly, for in 1952, by a joint resolution of Congress, the first Thursday in May each year was designated as a national day of prayer. This day was designated as a day of focused prayer for our nation, and its day after tomorrow Thursday, May 7 is the first Thursday of May. Each of us are privileged to be a part in our own way in this annual observance of our national day of prayer.

And God is always true to his character, as we seek his face and prayer and respond to his holy promise in the Scriptures, it will change the way we think and the way we behave. For sin and spiritual decline removes the favor of God, but if we repent, God will forgive and pardon our sins, and replace them with his righteousness in our lives. Each day we rest upon the unfailing promise found in the scriptures, Isaiah 41:10, "Fear not for I am with you. Be not dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you, I will help you, I will uphold you with my righteous right hand." Knowing this, we confidently affirm our nation's motto: in God we trust.

And in heartfelt humility, we ask tonight for your protection and your favor upon our nation and our citizens. We especially pray for those who are ill and shut in. We would not forget to pray especially today for one who attends almost every Council meeting and speaks frequently from this podium. Because of his interest in our city and its future, we pray for Tony Spinelli, one of our citizens who's been so ill. Will you allow the healing grace of God to flow through his body, and may healing be swiftly and completely in his body. We pray also for those who are being adversely affected by the economic slowdown. We ask your divine presence and power to comfort and strengthen them and their families. And we invoke your divine wisdom to be bestowed on each member of our City Council. We ask you to provide solutions to each problem and to each need that they face tonight. We declare our responsibility to pray for your leadership in the lives and decisions of each member of our City Council, and their support staff. Fill City Hall and these council chambers with the peace and the power of your divine presence. May each home, each citizen, and each guest sense the impact of your presence in our city. This invocation we pray in the name of our personal Savior and Lord. Amen.

May 19, 2009

Dr. Paul Toms, recording partially missing

... Thank you for the people who lead us. Thank you with the people who act as our friends and help us day by day. Guide us now in this meeting. May the decisions that are made and all the processes that are followed be in keeping with your plan, and with Your Will. We ask these things in the name of Your Son and our Savior. Amen.

June 2, 2009

recording partially missing

... Pray for the army, and pray for peace, and be assured that this message on prayer has the approval, the encouragement, and the enthusiastic support of the third U.S. Army commander, General George Patton.”

And so tonight, Our Father, may each of us as individual citizens be people of prayer by day and night. Many unfavorable situations exist from time to time, in the lives of our citizens and in the life of our city. You have chosen human instruments, through whom you can infuse your divine life and your wisdom, with spiritual and civil authority. So teach us, and the members of our City Council, that it is when our hearts and minds are turned to God in childlike trust, that you divinely enable us to complete any assignment from you, with courage and with success. Tonight we invoke your presence and Your Will to become the resource that you give to each of our elected leaders and their support staff. God, bless our citizens and the guests of our beautiful city. God bless America, and protect America. This invocation we pray in the name of our personal Savior and Lord. Amen.

June 16, 2009

Will you bow your heart with me in prayer? Our Heavenly Father, Karl Marx once said, "If we can rip away history from any people, then we will easily conquer them. We have learned that a bouquet of beautiful roses soon die because they are cut off from their roots."³⁹ Ethics and moral standards of behavior are not to be determined by a majority of people, but by God himself. It was President Harry Truman who said, "The fundamental basics of this nation's laws was given to Moses on the Mount, and the fundamental basis of our Bill of Rights comes from the teachings of Exodus, Isaiah, St. Matthew, and St. Paul."

Let none of us believe the misconception that freedom is a license to sin, or that freedom is a license to go our own way, or the misconception that freedom is a license to do as we wish. Help us to understand that freedom is the responsibility and the power to do what is right. No liberty is secure when it is removed from the roots that have been established by God. Our U.S. Constitution was written by moral people, and it was written for moral people, and it will work for no other but moral people. Our forefathers conceived freedom in their hearts, and they wrote freedom on our documents, and yet freedom is not free. Our freedoms cannot survive without our personal responsibility and courage. Our freedoms cannot survive without our eternal vigilance. So help each of our civic leaders and each of us as citizens to stand firm. Let us never be intimidated by numbers, but cause us to be men and women of conviction, who value moral righteousness above popular acclaim. Grant the light of your irresistible presence to avail, so that no unrighteousness can prevail. As loyal citizens, we boldly proclaim our nation's motto: in God we trust.

We invoke your favor upon our city of Pismo Beach. As we confess our sins and forsake our sins, release your blessings upon each of our citizens, and all who work at City Hall and serve our community. Give your eternal wisdom to our friends whom we have freely elected to serve on our City Council, for these we pray for daily by name. Help them as they endeavor to make Pismo Beach a better place to live and to enjoy life. Especially this evening, give your divine guidance to our mayor, and each council member, and their support staff. This invocation we pray in the name of our personal Savior and Lord. Amen.

³⁹ No source can be located for this quote, it appears fictional.

July 7, 2009

Will you please bow your heart with me in prayer? Our Heavenly Father, the past several days we have relived some of the history of our great nation, and the enumerable blessings of freedom that we enjoy. The Declaration of Independence has rightly been called 'the birth certificate of our United States'. It was approved by the Continental Congress, July 4, 1776, and by August 2, 56 legislators had affixed their signatures. Many of the signers of the Declaration of Independence were men of strong godly influence. 29 of the 56 signers had ordained ministerial credentials.⁴⁰ The first meeting of the Continental Congress convened September 6, 1774, and the first three hours were dedicated to prayer, followed by a study of Psalms 35. The Congress called for 3 million colonists to participate in a national day of prayer and fasting, for God's favor, as they faced the highly trained British Army and Navy in their quest to overrun and defeat the 13 colonies.

General George Washington later said, "The hand of divine providence became so conspicuous." For in 1781, General Washington forced the surrender of General Cornwallis at the Battle of Yorktown, ending the Revolutionary War. And by Congressional approval, 20,000 Bibles were printed in 1782,⁴¹ and placed in public schools to be used regularly in the classroom, and this practice continued for 181 years, until June 1963 when the U.S. Supreme Court forbid the practice to continue.⁴² President Andrew Jackson said, "The Bible is the rock upon which our republic rests."⁴³

⁴⁰ This myth comes from David Barton, who claimed the 29 signers had seminary degrees. Only one, John Witherspoon was a minister. Three others, Lyman Hall, Robert Treat Paine and William Williams, studied for but did not go into the ministry (Hall quit theology to become a doctor). See, e.g., Elise Hu and Barbara Bradley Hagerty, "Cue the Tape: How David Barton Sees the World," *National Public Radio*, (August 8, 2012) available at <http://www.npr.org/2012/08/02/157777697/cue-the-tape-how-david-barton-sees-the-world> (last accessed, February 1, 2013).

⁴¹ Congress never printed Bible. During the Revolutionary War, a printer, Robert Aitken, asked to publish a Bible under the authority of Congress and to be commissioned by Congress to do so. Congress declined to do this but did "recommend this edition," in part because it was "an instance of the progress of arts in this country." Gaillard Hunt, ed., *Journals of the Continental Congress, 1774-1789*, vol. 23, (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1914), 574. Printing in this country was important because of the British embargo. Aitken used the congressional recommendation to hawk his bibles but, by his own account, they sold so poorly that he lost over £3,000 on the endeavor and could not get Congress to reimburse him or buy the bibles. Robert Aitken to George Washington, June 9, 1790, George Washington Papers at the Library of Congress, 1741-1799: Series 4, General Correspondence.

⁴² This is not true. Congress did not place or approve the placement of Bibles in public schools and many state courts booted the Bible prior to 1963. See, e.g., *Weiss v. District Board*, 44 N.W. 967, 981 (1890); *Herold v. Parish Board of School Directors*, 136 La. 1034, 1049-1050, 68 So. 116, 121, L.R.A.1915D, 941 (1915); *State v. Scheve*, 65 Neb. 853, 91 N.W. 846 (1902) *aff'd*, 65 Neb. 853, 93 N.W. 169 (1903); *Tudor v. Board of Education*, 14 N.J. 31, 48-52, 100 A.2d 857, 867-868, 45 A.L.R.2d 729 (1953); *Brown v. Orange County Board of Public Instruction*, 128 So.2d 181, 185 (Fla.App., 1960);

⁴³ No primary source provided or discernable. The earliest located source is Frederic William Farrar, *History of Interpretation: eight lectures preached before the University of Oxford in the year MDCCCLXXXV on the foundation of the late Rev. John Bampton*, page xxvii (MacMillan and Co., London, 1886), http://books.google.com/books?id=kVX92B3TRkMC&printsec=frontcover&source=gbg_summary_r&cad=0#v=onepage&q&f=false. According to the title page, Farrar was Archdeacon and Canon of Westminster and Chaplain in Ordinary to the Queen. The Jackson quote is buried in a paragraph that begins, "My main wish has been to show the true basis whereon rests the sacredness of Holy Scripture... It is because there is no Book and no Literature which can for a moment supply the place of the Bible in the moral and spiritual education of mankind that I would do my utmost to save it from the injury of false theories and impossible interpretations." Although Farrar cites several sources just a few pages earlier, no source is provided for the deathbed quote by Jackson: " 'That book sir,' said the American President, Andrew Jackson, pointing to the family Bible during his last illness, 'is the rock on which our Republic rests.' "

Today, in the troubled times that our nation and our world faces, help each one of us to follow the principles of our founding fathers. May we humbly confess our sin, and seek the wisdom and the aid of our eternal God. For the Holy Scriptures state, “The eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous, and his ears are open to their cry.”⁴⁴ Many unfavorable circumstances exist from time to time in the lives of numerous citizens in our community. We are so grateful for the members of our City Council and their support staff, from whom you can infuse your divine wisdom and your divine life, and we join with them in invoking your divine presence and your divine will, to be the resource that becomes the solution to every situation that we face. God, bless the citizens and the guests of our beautiful city, and God bless and protect our country: America. This invocation we pray in the name of our personal Savior and Lord. Amen.

⁴⁴ Psalm 34:15

July 21, 2009
(recording partially missing)

...upon our city of Pismo Beach. As we confess and forsake our sins, release your blessings upon each of our citizens and all who work at City Hall, and serve our community. Give your eternal wisdom to each member of our City Council, these are friends whom we have freely elected to govern our city, and for these we pray daily by name. Assess them, as they endeavor to make our beautiful city a better place to live and to enjoy life. Especially this evening, give your divine wisdom to our mayor, her colleagues on the council, and their support staff. This invocation we pray in the name of our personal Savior and Lord. Amen.

August 4, 2009

Will you please bow your heart with me in prayer? Our Heavenly Father, America's founding fathers gave us a constitutional republic, and because of the wisdom and conviction of these righteous people, we are free today. But let us never forget that we could die slaves if we lose sight and understanding of the basic truth that freedom cannot exist without morality. Immoral men and women cannot long endure, and will cease to exist, and history is filled with such examples. Character and moral fortitude is a requirement, if we are to be able to govern ourselves. Whenever morality and righteous lifestyles decline, the abuse of rights always increase. To abandon moral principles and to abandon righteousness, we will lose our freedoms, for our rights come from God, and God gave certain inalienable rights before any human government ever existed. People joined together to form human governments in order to protect these rights, not to grant us rights, or to legislate out of existence these inalienable rights. Make us men and women who are unintimidated [*sic*], and who value moral righteousness above public acclaim.

It was George Washington, our first president, who said, "It is impossible to rightly govern without God and the Bible."⁴⁵ And all 50 states in our United States, without exception, acknowledge God in their state constitution. In 1879, when our own California State Constitution was written, the preamble began by saying, "We the people of the state of California are grateful to Almighty God for our freedom." Tonight, we feel much like President William McKinley, our 25th president, who declared in his 1897 inaugural address, "I assume the responsible duties as President of the United States, relying on the support of my countrymen and invoking the guidance of Almighty God."

In this public City Council meeting tonight, we invoke the wisdom and the guidance of Almighty God to illuminate the thought processes of each of our council members. We have freely elected them to govern us, and therefore we pray for them daily by name. Help each of them; our mayor, her colleagues, and their support staff, as they endeavor to make wise decisions. And since you transmit your blessings and your favor through headship, allow your favor to flow from City Hall, and from these council chambers, to every home, and into every citizen who resides in our city, and every guest who visits our city. Cause our beautiful city of Pismo Beach that borders the blue Pacific, to become a better place to live and to enjoy life. This invocation we pray in the name of our personal Savior and Lord. Amen.

⁴⁵ Washington never said or wrote this phrase. See Paul Boller and John H. George, *They Never Said It: A Book of Fake Quotes, Misquotes, and Misleading Attributions*, 126-7 (Oxford University Press, 1989).

August 18, 2009
(Dr. Paul Toms)

Will you join with me in a word of prayer please? Eternal God, Our Father, it is right and proper that we should begin an important and significant meeting such as this, seeking your blessing and your hand of guidance⁴⁶ upon us. Thank you for all that you do for us. Thank you that we have food and shelter. Thank you that we have people who help us and sustain us. Thank you for friends who encourage us. Thank you for this community. We pray today your rich and abiding and continued blessing upon this community. And bless, we pray, and is fitting and proper that we should ask this, we pray for your blessing upon those who lead us. You have told us in Your Word that we should pray for those who have authority over us.⁴⁷

Authority has been granted to this counsel, and to other people represented here today by the people of the community. Bless them as they exercise that authority. Give to them wisdom and understanding, and may we continue to live in a peaceful and quiet situation. Bless those who help us. Bless the children and youth of our community. Bless their teachers as they begin another school year, guide and direct in their influence and their lives. Bless those who protect us, our firemen and our police people. Watch over them. Help them as they protect us, may they be protected as well. Bless each member of this counsel, and all the officers, people who are assigned responsibilities, and all of us as we represent the community. We commend this meeting into your loving care. We seek Your Hand of blessing and guidance⁴⁸ upon us, and we ask you to all to thank giving through Christ our Lord. Amen.

⁴⁶ See e.g., Isaiah 25:10, 66:14; Psalm 139:5.

⁴⁷ 1 Timothy 2:1-2

⁴⁸ See e.g., Isaiah 25:10, 66:14; Psalm 139:5.

September 1, 2009

May I ask you to bow your heart with me in prayer please? Our Heavenly Father, nearly 8 years have come and gone since the day of infamy: 9-11-2001. On this day, 19 foreign born terrorists recognized the vulnerability of our beloved nation, and they seized U.S. commercial airliners in midair, and filled with thousands of gallons of high octane jet fuel, they slammed them into both towers of the World Trade Center in New York City, and another airliner was flown into the nerve center of our U.S. military, the Pentagon, in Washington D.C., and nearly 3,000 innocent people were killed. Before our next official City Council meeting, September 11, 2009 will be upon us, in just 10 days, many of us will be participating in memorial services. On this day, we will be remembering those who grieve, because of the lives of loved ones, as well as those who are infirmed, physically and mentally, from this cowardly attack. Following that 9/11 attack, members of both the Senate and the House of Representatives met voluntarily for two hours in the rotunda of the capital building to humbly seek the favor of God, asking for the forgiveness of our sins, and for reconciliation and unity. They believe such assist our nation, to realize our potential as the champion of hope, the vindicator of the defenseless, and the guardian of freedom. Our President and all nine Supreme Court Justices were invited to this time of prayer, with no reporters or T.V. cameras, so that each could pray unhindered to God. It is in this spirit that we pray this invocation tonight, for tonight, tens of thousands of our finest youth and military leaders are in Afghanistan and Iraq, seeking to bring peace and prosperity to a people that have been formerly oppressed.

It was Thomas Jefferson, our third president, who said, "The tree of freedom is watered by the blood of every generation." And so tonight, we pray earnestly for our President Obama, and his advisers, and every member of Congress. We pray for our servicemen and women. Protect them with the power of your divine presence. And we pray for the families and loved ones who grieve, because of those who paid the supreme sacrifice of their lives. And we stand tonight and affirm our national motto: in God we trust. Especially tonight, our hearts go out to all those who suffer so much because of the inferno of uncontrollable fires that burned so fiercely, especially in Southern California. We ask that you would protect our firemen, who willingly give their all to protect our homes and our businesses. Cause these fires to quickly burn themselves out. We ask your divine presence to fill our City Hall daily, and to fill our council chambers tonight. Give to each member of our City Council your divine wisdom and your divine guidance for the matters at hand tonight and in the future. God, bless and protect America, our citizens and the guests who visit our beautiful city. This invocation, invoking your divine leadership tonight, we pray in the name of our personal Savior and Lord. Amen.

September 15, 2009

May I invite you to bow your hearts with me in prayer? Our Heavenly Father, throughout our nation's history, our leaders have invoked the aid of divine providence during the moments of trial and war. Perhaps nothing exemplifies this more than the image of George Washington kneeling in the snow in prayer during the terrible winter of 1776 at Valley Forge.⁴⁹ Honoring this heritage, in years after World War II, Congress added the words: "under God" to our Pledge of Allegiance in 1954, and made the words: in God we trust, our nation's motto in 1956. And so it is in this spirit that I offer this invocation tonight. May we, our lawmakers in Washington D.C., as well as the members of our City Council in Pismo Beach, be often reminded that America is still one nation under God, and may me remember that God will continue to bless our nation, only as long as we boldly affirm our nation's motto with all our hearts: in God we trust.

Grant that each citizen, each of our leaders, will seek to be people of conviction who value moral righteousness above public acclaim. May we as individuals never forget that it is our unified prayers, seeing God's protection and seeking his blessing, that we are our greatest shield from the dangers and threats that we face. Give to each of us a new fidelity, a new integrity, and a deeper purity. For only then will the fullness of your purpose and your ways be revealed in each of us. Tonight, in the dignity of this City Council meeting, guide our mayor and her colleagues whom we have freely elected to serve as our leaders. We pray for them tonight publicly, because we have already prayed for each one by name today in our prayers. We ask that you would crown this council meeting, and our community, with the nearness of your invisible presence. Give your divine guidance in their thought processes, as well as their support staff who work at City Hall. May each decision that is made honor you, and be for the betterment of all of our citizens, and the guests who visit our beautiful city. This invocation I pray in the name of our personal Savior and Lord. Amen.

⁴⁹ Historians agree that this did not happen. There is no contemporaneous report to verify it and the original report is from *The Life of Washington*, by Parson Mason Weems, who did not include the story until the 17th edition and also gave us the myth of the cherry tree. See Edward G. Lengel, *Inventing George Washington*, 13, 22-23, 76-86 (Harper Collins Publishers, 2011).

October 6, 2009

May I ask you to bow your heart with me in prayer please? Our Heavenly Father, we bow our hearts before you and the dignity of the City Council meeting. The Scriptures teach us, saying, "Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord."⁵⁰ We recognize that we are a nation under God. Our forefathers have handed us the torch of faith; you alone have given us our freedom, our liberty, and our prosperity. And faith in God is our heritage and our foundation. It was President George Washington who reminded us that morality and faith are the pillars of our republic. But it is evident that these pillars are being eroded in our secular and permissive society. Too long, we have neglected Your Word and ignored your laws. We have tried to solve our problems without reference to you. Your Word is so clear, and is so simple. For Your Word says: righteousness exalts a nation, but sin is a reproach and an embarrassment to any people.⁵¹ And so we confess to you our sins, and ask that we as a nation and as individuals, may experience a moral and a spiritual restoration.

Our leaders in Washington D.C., and our leaders here in our beautiful city of Pismo Beach, often face burdens and responsibilities, that at times, are overwhelming. And we ask tonight your divine guidance and your power to rest mightily upon each of our leaders. In the moment of decision, give to them your uncompromising courage to do what is morally right; with a cool head, and a warm heart. We pray especially tonight for your divine understanding to rest strongly upon our intelligence community. And we pause now to thank you for the two domestic Islamic terrorist plots upon our nation that had been uncovered in recent days. Both of these would have inflicted severe damage to multitudes of our citizens. And so tonight, we boldly declare our nation's motto; in God we trust. And not only is this trust, this truth, engraved on our currency, but we also have enshrined it on our hearts and on our lips. Surround us with your presence and power as we find our security from your promise, which says: I will never leave you, I will never forsake you.

Tonight, may our mayor, her colleagues, and their support staff rest confidently in your ability to give solutions to every problem they face; tonight and in the future. And may our united desire always be that Your Word becomes our law, and Your Will becomes our chosen path. This we pray in the name of him who Isaiah called the "Prince of Peace,"⁵² our personal Savior and Lord. Amen.

⁵⁰ Psalm 33:12

⁵¹ Proverbs 14:34

⁵² Isaiah 9:6 – This is from the Old Testament, the belief that Jesus is the fulfillment of this "prophecy" is an exclusively Christian idea, "For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace."

October 20, 2009

Will you please bow your heart with me in prayer? Our Heavenly Father, it was George Washington, the first president of our great nation, who said, "It is the duty of all nations to acknowledge the providence of Almighty God, to obey his will and to be grateful for his benefits, and to humbly implore his protection and his favor." And then James Madison, the fourth president of our great nation, said, "Before any man can be a member of civil society he must be considered a subject of the governor of the universe." The founding leaders of our country believed wholeheartedly the words of Holy Scripture⁵³ that are recorded in Psalm 33, "The word of the Lord is right. The earth is full of the goodness of the Lord, and blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord."⁵⁴ Because of this legacy, left to succeeding generations, we understand more fully why our U.S. Congress voted the model of our nation to be: in God we trust. And as American citizens of this generation, we forthrightly proclaim: in God we trust.

Cause us, Lord, to be ever mindful that no one is secure in their own accomplishments. Our positions and our achievements never make us invincible. For God promises security and stability to those who choose to put their confidence and their trust in him. And so may we always seem to live justly, and to live righteously, and be zealous for the things that honor God. Thank you for each member of our City Council, as well as their support staff. We would ask that you would infuse in them your wisdom and your understanding. Give your solution to every difficulty and every need they face. We invoke your irresistible presence and Your Will tonight, to become the resource that you graciously grant to each of the elected leaders of our city. May proper decisions be made tonight, that will honor you and benefit the citizens as well as the guests of our beautiful city. This invocation we pray in the name of our personal Savior and Lord. Amen.

⁵³ Completely unsubstantiated.

⁵⁴ Verses 4, 5 and 12.

November 3, 2009

Our Heavenly Father, Wednesday, one week from tomorrow, is Veterans Day across our great nation, and in our beloved city of Pismo Beach. And we pause in the dignity of this moment to offer thanks to you for the privilege to be citizens of the greatest nation on earth: the United States of America. And today, we lift loudly our voice in thanks for every military veteran who have proudly worn the uniform of our nation, and served our great country at any cost. These 25 million men and women have willingly fought any enemy, at great sacrifice, to guarantee to each citizen the right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. Many of their comrades have paid willingly the supreme sacrifice, so that no enemy and no oppressor shall remove from us the unalienable right of freedom. Many of our veterans are hospitalized tonight, suffering loss of limb and body because of wounds they received on the battlefield. To these, we pause tonight to say a sincere and heartfelt thank you. Allow your unseen, but dynamic, presence to be near them and their families tonight. And cause each of us as citizens of our great country to honor deeply in solemn appreciation, these millions of veterans across our great nation, who live among us as friends and as neighbors.

And tonight, we give adherence to the wise instruction of our founding fathers. Let us not foolishly trust in wealth, or power, or position, or pleasure, for time has taught us that these are only fleeting and transitory, and so quickly fade away. So cause each of us to boldly proclaim: in God we trust. Today, we pray earnestly for your wisdom to be desired greatly by President Obama, his advisers, and every member of our Congress and Senate. We also pray for all of our servicemen and women serving our country abroad and around the globe, especially in Iraq and Afghanistan; protect them with your eternal power. And tonight we invoke your divine presence, so that it may fill our City Hall daily, as well as our council chambers this evening. Give to each member of our City Council and their support staff your wisdom and your understanding for matters at hand, today and in the future. God, bless America protect our citizens here in Pismo Beach and the guests who visit our beautiful city. This invocation, invoking your divine leadership continually, we pray in the name of our personal Savior and Lord. Amen.

November 17, 2009

May I ask you to bow your heart with me in prayer please? Our Heavenly Father, Thursday of next week has been proclaimed as Thanksgiving day, in our beloved nation. Thanksgiving day is America's defining holiday. As individuals and as a nation, we are blessed above all of the people of the earth, with food in abundance, family and friends. Thanksgiving day in 1986, present Ronald Reagan said, "Perhaps no custom reveals our character as a nation so clearly as our celebration of Thanksgiving day. Rooted deeply in our Judeo-Christian heritage, the practice of offering Thanksgiving underscores our unshakable belief in God as the foundation of our nation, and our firm reliance upon Him from whom all blessings flow." We join with our pilgrim fathers at their first harvest feast in 1621. They believed and obeyed the words of Psalm 28:7, which says, "The Lord is my strength and my shield. My heart trust in him, and I am helped, and I will give thanks to him."

Tonight, we remember and pray for the American military men and women around the world, especially those serving in Iraq and Afghanistan, as they serve us with honor and bravery in places of difficulty, danger, and challenge. May they sense our gratitude and your protection. We would remember tonight to ask that you console the victims who survived the massacre at Fort Hood. May your presence and comfort sustain the family members as they cope with the tragic loss of their loved ones. Tonight we lift our hearts with gratitude, and boldly proclaim our nation's motto: in God we trust. May our nation remain 'one nation under God', as President Abraham Lincoln coined the phrase in his Gettysburg address November 19, 1863. And then said, "May we be one nation under God so that our nation of the people, and our government, by the people and for the people, shall not perish from the earth."

We are grateful for our freely elected mayor and council members. We undergird them and their support staff with our words and our prayers daily.⁵⁵ We invoke your divine wisdom and courage to be freely bestowed upon each of them, so that they may make good and right decisions. May each determination bring esteem and righteousness toward God, and bring fairness and justice to each citizen and guest in our city. Grant your protection and favor in abundance upon our civic leaders and our citizens. Thank you for responding to this invocation of Thanksgiving, that we pray in the name of our personal Savior and Lord. Amen.

⁵⁵ 1 Timothy 2:1-2.

December 1, 2009

Our Heavenly Father, Karl Marx, once said, "If we can remove history from people, then they can be easily conquered. And we know that a bouquet of roses die when cut off from their roots."⁵⁶ So we clearly understand that no liberty and no freedom is secure when our roots are removed. Those roots that have been determined by God. For ethics, morals, and standards of behavior are determined by God. Standards of behavior are not determined by a majority of people. So enable each of us to stand firm for our godly convictions, understanding that it is an honor and a privilege to stand for right. May the deep abiding sense of God's holiness and God's righteousness always determine our sense of right and wrong. Tonight, once again, we strongly affirm our nation's motto: in God we trust. Help us to maintain this firm conviction in our hearts as well as our lifestyles. For only then will we not be helpless or defenseless as we face the future with confidence.

We thank you for the privilege of meeting together in this council meeting, conducted openly in public for the benefit of our citizens. We ask that your invisible presence will fill our City Hall daily, as well as our Council Chambers tonight. We pray for each of our council members, for these are our friends whom we have freely elected to serve and to govern us. We pray for them publicly tonight, because we pray for them by name daily in our private prayers. Grant that each of our City Council members, and their support staff, and our mayor will be generously given your divine wisdom and your divine guidance for the matters at hand tonight, and in the future. God, bless and protect America. Bless and protect our president, and our military forces. Bless and protect the citizens of Pismo Beach, and the guest to visit our beautiful city. We invoke your divine leadership tonight upon all who lead our city. This invocation we pray in the name of our personal Savior and Lord. Amen.

⁵⁶ No source can be located for this quote, it appears fictional.

December 15, 2009

May I ask you please to bow your heart in prayer? Our Heavenly Father, it's Christmas time in our city and surrounding communities. Stores and shops are filled with carols and beautiful music of Christmas. We thank you that so many have been prospered, that they may purchase gifts for those that we love and are so dear to us. We ask you to allow your favor to rest upon our business community, who has planned earnestly and worked diligently to sell their goods and services, and then sent sales tax and bed tax to our city treasury. For your favor, we are grateful. Let us understand anew that the message of Christmas is simple and wonderful. God wants to enter into all of life circumstances. And God chooses a beginning point for his wonder workings in human beings; everyone is important. And so we pray tonight for those families among us whose lives have been impacted by the economic slowdown. Graciously provide for them as only you know how.

At this Christmas time, we also remember to pray for our military personnel as they serve the local causes of freedom and liberty around the world. May each one who is deployed be safe and secure, and may their loved ones have God's comfort in presence, as families are separated one from the other. When our next city Council meeting convenes, the Christmas lights will be out, the Christmas trees will have faded, the Christmas ribbons will be forgotten, and Christmas cards will be packed away. But the babe that was born in Bethlehem's manger will yet remain.⁵⁷ He will comfort when we are sorrowful, he will provide meaning when life seems so useless and empty, he will bring light when the way seems so dark, and he will provide joy when the circumstances are grim. And long after the carols were hushed, and long after the gift certificates have been cashed, the babe that was born in Bethlehem's manger will continue to bring happiness and satisfaction.⁵⁸ For His name is above all other names,⁵⁹ His reign is above all other rulers,⁶⁰ and His truth is above all other opinions.

And so tonight, we invoke your divine presence to so fill City Hall daily, and these council chambers tonight, that you will give your wisdom to our mayor, and her colleagues, and their support staff, for the matters at hand tonight and for the future as well. God, bless America. Protect our great country. Protect the citizens in Pismo Beach, and protect the guests who visit our beautiful city. This invocation we pray, this holy Christmas season, in the name of our personal Savior and Lord. Amen.

⁵⁷ Luke 2:12.

⁵⁸ Luke 2:12.

⁵⁹ Philippians 2:9.

⁶⁰ 1 Timothy 6:15.

January 19, 2010

Will you please bow your heart in prayer with me? Our Heavenly Father, we stand on the threshold of this new year, 2010. But already, our hearts have been deeply moved as we have listened to the news reporters and viewed pictures of the devastating earthquake that has brought such havoc in the city of Port-Au-Prince, the capital of Haiti. Many tens of thousands of citizens in this impoverished island nation have been killed. Many more have lost what meager possessions they had. Great numbers of our fellow Americans are freely giving cash and supplies to assist the Red Cross, and other relief organizations, as they provide emergency food, and water, and clothing, and temporary shelter. We continue daily to undergird these needy people in our earnest prayers, in this their time of desperation. And we pray Lord that you will give them courage and give them strength as they face the seemingly impossible road to recovery.

Chapter 40 of Isaiah in the Holy Scriptures records these encouraging words, "Have you not known? Have you not heard? The everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth, he never faints, nor is weary. And he gives power to the weak. And to those who have no might, he increases strength. And our times of human weakness, God will enable us to meet every current difficulty by the greatness of his might and by the strength of his power."⁶¹ But Lord, cause us to never forget the need for our devotion to God, and our obedience to his ways. We remember the prayer that was prayed by President Theodore Roosevelt when he said, "We invoke the direction and the favor of Almighty God for our guidance." And this is the stabilizing force that God provides for those who trust in him in these uncertain times. And so again tonight we unitedly affirm our nation's motto: in God we trust.

In the dignity of this public City Council meeting, we invoke your wisdom to guide our elected mayor, and her colleagues, and their support staff. May they make wise decisions that will honor God and benefit our citizens. And with your Almighty help, and with your divine wisdom, we are confident that every problem and every difficulty that confronts our City Council, and our city officials will find your solution, and be properly resolved. Grant this, oh Lord. Thank you for hearing our united prayers. This invocation we pray in the name of our wonderful Savior and Lord. Amen.

⁶¹ Verses are 21, 29 and 26, respectively.

February 2, 2010

Will you please bow your hearts with me in prayer? Our Heavenly Father, our U.S. Constitution gives each of us the guarantee to the right to worship God at home, and at work, and at school. Our founding fathers intended it thus to be. Benjamin Franklin proposed that the Constitutional Convention of 1787 begin each day with prayer.⁶² George Washington had hoped that all nations would acknowledge the providence of God, and obey his will. Thomas Jefferson warned the new United States to never forget that their liberties are the gift of God. These are testimonies to the role of God in America's history. And Abraham Lincoln later declared, "The sublime truth in the Holy Scriptures, and proven by all history is; that nations only are blessed whose God is the Lord."

And Saint Luke admonishes us, "Grant that we may serve the Lord in holiness and righteousness, all the days of our lives."⁶³ It was President Calvin Coolidge who said, "If American democracy is to remain the greatest hope of humanity, it must continue abundantly in the faith of the Bible." And Isaiah urges us to walk righteously, and speak uprightly.⁶⁴ This is the stabilizing force that God provides those who trust in him, in certain times as well as uncertain times. You alone, oh God, give wisdom to the wise, and knowledge to the discerning.⁶⁵

So we pray tonight, turn our hearts, and the hearts of our leaders toward you, and once again we boldly affirm our nation's motto: in God we trust. Tonight, we would not forget to ask your guidance, and your help, to all who give of their resources and their abilities to render aid and comfort to the tens of thousands who suffer tonight, and seem so helpless in the little island nation of Haiti. And this because of the result of the recent devastating earthquake. We invoke your presence and your favor to surround our City Council. Grant your divine intervention as unitedly [*sic*] they seek solutions to the needs of our beloved city. May our council, and their support staff, and all who work at City Hall, sense the nearness of God in their offices and in their places of work as they serve our citizens and the guests who come to our city. We ask your special favor upon our businesses who are finding it difficult financially in these uncertain economic times. May we always determine to honor you and to benefit each other. This invocation we pray, in the name of our personal Savior and Lord. Amen.

⁶² Again ignoring the conclusion, that the motion was so unimportant it was not voted on.

⁶³ Luke 1:75

⁶⁴ Isaiah 33:15

⁶⁵ Daniel 2:21

February 16, 2010

Will you bow your heart with me in prayer please? We're grateful, Our Heavenly Father, to be citizens of our great country, the United States of America. We acknowledge that your power and your blessing has [*sic*] made us great. We enjoy blessings and benefits that are unknown by the vast majority of earth's population. We have plenteous food, clean water, proper housing, and prosperity that abounds in the lives of so many of our citizens. We accept these and many others as a direct result of the favor of God. We confess that we do not deserve these benefits more than others, but we express thanks and our desire to honor you in our daily lifestyles. With great appreciation, we boldly proclaim: in God we trust.

Solomon, the wisest king who ever ruled, penned in the Holy Scriptures these words, "Righteousness exalts the nation, but sin is a reproach and an embarrassment to any people."⁶⁶ And so tonight, we align ourselves with the words of one of our great statesman, Daniel Webster. He served first as a U.S. Senator and then as Secretary of State, and 150 years ago he declared, "If we abide by the principles taught in the Holy Bible, our country will go on prospering and to prosper, but if we or our posterity neglect the instructions and the authority of the Bible, no man can tell how suddenly catastrophe may overwhelm us and bear all of our glory in profound obscurity."⁶⁷ So cause each of us to accept such wise instruction personally, and make it a part of our lives and our lifestyles daily.

Tonight, in the dignity of this City Council meeting, we invoke your wisdom to guide our elected mayor, and her colleagues, and their support staff. May they make wise decisions that will honor God, and make better conditions for the citizens and the guests who visit our beautiful city of Pismo Beach. Together with your almighty help, and your divine wisdom, we are convinced that every problem and every difficulty that confronts our City Council will find your solution and be properly resolved. God, grant this. Thank you for hearing our united prayers, this invocation we pray, in the blessed name of our wonderful Savior and Lord. Amen.

⁶⁶ Proverbs 14:34

⁶⁷ This quote is inaccurate. The true quote does not mention the "Holy Bible" or the "Bible" at all. It does mention religious institutions but only in conjunction with morality and our political constitution. The following is accurate:

"...if we maintain those institutions of government and that political union, exceeding all praise as much as it exceeds all former examples of political associations, we may be sure of one thing, that, while our country furnishes material for a thousand masters of the historic art, it will afford no topic for a Gibbon. It will have no Decline and Fall. It will go on prospering and to prosper. But if we and our posterity reject religious institutions and authority, violate the rules of eternal justice, trifle with the injunctions of morality, and recklessly destroy the political constitution which holds us together, no man can tell how sudden a catastrophe may overwhelm us that shall bury all our glory in profound obscurity. Should that catastrophe happen, let it have no history! Let the horrible narrative never be written! Let its fate be like that of the lost books of Livy, which no human eye shall ever read, or the missing Pleiad, of which no man can ever know more than that it is lost, and lost forever!"

Daniel Webster, An Address Delivered before the New York Historical Society, February 23, 1852, available at <http://archive.org/stream/cu31924064123064#page/n5/mode/2up>

March 2, 2010

Will you please bow your hearts with me in prayer? Our Heavenly Father, James Madison was the principal author of U.S. Constitution. He was the father of our Bill of Rights. He was the fourth President of the United States. It was he who said, "We have staked the whole fortune of American civilization not upon the power of government, but far from it, for we have staked the future upon the capacity of each and all of us to govern ourselves according to the 10 Commandments of God."⁶⁸ These are fundamental expressions of God's design for man, and to abandon our nation's moorings would be absolutely tragic. And tonight, we join our hearts with our American founding fathers of the past, whose vision and whose courage shape the future of our country. In true repentance, we ask you our God, to protect and to preserve our beloved country. And cause our leaders to honor and follow you. Grant to each of our leaders, nationally and locally, clear guidance and moral courage, as they make decisions that directly influence our policies and our laws.

For it is recorded in Holy Scripture, and King Solomon declared it 930 B.C., "God is a shield to those who put their trust in him."⁶⁹ And again he said, "He who trust in the Lord shall prosper."⁷⁰ And again he said, "Whoever trusts in the Lord shall be safe and secure."⁷¹ And his father before him, King David wrote, "He that trust in the Lord, mercy shall surround him."⁷² Our forefathers read and reread these portions of Holy Scripture, and anchored their faith and their future to them. And as a result, in the year 1863 President Abraham Lincoln had this phrase engraved on every coin; in God we trust. And later this phrase was authorized to be printed on each U.S. paper currency, and in 1956 the U.S. Congress passed a resolution declaring our national motto: in God we trust. And Isaiah many years before wrote, "Anyone who trust in the Lord will not be disappointed."⁷³ And so tonight, we will boldly and firmly affirm our nation's motto: in God we trust.

And it is in this spirit that we pray this invocation. We are so grateful that all of us can be a part of this public City Council meeting. We invoke your blessings upon each council member. These are our friends. We have freely elected them to serve us, and we pray for them daily. Cause each of them to understand that they cannot properly discharge their responsibilities or their assigned task apart from your enablement. Bless them and their support staff with the strength and the security of your invisible presence, and grant to each of them your divine direction in their thought processes. For this will bring proper solutions to each problem and each need that they encounter, and will benefit each citizen and each guest in our beautiful city of Pismo Beach. This invocation we pray in the name of our personal Savior and Lord. Amen.

⁶⁸ This quote is false, or at least, falsely attributed to James Madison. David Barton is responsible for putting this quote into Christian pop-culture.

⁶⁹ Proverbs 30:5

⁷⁰ Proverbs 28:25

⁷¹ Proverbs 29:25

⁷² Psalm 32:10

⁷³ Isaiah 49:23

March 16, 2010

Our Heavenly father, America's founding fathers gave us a constitutional republic. Because of the wisdom and the convictions of these righteous people, we are free today. But let us never forget that we could die slaves if we lose sight and understanding of one basic truth; that is that freedom cannot exist without morality. Immoral men and women cannot long endure, and will cease to exist. History is filled with such examples. But character and moral fortitude is a requirement if we are to be able to govern ourselves. Whenever morality and righteous lifestyles decline, the abuse of rights increases. To abandon moral principles and to abandon righteousness, we will lose our freedoms. Our rights came from God before any human government existed. And people joined together to form human government in order to protect these rights, not to grant us rights, or to legislate out of existence these inalienable rights. Make us men and women who are unintimidated, and who value moral righteousness above public acclaim. It was George Washington, our first United States president who said, "It is impossible to govern righteously without God and the Bible."⁷⁴

All 50 states in our United States without exception acknowledges God in their state constitution. In 1879, when California wrote its constitution, the preamble begins with these words, "We the people of the state of California, are grateful to Almighty God for our freedom." Tonight, we feel much like Pres. William McKinley, our 25th president, who declared in his 1897 inaugural address, "I assume this responsible duty, as President of the United States, relying on the support of my countrymen and invoking the guidance of Almighty God."

And so, in this public Council meeting tonight, we invoke the wisdom and the guidance of Almighty God to illuminate the thought processes of each of our City Council members. We have freely elected them to govern us, and we pray for them daily. Help each of them, our mayor, her colleagues, and their support staff, as they endeavor to make wise decisions. And since you transmit your blessing and your favors through headship, allow your favor to flow from City Hall and these Council chambers to every home and to every citizen who resides in our city and to each guest who visits our city. Cause our beautiful city of Pismo Beach, that borders the blue Pacific, to become a better place to live and to enjoy life. This invocation we pray in the name of our personal Savior and Lord. Amen.

⁷⁴ This is not accurate. There is no evidence recording that Washington said or wrote such a statement.

April 6, 2010

Will you bow your hearts in prayer please? Our Heavenly Father, we lift our hearts in gratitude tonight, that we are privileged to participate in our public City Council meeting. We offer praise to God, for your continued protection over our nation and our city. And we pray that your omniscience and your knowledge will be granted to our intelligence community, as they continue to safeguard our country and our citizens. May no further terrorist plots be carried out, and may any plans made to do us harm be uncovered and defused before they can be realized. Cause righteousness to reign in our lives individually and in our government. It was President Herbert Hoover, our 31st president, who said, "Where there is a lack of honor in government, the morals of the whole people are poisoned. There is no such thing as no man's land between honesty and dishonesty. Our strength lies in spiritual concepts; it lies in public sensitivity to evil." Then he said, "Our greatest dangers are not from invasion by foreign armies, but rather that we commit suicide from within, by complaisance with evil or public tolerance of scandalous behavior." The power of prayer is a dynamic force that repels unrighteousness, but the influence of prayer has been dramatically reduced in our public life. And the moral compass of the Holy Scriptures has been largely laid aside. Public morality is declining to dangerously low points. So help each of us to always seek to live justly, and to pursue righteousness, and to be zealous for a lifestyle that honors God. We are most grateful for our nation's motto that so strongly instructs us: in God we trust.

Thank you for every member of our City Council and their support staff. Infuse in them your wisdom and your understanding. Give to them your solution to every difficulty that they face. We invoke your irresistible presence and will tonight to become the resource that you graciously grant to each of the leaders of our city. May proper decisions be made tonight that will honor you and that will benefit the citizens and the guests of our beautiful city. This invocation we pray in the name of our personal Savior and Lord. Amen.

April 20, 2010

Will you please bow your heart with me in prayer? Our Heavenly Father, it was June 28, 1787 that Governor Benjamin Franklin of Pennsylvania hosted the 55 delegates in Pennsylvania to the first Constitutional Convention. He said, "I've lived a long time, and the longer I live, the more convincing proofs I see of this truth; that God governs in the affairs of men. If a sparrow cannot fall to the ground without God's notice, is it probable that an empire can rise without his aid? We have been assured in the sacred writings that except the Lord build this house, they labor in vain who build it. Without his concurring aid, we shall succeed in building this Republic no better than the builders of Babel. I therefore move, that henceforth, prayers imploring the assistance of Heaven and its blessings on our deliberations be held in this assembly every morning before we proceed to business, and that one or more of the clergy of this city be requested to officiate in that service." James Madison concurred, and such resolution was passed.⁷⁵ And from that day until today, for the past 223 years, prayers of have opened both houses of our Congress daily; in the U.S. Senate, and US House of Representatives.

And so it is in this spirit we pray this invocation tonight. We are grateful for the privilege to gather publicly in this Pismo Beach City Council meeting. This is the last Council meeting before Randy Bloom retires as our City Director of Community Development. Thank you for his leadership in our cities these past 10 1/2 years, and all that has been accomplished through his leadership. Our city is a better place for our citizens and our guests because he has served us with his skills. We have freely elected our mayor and her colleagues to our City Council, and in obedience to Holy Scripture, we support, and we undergird them and their staff with our prayers.⁷⁶ We pray for them tonight publicly, as we have prayed for each of them by name in our personal prayers. We are reminded again that good government is not the idea that was generated in the heart of people, but good government is the principal that originated in the heart of God. So give to each of our Council persons tonight your divine wisdom to make good decisions, and grant that each decision will honor God, and be for the betterment of all the citizens of Pismo Beach and all the guests who visit our beautiful city. We thank you for hearing our prayer. For this invocation we pray in the name of our personal Savior and Lord. Amen.

⁷⁵ As pointed out previously, this is false. The motion was not even voted on, let alone passed.

⁷⁶ 1 Timothy 2:1-2.

May 4, 2010

Our Heavenly Father, we pause to offer our heartfelt thanks, giving that you have again extended your protection to our citizens and our nation this past 24 hours. Thank you that the would-be terrorist, who plotted to blow up a car and kill scores and scores of citizens in New York City, has failed in his attempt and was arrested, and now awaits trial. Continue to grant your favor to our intelligence community, as they seek to guard our nation against all those, foreign and domestic, who would terrorize and harm our citizens. It was 1789, President George Washington said, "It is the duty of all nations to acknowledge the providence of Almighty God, to obey his will, and to be grateful for his benefit, and to humbly implore God's protection and favor." When Nehemiah was mayor of Jerusalem, the Bible says of his brother Hanani, that he was a faithful man and honored God more than many.⁷⁷ The Bible and history unite and continually teach us that God's favor accompanies righteousness. For those who practice righteousness shine as beacons of light. And such righteousness brings God's blessings, and his protection.

Cause each member of our City Council to humbly seek the blessing and favors of God, that they may properly discharge their responsibilities and the tasks that have been assigned to them. And as a result, may righteousness flow from City Hall, and may righteousness flow from these council chambers, into each home in our beautiful city and into the lives of each of our citizens. Thank you for your continued protection and provisions for our city and its citizens. We are grateful for these open council meetings, and this one tonight, where all may participate in the affairs of our city. Bless all who work at City Hall. Cause them to serve and to sense the strength and the security of your enabling presence. Grant our city Council and their support staff your divine direction in their thought processes, and may they receive your solution for each of the problems and needs that they may encounter tonight. May each decision honor you, and benefit the citizens and the guest of our beautiful city. This invocation we pray in the name of our personal Savior and Lord. Amen.

⁷⁷ The Bible says that Nehemiah put Hanani in charge *because* he "feared God more than most men do." Nehemiah 7:2.

May 18, 2010

Will you bow your heart with me in prayer please? Our Heavenly Father, our nation was founded on principles of righteousness by men and women who both knew and loved God. The Pennsylvania State Assembly, in 1751, called for the forging of a bell to commemorate William Penn's original state charter. The legislators included the instructions that a scripture verse from the Holy Bible be inscribed on that bell. And the verse chosen was Leviticus 25:10, "Proclaim liberty throughout all the land, and unto all the inhabitants."⁷⁸ Our founding fathers considered important for all generations to know that God is the source of true freedom. So help us to understand, as did our founding fathers, that righteousness does not just happen by accident, but righteousness must be pursued. We refuse to be absorbed by the uncertainty in the daily headlines. The good news is: no one is helpless in the face of the future. Our daily prayer seeking God's blessing and God's protection are our greatest shield from any danger or threat that we may face. It was John Jay, our first United States Supreme Court Chief Justice, who said, "Rely upon the good providence of Almighty God for success, in full confidence that without his blessing, all our efforts will inevitably fail." Today, as a nation and as individuals, we are neither ashamed nor embarrassed to let the world know that we indeed boldly affirm our nation's motto: in God we trust.

And it is in this spirit that we pray this invocation. In heartfelt humility we implore your protection and your favors. We invoke your infinite wisdom to be graciously bestowed upon the members of our City Council. The problems our city faces are known by our council members, but more importantly, they are known by you, oh God. So grant solutions that will honor you, and be for the betterment of each citizen and each guest who visits our city. We have freely elected five citizens, our friends, to serve as council members to lead our beautiful city. May your leadership be manifest in their lives and in their decisions, as well as their support staff. Where there may be confusion, bring harmony. Give your wisdom for the proper answer and the proper solution. We pray tonight you would fill City Hall and these council chambers with the peace and the power of your eternal presence, and cause each home and each citizen in Pismo Beach to feel the impact of your eternal presence. This invocation we pray in the name of our personal Savior and Lord. Amen.

⁷⁸ The full text, with contextual passages (25:1, 8-12), reads:

"The LORD then spoke to Moses at Mount Sinai saying... 'You are also to count off seven Sabbaths of years for yourself, seven times seven years, so that you have the time of the seven Sabbaths of years, namely, forty-nine years. You shall then sound a ram's horn abroad on the tenth day of the seventh month; on the Day of Atonement you shall sound a horn all through your land. You shall thus consecrate the fiftieth year and proclaim a release through the land to all its inhabitants. It shall be a jubilee for you, and each of you shall return to his own property, and each of you shall return to his family. You shall have the fiftieth year as a jubilee; you shall not sow, nor reap its aftergrowth, nor gather in from its untrimmed vines. For it is a jubilee; it shall be holy to you. You shall eat its crops out of the field.' "

June 1, 2010
(Dr. Paul Toms)

Will you join me please in a moment of prayer? Eternal God, our Heavenly Father, we come to you at the end of a busy day, all kinds of activities and challenges, opportunities. We give you thanks for your provision, for your guidance, for your watchful care over us. Now we come to you again to seek your blessing upon us in this special meeting. Thankful for where we live, thankful for the blessings we enjoy here, we seek your blessing today upon this meeting in a special way. Bless members of this council. Bless these other elected and appointed officials. We thank you for what they do for us. Thank you for their commitment to that which is desirable, and useful, proper, and right. May the blessing of God rest upon us, and upon our community, for which we pray; we pray for the people who live here, we pray for the people who visit here, we pray for the people who come from here who are overseas, and some of them fighting in very difficult places. Watch over them, protect them, help them, bring an end to these conflicts, and return them safely home. Thank you for the people to watch over us here; for our policeman, policewomen, fire department people, for other people who work and succeed in doing so many things that make life comfortable and far more easy for us. So we give you thanks today, we pray your blessing upon this meeting. We ask for your inspiration, we ask it will be led by you. We thank you that these people are seeking to do the right thing. The Bible says that if we lack wisdom, let us ask of God.⁷⁹ So we ask of you today to give wisdom, and guidance, and direction. Help us as we commend ourselves into your loving care. We pray all these things in the name of the Great Redeemer, your Divine Son, amen.

⁷⁹ James 1:2, 3, 5 - "Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. ... If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to you."

June 15, 2010

Will you bow your heart with me in prayer? Our Heavenly Father, history teaches each of us that when the capitol building was built in Washington D.C., the designers were well aware of the dependence of the members of Congress upon God and prayer. The eighty third Congress designated a room in the rotunda that is always open for private prayer and meditation for the members of Congress, whenever Congress is in session. This prayer chapel stands as a witness to the need for prayer by our nation's leaders. In the focal point of the room is a stained glass window that depicts General George Washington, kneeling in prayer.⁸⁰ Surrounding him are the words found in Psalm Chapter 16, "Preserve me, oh God, for in thee, do I put my trust."⁸¹ When our pilgrim fathers came to this new world, they came in search for religious freedom. The faith and the prayers of our founding fathers made us truly one nation under God. Faith in God has played an integral role in the founding and the growth of our great nation. One of the most important characteristics of our country is our legacy of faith and trust in God. So again, we here tonight boldly affirm our nation's motto: in God we trust. And it is in this spirit that we pray this invocation tonight.

We are grateful for the privilege to gather publicly in the Pismo Beach City Council meeting. We have freely elected our friends, the mayor and her colleagues, to our City Council to serve us. And in obedience to Holy Scripture, we support them and undergird their support staff with our prayers.⁸² We pray for them corporately tonight, as we pray for each of them daily by name in our personal prayers. And we understand that good government is a principle that originated in the heart of God. So tonight, cause each of our council members to sense the power of your invisible presence, and we invoke your divine wisdom and your courage be given to each of them to make good and right decisions. Grant that each decision will honor God, and be for the betterment of all citizens of Pismo Beach, and the guests who visit our beautiful city. We thank you for hearing and responding to our prayer. This invocation we pray in the name of our personal Savior and Lord. Amen.

⁸⁰ Although the window may exist, the event portrayed did not happen.

⁸¹ Psalm 16:1-1 "Keep me safe, my God, for in you I take refuge. I say to the Lord, 'You are my Lord; apart from you I have no good thing.' I say of the holy people who are in the land, 'they are the noble ones in whom is all my delight.' Those who run after other gods will suffer more and more. I will not pour out libations of blood to such gods or take up their names on my lips."

⁸² 1 Timothy 2:1-2.

July 6, 2010

Would you please bow your heart with me in prayer? Our Heavenly Father, two days ago, Sunday, July 4, the citizens of our great nation celebrated our freedom as a nation – our 234th birthday. It was July 4th, 1776 that John Hancock, President of the Continental Congress led the elected representatives of the thirteen colonies to vote on a resolution declaring their independence from Great Britain. This document, written by Thomas Jefferson, our Declaration of Independence was officially ratified causing the thirteen colonies of America to become the United States of America. In its opening statement, it reads: “All men are created equal, they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights., that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.”⁸³

The representatives at the Continental Congress proclaimed themselves to be free and independent with a firm reliance on the protection of Divine Providence. Little wonder then, that the United States Congress in 1956, under the leadership of President Dwight Eisenhower passed a resolution declaring our national motto to be: “In God, We Trust.” And it was President Ronald Reagan on August 23, 1984 who said, “Without God, there is no virtue, because there is no prompting of the conscience. Without God, there is a coarsening of our society. And without God, democracy will not, and cannot, long endure.” He concluded by saying, “If we ever forget that we are one nation, under God, then we will be nation gone under.”

So tonight, help us and our generation to never forget the godly principles and the values upon which our great nation was founded. We pray for our mayor, for the members of our City Council, and their support staff. Tonight, we invoke God’s divine wisdom and courage to be freely given to each of the members of our City Council. May each determination that is made bring esteem and righteousness toward God, and at the same time bring justice and fairness and worth to each citizen, and each guest visiting our beautiful city. May your protection, and your favor and abundance, be upon our leaders and our citizens. Thank you for hearing and responding to this prayer of invocation. We pray it, in the name of our personal Savior and Lord. Amen.

⁸³ The full opening reads: “When in the Course of human events, it becomes necessary for one people to dissolve the political bands which have connected them with another, and to assume among the powers of the earth, the separate and equal station to which the Laws of Nature and of Nature’s God entitle them, a decent respect to the opinions of mankind requires that they should declare the causes which impel them to the separation.

We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.”

August 3, 2010

Will you bow your heart with me in prayer, please? Our Heavenly Father, it was President George Washington who on one occasion said, "It is impossible to govern the world without God and the Bible."⁸⁴ In 1864, during the Civil War, the United States Congress approved engraving the phrase "In God, We Trust" on the two cent coin. Forty-four years later, in 1908, legislation was passed to engrave "In God, We Trust" on all U.S. coins. And forty-seven years later, in 1955, when President Eisenhower was our President, Congress passed a resolution that "In God, We Trust" would be printed on all coins and all U.S. currency. One year later, in 1956, the phrase "In God, We Trust" became the national motto of our great country. And tonight, as American citizens, we boldly affirm as a nation, and as individual citizens "In God, We Trust." And it is in this spirit that we pray this invocation tonight.

As American citizens living in this great nation, we enjoy the blessings of freedom that have been given to us by God. As such, we join our voices with President Warren G. Harding, who once said, "I implore the favor and the guidance of God in heaven."

Bless all who work and serve us in our City Hall. Cause them to sense the strength and the security of your invisible presence. Bless our City Council whom we have freely elected. These are our friends, for whom we pray daily. May the members of our City Council understand that they cannot properly discharge their responsibilities, or the tasks assigned to them, without your help. Tonight, crown this City Council with your nearness, and give your divine guidance and your divine direction in their thought processes. May each decision that is made honor you and be for the betterment of all of our citizens, and the guests who visit our beautiful city. This invocation we pray, in the name of our personal Savior and Lord . . . Amen.

⁸⁴ This is not accurate. There is no evidence recording that Washington said or wrote such a statement.

August 17, 2010
(Father Victor Abegg)

We pause for a moment to open our hearts and our minds so as to allow the great force of our world that we all recognize in so many different ways, to enter into our lives, to help us be transformed this evening, and to truly help us to derive the wisdom that we need in order to come together for the sake of the needs of the community of Pismo Beach. May all that we know and all that we hold dear come together for the sake of the common good. May we be blessed with wisdom. May we search for a true understanding of what is being said by one another, so that we may come to a consensus and draw ourselves in to a one-ness which leads to the establishment of a more remarkable union as far as our citizens are concerned and as far as our work is concerned. May we all be blessed then, to listen carefully, to understand deeply, and to reflect powerfully, on what is the best. To allow our minds to be changed if they need to be changed, and to allow our hearts to reach out where they need to reach out. May we ask all of this and be guided by all of this, in the name of the one whom each of us holds dear, the one that we call Lord, and make this prayer. Amen.

September 7, 2010

Will you bow your heart with me in prayer? Our Heavenly Father, our nation was founded on Biblical principles by men and women who knew and honored you. The Pennsylvania State Assembly in 1751 called for the forging of a bell to commemorate William Penn's original state charter. And then legislators included instructions that required a verse from the Bible to be inscribed on the bell and the verse chosen was recorded in Leviticus chapter 25, verse 10: "Proclaim liberty through all the land, unto all the inhabitants."

Our Founding Fathers considered it important for all generations to know that God is the source of our freedoms. It was on June the 14th, 1954 that President Dwight D. Eisenhower signed a joint resolution which added the phrase "under god" to the pledge of allegiance to our flag, and then he said, "In this way we are re-affirming our religious faith in America's heritage and our future. And in this way we constantly strengthen those spiritual weapons that forever will be our country's most powerful resource in peace and in war."

So tonight, we bow our hearts and our heads to acknowledge your divine providence. We desire to do Your Will. We are most grateful for all of your benefits to us: life and health and friends and your divine presence and our beautiful city. Make us mindful of the words of King Solomon who said, "Righteousness exalts a nation, but sin is a reproach and an embarrassment to any people."⁸⁵ And heartfelt humility compels each of us to repent of our sins as we implore your protection and your continued favors. Allow your infinite wisdom to be graciously bestowed on our City Council. The problems our City Council faces today are known by our Council members but, more importantly, they are also known by you, our God, and we ask that you would grant solutions that will honor you and benefit each citizen. We have freely elected these five citizens, our friends, to lead our city. May your leadership be manifested in their lives, and in their decisions, as well as the staff that supports them. Where there may be confusion, bring harmony. And where there may be seemingly no solution, give your wisdom for the proper answer. We ask that City Hall and these Council chambers will be filled with the peace and power of your eternal presence, and cause each home and each citizen in Pismo Beach to feel the impact of your eternal presence. This invocation we pray, in the name of our personal Savior and Lord . . . Amen.

⁸⁵ Proverbs 14:34

September 21, 2010

Our Heavenly Father, tonight in this regular meeting of the Pismo Beach City Council, we are reminded of the words of President Abraham Lincoln, declared a hundred and forty-seven years ago, on March 30, 1863. Our nation at that time was in the midst of the Civil War, and President Lincoln said, "Whereas it is the duty of nations, as well as men, to owe their dependence upon the overruling power of God, and to confess their sins and transgressions in humble sorrow, yet with assured hope that genuine repentance will lead to mercy and pardon and to recognize his sublime truth that has been announced in the Holy Scriptures, and proven by all history, that those nations only are blessed whose God is the Lord."

It is in this spirit that we pray this invocation tonight. We join with hundreds of communities across our land, as we salute and honor our brave military youth and veterans of the conflict in the Middle East. These young men and women have strongly believed, and taught us by their lives and their courage and their actions that liberty is dearly bought, it is difficult to keep, and liberty must be continually paid for. These youth have offered their most vital years of youth in service to our country, in our Army and Navy, in our Coast Guard and Marines and Air Force. Shower your wisdom upon our President, and upon all of our national leaders as they seek you tonight.

Bless our City Council. These are our friends whom we have freely elected, for whom we pray daily. Help them as they earnestly endeavor to make Pismo Beach a better place for us to live and enjoy life. Crown this Council meeting with the nearness of your presence, and give your divine guidance in their thought processes. May each decision that is made honor you and be for the betterment of all of our citizens, and the guests who visit our beautiful city. This invocation we pray, in the name of our personal Savior and Lord . . . Amen.

October 5, 2010

Will you bow your heart with me in prayer, please? Our Heavenly Father, our American history teach us that it was October 3rd, 1789, that's just two hundred and twenty-one years ago last Sunday, that President George Washington gave us these immortal words, when he said, and I quote "It is the duty of nations to acknowledge the providence of almighty God, to obey his will, and to be grateful for his benefits, and to humbly implore his protection and his favor." We are exceedingly grateful for the bounty of heaven, that has preserved our nation and our community.

Today we enjoy peace and prosperity, and wealth and power that is unknown by any other people on Earth. And tonight as we enjoy your gracious and guiding hand, we do so in our land and our beautiful city of Pismo Beach. We invoke God's blessing upon our mayor and the members of our City Council. We have freely elected these, our fellow citizens, and we pray for them daily. Our City Council and their support staff seek earnestly to make Pismo Beach a better place to live and to enjoy life with our families and with our friends. We would pray tonight that you would allow for the power of your eternal presence to cause their thought processes to respond to your divine guidance. May the decisions that are made honor you and be for the betterment of Pismo Beach, for all of our citizens, and the guests who visit our beautiful city. This invocation we pray, in the name of our personal Savior and Lord . . . Amen.

October 19, 2010

Will you bow your heart with me in prayer? Our Heavenly Father, George Washington, the first President of our country, said, "It is the duty of all nations to acknowledge the providence of almighty God, to obey his will, and to be grateful for his benefits, and to humbly implore his protection and his favor." And James Madison, our fourth President, said, "Before any man can be a member of civil society, he must be considered as a subject of the governor of the universe." The Founding Fathers of our country believed wholeheartedly in what these men said and the words of Holy Scripture that are revealed in Psalm 33, which says, "The Word of the Lord is right... The Earth is full of the goodness of the Lord... Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord."⁸⁶ And because of this legacy that was left to succeeding generations, we understand more fully why our Congress voted the motto of our nation to be, "In God, We Trust." As American citizens of this generation, we proclaim forthrightly, "In God, We Trust."

Cause us Lord to be ever mindful that no one is secure in their own accomplishments. Our positions and our achievements never make us invincible. God promises security and stability to those who choose to put their trust in and their confidence in him. May we always seek to live justly and righteously and be zealous for the things that honor God.

Thank you for each member of our City Council, and their support staff. Infuse in them your wisdom and your understanding. Give each solution to every difficulty and need that they face. We invoke your irresistible presence and will tonight to become the resource that you so graciously grant to each of the elected leaders of our city. May proper decisions be made tonight, that will honor you and benefit the citizens of Pismo Beach, and the guests of our city. This invocation we pray, in the name of our personal Savior and Lord. Amen.

⁸⁶ Psalm 33:4-12 reads:

For the word of the Lord is right; and all his works are done in truth. He loveth righteousness and judgment: the earth is full of the goodness of the Lord. By the word of the Lord were the heavens made; and all the host of them by the breath of his mouth. He gathereth the waters of the sea together as an heap: he layeth up the depth in storehouses. Let all the earth fear the Lord: let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of him. For he spake, and it was done; he commanded, and it stood fast. The Lord bringeth the counsel of the heathen to nought: he maketh the devices of the people of none effect. The counsel of the Lord standeth for ever, the thoughts of his heart to all generations. Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord; and the people whom he hath chosen for his own inheritance.

November 16, 2010

Will you please bow your heart with me in prayer? Our Heavenly Father, Karl Marx once said, “If we can rip way history from any people, they will be easily conquered.”⁸⁷ We have learned that a bouquet of beautiful roses soon die because they are cut off from their roots. Ethics and moral standards of behavior are not to be determined by a majority of people, but by God himself. For it was Harry Truman, our President, who said, “The fundamental basics of this nation's laws was given to Moses on Mt. Sinai, and the fundamental basis of our Bill of Rights comes from the teachings of Exodus, Isaiah, Matthew and St. Paul.”

So let none of us believe the misconception that freedom is a license to sin or go our own way or do as we wish, but rather help us to understand that freedom is the responsibility and the power to do what is right. No liberty is secure when it is removed from the roots that have been established by God. Our U.S. Constitution was written by moral people, it was written for moral people and it will work for no other people. Our forefathers conceived freedom in their hearts, and wrote freedom on our documents, and yet freedom is not free. Our freedoms cannot survive without our personal responsibility and courage and they certainly cannot survive without our eternal vigilance.

So help each of our civic leaders, and help each of us as citizens to stand firm. Let us never be intimidated by numbers, but cause us to be men and women of conviction who value moral righteousness above public acclaim. Grant the light of your irresistible presence to avail, so that no unrighteousness can prevail. As loyal citizens, tonight we boldly proclaim our nation's motto, “In God, We Trust.”

We invoke your favor upon our city of Pismo Beach, as we forsake and confess our sins. Release your blessings upon each of us as citizens, and all who work at City Hall and serve our community. Give your eternal wisdom to our friends, whom we have freely elected to serve on the City Council, for these we pray daily by name. Help them as they endeavor to make Pismo Beach a better place to live and to enjoy life. Especially this evening, give your divine guidance to our mayor, each council member and their support staff. This invocation we pray, in the name of our personal Savior and Lord . . . Amen.

⁸⁷ No source can be located for this quote, it appears fictional.

December 7, 2010

Will you please bow your heart with me in prayer? Our Heavenly Father, we thank you for each member of our City Council, who has served our city and our citizens so well. You have graciously given us Mary Ann Reese, six years ago as your gift to us, as our mayor. She has led our Council with skill and dignity even when difficult decisions had to be made. It has been rewarding to see each member of our council work together in such a great spirit of unity, though each decision has not been unanimous.

The Bible speaks of leadership as quote, “serving with one accord.”⁸⁸ We have seen this attitude modeled before us regularly. You have graced each of our council members with understanding and courage, yet with a spirit of meekness. They have demonstrated that meekness is not weakness, but meekness is strength and skills under control. And tonight, our newly elected mayor, Shelly Higginbotham, will be duly installed. We believe she is your gift to us, for this season, to help guide our city and this council through somewhat difficult financial times.

We offer you gratitude for our council and their support staff, who have shown wisdom and soundness of mind. They have led with integrity and transparency, and have made character a high honor. May they always remain calm and controlled, manifesting uprightness and righteousness. For such leadership shall help keep our city strong as we enter the new year of 2011. Let there never be division or confusion, but may your unseen irresistible presence caused their united efforts to be structured, efficient and productive. We pray the prayer of President Theodore Roosevelt, when he said and I quote, “We invoke the direction and the favor of Almighty God for our guidance.”⁸⁹ And so tonight, Our Father, we affirm again to you our nation's motto, “In God, We Trust.”

May your nearness always hallow these council chambers, and cause each decision that is made to honor you and to make Pismo Beach a better place to live and to enjoy life. We ask each of these benefits to our city, for all of us who live in it, and for the visitors who come to visit us. We ask this invocation in the wonderful name of our personal Savior and Lord. Amen.

⁸⁸ Romans 15:5-6 *NASB*: “Now may the God who gives perseverance and encouragement grant you to be of the same mind with one another according to Christ Jesus, [6] so that with one accord you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

⁸⁹ There is nothing in the historical record to support this quote attributed to T. Roosevelt.

December 21, 2010
(recording partially missing)

. . . will become a reality in the Middle East, in Iraq and Afghanistan, in Iran and on the Korean Peninsula. In the truest sense, let earth receive her king, for the message of Christmas is evident in the lives of our citizens throughout Pismo Beach. In many of our stores, and especially the outlet center, favorite Christmas carols are heard such as, "Silent Night," "Oh Come All, Ye Faithful" and "Joy to the World, the Lord Has Come." These carols fill the air, and they fill our hearts, and Christmas teaches us that God is able and willing to bring life to the most barren settings, and that he is able to breathe hope into the most unpromising situations, and all of life's circumstances for each of us today.

We thank you for your many gifts to us and to our city this Christmas season. Thank you for the numerous inches of rain that have fallen in our area, making our hills and our countryside lush and green. Thank you for our new mayor, Shelly Higginbotham, and our new mayor pro-tem Chris Vardas, and our united city council and their grand support staff. We would invite your guidance through their skills and their talents as they dedicate them to make Pismo Beach a better place, and a better place to live in 2011. This invocation we pray in the name of our personal Savior and Lord. Amen.

January 18, 2011

Will you bow your heart with me in prayer, please? Our Heavenly Father, General George Washington emerged as the most significant leader in the founding of our United States. History has esteemed him as the father of our country. He was surrounded by a host of courageous leaders, brilliant thinkers, passionate orators, many better educated than he. Washington possessed energy, vision and calm demeanor, but the reason cited for his emergence as the supreme leader in the early days of our country was because of his high moral character – his sterling character, combined with his leadership genius. He could be trusted implicitly. Thomas Jefferson wrote of George Washington, “His integrity was most pure. His justice was most inflexible, and no motives of friendship or hatred were able to bias his decisions.” He could lead over a long period of time. He could lead in extraordinary difficulties. He led our trips to victory in the Revolutionary War. He superintended the Constitutional Convention. He was elected unanimously as our first United States President.

So, oh God, cause each of us to strive for such character and such righteousness in our lives, and in our decisions. May our nation, and may our community, be strengthened morally by such actions. In this first public City Council meeting of this new year, and this new decade, may each Council member, each staff member, each community leader and each citizen determine to have a positive influence as we dedicate ourselves to lifestyles of character and righteousness. We are most grateful for our new mayor, Shelly Higginbotham, whom you have given to us, as well as her colleagues on our current City Council. We invoke your wisdom, and your understanding to be graciously bestowed in their thought processes. May each decision bring honor to God, and benefit our citizens.

We continue to remember in our prayers our fellow American citizens in Tuscon, Arizona and especially those who have lost loved ones, and grieve tonight because of a senseless tragedy. Cause each of those who were injured to be granted a speedy and a complete recovery. Our father, accept our gratitude for your continued protection to our community, and to each citizen and each guest that visits our city. This invocation we pray, in the name of our personal Savior and Lord . . . Amen.

February 1, 2011

Will you bow your hearts with me in prayer? Our Heavenly Father, we bow our hearts before you in humility. We ask you to unite our hearts and strengthen our hands, to work together for the good of our nation, for our state and for our community. It was Horace Greeley, a respected 19th century newspaper editor, who reminds us in our quote, “Our founding fathers emphasized that liberty cannot be established without morality, nor can morality be established without faith.” Success depends upon God’s word being in our hearts, and our minds, and upon our lips.

America was founded upon principles recorded in the Holy Scriptures. Our founders left us an abundance of quotations in their personal correspondence, as well as their public statements, and these show us the profound extent to which their thinking and their lives were influenced from a righteous worldview. They thought, and they reasoned, from a Biblical perspective. This greatly shaped and determined their political ideals for our Republic.

We pray for our President tonight, for the House and Senate leadership, and for all those who are seeking to bring peace and justice to our dangerous and troubled world. We pray especially for the citizens of Egypt in their current struggle. Allow your protection to surround all those who serve in our armed forces around the world. Thank you for their commitment to defend our freedoms even at the cost of their own lives. Be near to their families, and assure them of your love and your concern for them.

We confess our need of you, and your invisible presence, in this council meeting tonight. For you alone know our future, and only you can bring the strength and the wisdom to our mayor, her colleagues, and their support staff, to meet the challenges, as well as the opportunities, that we face as a city. We invite your blessings upon our city, upon each citizen and each guest who visits our city. And we thank you for friends as well as fellowship. This invocation we pray, in the wonderful name of our Savior and Lord . . . Amen.

February 15, 2011

Will you bow your heart with me in prayer, please? Our Heavenly Father, our world has looked intently for eighteen days as millions of Egyptian citizens have protested in the streets of Cairo, their capital city, and other large cities in their country. They are protesting thirty years of tyrannical reign of the ruthless dictator of this country, Egypt. Eighty million Egyptians believe as our forefathers believed that freedom and liberty does not come from government, but rather it comes from our creator, and since the resignation and departure of their dictator days of jubilation have followed, and we pray that peace and goodwill may be enjoyed now by all the citizens of Egypt. May any who would deny such freedom be thwarted by your divine intervention.

We are most grateful for your blessings upon the founders of our beloved country, the United States of America. You have honored their vision for the days they lived, as well as for the 234 years that have followed. And today, we pray the prayer that was written by Samuel Smith, who was a student at Andover University Theological Seminary in 1831, he wrote, "Let music swell the breeze and ring from all the trees. Sweet music, freedom's song. Let mortal tongues awake. Let all that breathe partake. Let rocks their silence break. This song, prolong. Our father's God to thee, author of liberty, to thee we sing. Long may our land be bright, with freedom's holy light. Protect us by your might, great God, our king." And tonight we resoundingly affirm our nation's motto, "In God, We Trust."

Accept our gratitude for our mayor, her colleagues who share with her on our City Council, and their support staff. As citizens of Pismo Beach, we are most fortunate for such talented and skilled people to lead our city, and give watchful care for our concerns. We invoke your wisdom to be graciously given to each of them tonight as they seek solutions to make our city a better place to live, and to enjoy life. This invocation we pray, in the name of our personal Savior and Lord . . . Amen.

March 1, 2011

May I ask you again to bow your heart with me in prayer? Our Heavenly Father, each Wednesday morning at 8 o'clock, when Congress is in session, a group of nearly twenty Senators meet to seek and to pray for the guidance of God. These weekly sessions are a tradition of more than sixty years, and during these prayer times they ask God to guide their personal lives and their lives as Senators. The fact that so many of our great leaders have sought spiritual guidance from God the almighty is a testament to the power of prayer. Throughout our history, citizens, and leaders as well, have been involved in prayer to promote progress, to heal wounds, to enhance insight, and to win moral victories.

It was on January 27, 1983 that President Ronald Reagan declared, and I quote, "Prayer is the mainspring of the American spirit. Prayer is the fundamental tenet of our people, since before our Republic was even founded." As citizens, we are somewhat aware of the chaotic times of unrest around our world, and within our country. And so tonight, we join our hearts with President George Washington and pray again the prayer that he prayed, and I quote, "Almighty God, we make our earnest prayer that you will keep the United States in your holy protection."⁹⁰

We pray that you would cause our President Obama, and our leaders in Washington, and our leaders in every state, to take your wisdom and your guidance as they deal with our domestic and foreign issues of urgency. We pray tonight for our City Council, as they seek to privately and to personally govern our city. We are grateful for our mayor, Shelly Higginbotham, and her fellow council members, and their talented staff whom you have given to support them. May each of us citizens seek to keep the ways of the Lord, and to live righteously before you. And as we do, your abundant blessings will continue upon the leaders of our city. Your abundant blessings will continue upon each of us as citizens, and your abundant blessings will continue upon the tens of thousands of guests who visit our beautiful city each year. This prayer of invocation we pray, in the name of our personal Savior and Lord . . . Amen.

⁹⁰ This is not accurate. This was written by one of Washington's aides, David Cobb, in a June 8, 1783 letter to the governors of the states, "I now make it my earnest prayer, that God would have you, and the State over which you preside, in his holy protection, that he would incline the hearts of the Citizens to cultivate a spirit of subordination and obedience to Government, to entertain a brotherly affection and love for one another, for their fellow Citizens of the United States at large, and particularly for their brethren who have served in the Field, and finally, that he would most graciously be pleased to dispose us all, to do Justice, to love mercy, and to demean ourselves with that Charity, humility and pacific temper of mind, which were the Characteristicks of the Divine Author of our blessed Religion, and without an humble imitation of whose example in these things, we can never hope to be a happy Nation." *The writings of George Washington from the original manuscript sources 1732-1799*, (ed. John C. Fitzpatrick, U.S. Gov't Print. Off.) Vol. 26, page 496.

<http://etext.virginia.edu/etcbin/ot2www-washington?specfile=/texts/english/washington/fitzpatrick/search/gw.o2w&act=surround&offset=33279213&tag=Writings+of+Washington,+Vol.+26:+CIRCULAR+TO+THE+STATES&query=earnest+prayer&id=gw260534>

March 15, 2011

Would you please bow your heart with me in prayer? Our Heavenly Father, President Dwight D. Eisenhower proclaimed in 1955 these words, and I quote, “Without God, there can be no American form of government, nor American way of life. Recognition of the Supreme Being is the first, and the most basic, expressions of Americanism. Our founding fathers recognized this with God’s help, it will continue to be.” Every session of the House of Representatives and U.S. Senate begins with a prayer. Each House has its own full time chaplain. The 83rd Congress set aside a room in the capitol, just off the rotunda, for the private prayer and meditation of members of Congress. The focal point is a stained glass window showing George Washington kneeling in prayer, and behind him etched the words of Psalm 16, verse 1, “Preserve me, oh gods. For in thee do I put my trust.”⁹¹ The intimate relationships our Presidents and elected leaders have enjoyed with the living God inspire us today. And so we boldly affirm the words of our national motto, “In God, We Trust.”

As we pray today, we especially remember the nation of Japan. Last Friday was rocked by a 9.0 earthquake, and attending tsunami. Entire towns have been destroyed and the loss of human lives and those missing number into the tens of thousands. Their grief, and their loss, can only be imagined by us, and so we pray from our heart the comfort of our loving Lord, and his eternal strength will help to regulate their emotions as they endeavor to clean up this disaster and look into the future. May the injured sense the power of your presence.

We thank you again for your divine protection upon our country. May each of us demonstrate our gratitude by leading righteous lives that honor and please You. We invoke your divine wisdom and understanding upon our mayor, the members of our City Council, and their support staff. May our City Hall, and these Council chambers, be hallowed and filled with your abiding presence, and may our city be affected by your nearness in the lives of every citizen, and the guests who visit our beautiful city. This invocation we pray, in the name of Him who loves us, and who cares for us, our personal Savior and Lord . . . Amen.

⁹¹ The event portrayed in the window did not happen.

Psalm 16:1-1 “Keep me safe, my God, for in you I take refuge. I say to the Lord, ‘You are my Lord; apart from you I have no good thing.’ I say of the holy people who are in the land, “they are the noble ones in whom is all my delight.’ Those who run after other gods will suffer more and more. I will not pour out libations of blood to such gods or take up their names on my lips.”

April 5, 2011

Will you please bow your heart in prayer with me? Our Heavenly Father, national unrest has caused protestors to fill the cities of Egypt and topple a government of long standing. Tunisia has been in a bloody protest. Protest marches and killings are happening today in Syria. Unrest is being manifest in Jordan and Saudi Arabia. Libya is engaged in a bloody civil war to drive out a ruthless dictator of some 42 years, and many protestors are dying in Yemen as we pray this prayer. And our country is involved in two long wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, and Japan's recent 9.0 earthquake and the attending tsunami has created a nuclear disaster that appears to defy human solutions.

But at this time we are reminded of an event in the life of Conrad Hilton, who founded the Hilton hotel chain. During our fight with Communism in the Cold War, he published a prayer, a full-page prayer, in major magazines, July 4, 1952, across the length and breadth of our country, and I pray that prayer today, verbatim, 51 years later: "Our Father in Heaven, we pray that you save us from ourselves. That world that you have made for us to live in peace, we have made into an armed camp. We live in fear of war to come. We are afraid. We have turned from you to go our selfish way. We have broken Your Commandments, and denied Your Truth. We have left your altars to serve the false gods of money, and pleasure, and power. Forgive us, and help us. And now darkness gathers around us, and we are confused in all our counsels. Losing faith in you, we lose faith in ourselves. Inspire us with wisdom, all of us, of every color, every race, and every creed, to use our wealth and our strength to help our brother instead of destroying him. Help us to do Your Will as it is done in Heaven, and to be worthy of your promise of peace on earth. Fill us with new faith, new strength, and new courage that we may win the battle for peace. Be swift to save us, dear God, before the darkness falls."

And tonight, Our Father, in true humility we also pray: Lord, save us. May your invisible presence be sensed by all who work at City Hall, and each of us in these Council chambers. Only you have the solutions to the challenges and needs that are faced by our national leaders, and the members of our City Council, and so we invoke your wisdom and your understanding to fill their hearts and their minds with confidence to meet each challenge and each opportunity in which they and their staff will be involved. May righteousness so be a part of our daily conduct as to allow your continued blessings upon our City, upon our citizens, and the guests who visit our beautiful city. This invocation we pray, in the name of our Gracious Redeemer and Lord . . . Amen.

April 19, 2011

Will you please bow your heart in prayer with me? Our Heavenly Father, today is April 19th. This day is rich in the history of our great country. On this day in 1865, funeral services were conducted for our slain President, Abraham Lincoln. On this date in 1933, President Franklin D. Roosevelt announced the U.S. is going off of the gold standard, and this same day in 1951, General Douglas MacArthur was relieved of his command by President Harry Truman and then gave his farewell address to Congress in which he coined the phrase “old soldiers never die, they just fade away.” But perhaps the best known event was this day in 1775, the American Revolutionary War began in the villages of Lexington and Concord near Boston. Someone fired a shot as 700 British redcoat soldiers engaged 75 minutemen and in just a matter of seconds, eight dead and ten wounded minutemen lay on the Lexington Greens. But as the redcoats returned to Boston, minutemen lay in ambush behind trees and rocks and woodpiles. Snipers plagued these British soldiers and by nightfall 250 redcoats were killed or wounded, and the colonists had lost 90 minutemen. Hundreds of militiamen shouldered their muskets and marched to Boston, and the struggle for our American independence had begun. On this day, April 19, 1775, Americans fired the shot that was heard around the world.

Two years later, September 17, 1777, the Continental Congress convened. Leaders present that day included George Washington, John Rutledge, Patrick Henry and John Jay, the first Chief Justice of the Supreme Court. These were joined with Puritan patriots of New England in fervent prayer, and I pray today just a part of the prayer they prayed that day, and I quote: “Almighty God, may order and harmony and peace be effectually restored, and may justice and truth and righteousness prevail and flourish among the people.” John Adams wrote his wife Abigail, and said these words: “Their emotions as they turned, imploring heaven for divine interposition, was enough to melt a heart of stone.”⁹²

⁹² A search of the text of letters between John and Abigail Adams during the Revolution reveals no such quote; indeed, it does not appear in any original, discernable source. Several letters had similar sentiments regarding melting hearts, but not due to congressional prayers.

John Adams, July 7, 1774 letter to Abigail Adams, “I am engaged in a famous cause,—the cause of King, of Scarborough, *versus* a mob that broke into his house and rifled his papers and terrified him, his wife, children and servants in the night. The terror and distress, the distraction and horror of his family cannot be described by words or painted upon canvas. It is enough to move a statue, to melt a heart of stone, to read the story.”

John Adams, September 18, 1774 letter to Abigail Adams, “These votes were passed in full Congress with perfect unanimity. The esteem, the affection, the admiration for the people of Boston and the Massachusetts which were expressed yesterday, and the fixed determination that they should be supported, were enough to melt a heart of stone.”

John Adams, June 11, 1775 letter to Abigail Adams “Millions will be upon their knees at once before their great Creator, imploring his forgiveness and blessing; his smiles on American councils and arms.”

John Adams, July 7, 1775 letter to Abigail Adams, “Your description of the distresses of the worthy inhabitants of Boston and the other seaport towns is enough to melt a heart of stone.”

John Adams, June 26, 1776 letter to Abigail Adams, “Our misfortunes in Canada are enough to melt a heart of stone. The small-pox is ten times more terrible than Britons, Canadians, and Indians, together.”

John Adams, April 13, 1777 letter to Abigail Adams, “The graves of the soldiers who have been buried in this ground from the hospital and bettering house during the course of the last summer, fall, and winter, dead of the small-pox and camp diseases, are enough to make the heart of stone to melt away.”

And so today, Our Father, we repent of our sins, and we also pray that justice and truth and righteousness would prevail among our generations of Americans. May we seek to live justly and righteously, and be zealous for those things that honor God. Thank you for every member of our City Council and their support staff. Infuse in them your wisdom and your understanding. Give your solution for every difficulty and every opportunity that they face. We would invoke your invisible presence and Your Will to be the resource that you graciously grant to our leaders, whom we have elected. May proper decisions be made tonight, that will honor you and benefit the citizens and the guests of our beautiful city. This invocation we pray, in the name of our personal Savior and Lord . . . Amen.

May 3, 2011

Will you please bow your heart with me in prayer? We join tonight we countless fellow Americans, our Heavenly Father, who have celebrated the demise of Osama bin Laden this past week in Pakistan. Brave and skilled U.S. Navy Seals practiced untiringly for months and carried out this mission with military precision. Our President has declared our world is a better place because he is gone. President George Washington spoke so clearly to his day, and likewise to our day, when he declared, and I quote "No people can be bound to acknowledge and to endure the invisible hand which conducts the affairs of men more than those of the United States." So we offer to you, our God, sincere gratitude and sincere appreciation for your continued blessings and bountifulness and protection to our country and citizens. Continue to endow our intelligence community with your favor and with your skills, as they seek each moment to protect each of us as citizens at home and abroad. And tonight, we unite our hearts as a grateful people and boldly affirm our nation's motto, "In God, we trust."

Thursday, day after tomorrow, has been declared our National Day of Prayer by Congressional leadership. Even now, tonight, we bow our hearts in true humility, and ask your forgiveness of our personal sins, and our sins as a nation. Cause us to walk uprightly, and cause us to pursue righteousness, for the Bible teaches us from the writings of King Solomon, recorded in Proverbs 14:34, "Righteousness exalts a nation, but sin is a reproach and an embarrassment to any people."⁹³ And so tonight we invoke your invisible presence to hallow these City Council chambers. May your wisdom and your understanding be freely granted to our mayor, her fellow council members, and their support staff. We pray that this will be the resource that becomes the solution to each situation and each opportunity that we face. God, bless the citizens and the guests of our beautiful City of Pismo Beach. God, bless and protect America. This invocation we pray, in the wonderful name of our Savior and Lord . . . Amen.

⁹³ Proverbs 14:34 -

NIV "Righteousness exalts a nation, but sin is a disgrace to any people."

KJV "Righteousness exalteth a nation: but sin *is* a reproach to any people."

May 17, 2011

Please bow your heart with me in prayer. Our Heavenly Father, this coming Saturday, the third Saturday in May, we will observe Armed Forces Day. As a nation we have celebrated this patriotic holiday since 1950. This is a day to salute soldiers and all branches of the military and to remember that we would have no peace, no security, no freedom, not even United States, without them. On Memorial Day we honor America's war dead, on Veteran's day we honor those who have served in day's past, but on Armed Forces Day we honor those who are presently serving in our military around the globe. And so tonight, we honor our service men and women, serving our country so honorably in Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya, Pakistan and many other needy areas in position of peril. Cause each of them to understand we hold them in honored affection, and in exceptional esteem. Our Father we thank you for the extraordinary privilege to be citizens of this great nation. We are aware that the greatness of America is largely the result of our founding fathers honoring God and honoring the precepts of the Bible. And so tonight, we wholeheartedly join our national leaders of generations past and affirm our nation's motto, "In God, we trust."

Thank you for our mayor, for every member of the City Council, and for their capable support staff. In the midst of complicated situations, and in the midst of unresolved problems, deliver these our friends from any sense of futility. Cause them to feel the support of the prayers daily of many of the citizens of our great city, and above all, we invoke the uplift of your everlasting arms.⁹⁴ This invocation we pray, in the wonderful name of our Savior and Lord . . . Amen.

⁹⁴ Deuteronomy 33:26-27 – "There is no one like the God of Jeshurun, who rides on the heavens to help you and on the clouds in his majesty. The eternal God is your refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms. He will drive out your enemy before you, saying, 'Destroy him!' "

June 7, 2011

Will you please bow your heart in prayer with me? Our Heavenly Father, James Madison was the principal author of the U.S. Constitution; he was the father of the Bill of Rights; he was the fourth President of our great country. He said, "We have staked the whole future of American civilization, not upon the power of government, far from it. We have staked the future upon the capacity of each and all of us to govern ourselves according to the Ten Commandments of God."⁹⁵ These our fundamental expressions of God's design for man. To abandon our nation's moorings would be tragic. Today we join our hearts with the American founding fathers of the past whose vision and courage shaped the future of our country and in true repentance we ask you, our God, to protect, and to preserve, our beloved country, and cause our leaders to honor and to follow you. Grant to each of our leaders nationally, and locally, clear guidance and moral courage as they make decisions that directly influence our policies and our laws. It is recorded in Holy Scripture that King Solomon declared in 930 B.C., "God is a shield to those who put their trust in him,"⁹⁶ and again he said, "he who trusts in the Lord, shall prosper,"⁹⁷ and again he wrote, "Whoever trusts in the Lord, shall be safe and secure,"⁹⁸ and his father, King David, before him wrote, "He that trusteth in the Lord, mercy shall surround him all about."⁹⁹ Our forefathers read, and re-read, these portions of Holy Scripture, and they anchored their faith and their future to them. And, as a result, President Abraham Lincoln in 1863 had the phrase "In God, we trust." engraved on each U.S. Coin, and later this phrase was authorized to be printed on all U.S. paper currency, and in 1956, the United States Congress passed a resolution declaring our national motto to be, "In God, we trust." And so today, we boldly affirm our nation's motto, "In God, we trust," and it is in this spirit that we pray this invocation.

We are grateful that all of us may be a part of this public City Council meeting. We invoke your blessings upon council member. These are our friends. We have freely elected them to serve us, and we pray for them daily. Cause each of them to understand that they cannot properly discharge their responsibilities or their assigned tasks apart from your divine enablement. Bless them, and their support staff, with the strength and the security of your invisible presence, and grant to each of them your divine direction in their thought processes. This will bring proper solutions to each problem, and to each need, that they encounter, and will benefit each of us as citizens and guests alike in our beautiful City of Pismo Beach. This invocation we pray, in the name of our personal Savior and Lord . . . Amen.

⁹⁵ This quote is false, or at least not attributable to James Madison. David Barton is responsible for putting this quote into Christian pop-culture.

⁹⁶ Proverbs 30:5

⁹⁷ Proverbs 28:25

⁹⁸ Proverbs 29:25

⁹⁹ Psalm 32:10

June 21, 2011
(Reverend Paul Toms)

Thank you, will you join together please with a moment of prayer? Eternal God, Our Father in Heaven, we come out of a busy day with all kinds of activities twirl around us, and now we come to an important part of that day and we seek your blessing and your guidance, and your hand of understanding upon us. We thank you today, O God, for the community in which we live. Blessed of you, surrounded by beauty, quietness, success, challenges, blessings, understandings, people that are trying to do the right thing. We are thankful for every good and perfect gift that comes from you. You look after us; you provide for our needs; you bless us beyond measure. We think of people today that live in small towns or huge cities . . . in many parts of the world they have nothing to eat, they're destitute, and they're threatened by war and climactic changes. Lord we thank you for what you have done for us here. We don't deserve it, but we rejoice in it. Now we seek your hand of blessing¹⁰⁰ upon this council. We thank you for these people, we thank that which they represent, they represent a community, a community of fireman, policemen, who protect us and help us, a community of teachers, a community of parents, a community of children and youth, a community of people who are dedicated to the ways in which we can improve our life here in this place. Thank you for your help. We seek your guidance upon us. Make this a useful, and successful and helpful meeting today. Give us guidance from your hand. Help us to remember that, "Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord."¹⁰¹ We trust you, we ask you to help us and guide today in this meeting, through Christ our Lord, we ask it. Amen.

¹⁰⁰ See e.g., Isaiah 25:10, 66:14; Psalm 139:5.

¹⁰¹ Psalm 33:12

July 19, 2011

Will you bow your heart in prayer with me, please? Our Heavenly Father, we bow our hearts before you in the dignity of this city council meeting. The Scriptures teach us that “blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord.”¹⁰² We recognize that we are a nation under God. Our forefathers have handed us the torch of faith. You alone have given us our freedoms, our liberties, and our wonderful prosperity. Faith in God is not only our heritage, faith in God is our foundation. It was President George Washington who reminds us, “Morality and faith are the pillars of our republic”, but it is evident that the pillars are being eroded in our secular and permissive society. Too long we have neglected Your Word. Too long we have ignored Your Laws. We have tried to solve our problems without reference to you, but Your Word is clear. The Bible is simple, for it says, “Righteousness exalts a nation, but sin is a reproach and an embarrassment to any people.” We confess to you our sins and ask that we as a nation and we as individuals experience a moral and a spiritual restoration.

Our leaders in Washington, D.C., as well as our leaders in our beautiful city of Pismo Beach face burdens and responsibilities that at times are overwhelming. So we pray tonight that you would cause your divine guidance to rest mightily upon each of our leaders. In the moment of decision, give to them your uncompromising courage to do what is morally right with a cool head and a warm heart. We pray especially tonight for your divine understanding to rest strongly upon our U.S. intelligence community. We want to thank you for the terrorist plots upon our nation that have been uncovered. These would have inflicted severe damage to our citizens. Tonight we boldly declare our nation’s motto, “in God we trust.” No only is this truth engraved on our currency, but we pray that it may also be enshrined in our hearts and placed upon our lips. Surround us with your presence and your power as we find our security from your promise which says I will never leave you; I will never forsake you.

Tonight we would remember those so near and dear to our city. We pray for Kevin Rice, our City Manager, whose lovely mother fell just today and broke her nose. Will you help her and help Kevin with your mighty healing power? We will not forget to pray for Burt Brunwin, whom so many of us know, having seen him for so many years in our community, and the husband of our former Mayor Maryann Reiss. We pray for him today as he suffers from a heart disorder. Bring healing and health to him. We pray for so many shut-ins in our community such as Art Anthony and Elaine Anthony who have been such a part of our community and our council meetings but no longer are able to do so. We believe you to help them. Tonight may our mayor and her colleagues and their support staff rest confidently in your ability to give solutions to every problem they face tonight and in the future. And may our united desires always be that Your Word becomes our law and Your Will becomes our chosen path. This invocation we pray in the name of Him who Isaiah called the “Prince of Peace”¹⁰³ but whom we know as our personal Savior and Lord, in His name we pray. Amen.

¹⁰² Psalm 33:12

¹⁰³ Isaiah 9:6 – This is from the Old Testament, the belief that Jesus is the fulfillment of this “prophecy” is an exclusively Christian idea, “For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.”

August 2, 2011

Will you please bow your heart with me in prayer? Our Heavenly Father, President John F. Kennedy said in 1961 in his inaugural address, “The same beliefs our forbearers fought are still at issue around the globe, the belief that the rights of man come not from the generosity of the state but from the hand of God. This generation of Americans are unwilling to permit the slow undoing of this human right to which this nation has always been committed.”¹⁰⁴ And then he said, “We shall pay any price. We shall bear any burden. We shall meet any hardship. We shall support any friend. And we shall oppose any foe in order to assure the survival and the success of liberty. Let us go, therefore, to lead this land we love asking God’s blessing and God’s help but knowing that God’s work on Earth must truly be our own.” And then President Ronald Reagan said, “Freedom is never more than one generation away from extinction. We did not pass it to our children in the bloodstream. It must be fought for, protected, and handed to them to do the same.” How grateful we are for your abundant blessings, Our Father, you have bestowed upon our great country, the United States of America.

Just a few days ago the young man who planned to make two bombs in his apartment and then do great damage to his fellow Americans was apprehended and today is incarcerated behind bars in jail. The goodness of God to America and to its citizens is great and we are deeply appreciative. We join our hearts in praying the prayer of the songwriter, “Long may our land be bright with freedom’s holy light. Protect us by thy might, great God our king.” May our military men and women and their families experience your protection and your peace and your loving care. We pray today that our President and our national leaders who represent us will seek you and your guidance and rest securely in your ability to grant solutions to every problem that our nation faces today and in the future. Cause our united desires to always be that Your Will becomes our chosen path.¹⁰⁵

Tonight we invoke your divine presence to fill city hall and these council chambers. Grant that your wisdom will be granted to our mayor and to her colleagues and to their support staff for the matters at hand tonight and in the future. May we as Americans bless God, and may God bless America. Protect our great country. Protect our citizens of Pismo Beach, and protect our guests who visit our beautiful city. This invocation we pray in the name of our Loving Savior and Lord. Amen.

¹⁰⁴ This is a heavily edited version.

¹⁰⁵ “Chosen Path” is probably from Psalm 25 – “Show me your ways, O LORD, teach me your paths; guide me in your truth and teach me, for you are God my Savior... He guides the humble in what is right and teaches them his way... Who, then, is the man that fears the LORD? He will instruct him in the way chosen for him.”

August 16, 2011

Will you please bow your heart in prayer with me? Our Heavenly Father, each Wednesday morning at 8:00 a.m. when Congress is in session, a group of nearly 20 senators meet to pray and to seek the guidance of God. These weekly sessions are a tradition of more than 60 years. During these prayer times they ask God to guide their senatorial lives as well as their personal lives. The fact that so many of our great leaders have sought spiritual guidance from God the almighty is a testament to the power of prayer. Throughout our history, leaders and citizens have been involved in prayer to promote progress and to heal wounds, to enhance insight and to win moral victories. It was on January 27, 1983 that then President Ronald Reagan declared, "Prayer is the mainspring of the American spirit, a fundamental tenant of our people since before our republic was founded." As citizens we are sometimes aware of the chaotic unrest and upheaval around our world and in our own country. And so tonight we join our hearts with President George Washington and pray again the prayer that he prayed when he said, "Almighty God we make our earnest prayer that you will keep the United States of America in your holy protection."¹⁰⁶ So we pray tonight that you would cause President Obama, our leaders in Washington, and leaders in every state across our great nation to seek your wisdom and your guidance as they deal with domestic and foreign issues of urgency.

Tonight we especially remember many of our citizens who dwell in our city who in previous years were very active in the affairs of our city, but with the passing of years and physical infirmities, they can no longer participate. These are our friends and include such wonderful citizens as Art and Elaine Anthony, Robert and Jane Rice, Burt Brunwin and many others. May these sense tonight the power of your presence in their home as well as renewed strength in their bodies. And especially tonight we pray for our city council as they seek to properly govern our city. We are grateful for our Mayor, Shelly Higginbotham, her fellow council members, and the talented staff who support them. May each of us as citizens seek to keep the ways of the Lord and live righteously before you. As we do, your abundant blessings will continue upon the leaders of our city as well as each citizen and the guests who visit our beautiful city. This prayer of thanksgiving and invocation, we pray in the name of our personal Savior and Lord. Amen.

¹⁰⁶ This is not accurate. This was written by one of Washington's aides, David Cobb, in a June 8, 1783 letter to the governors of the states, "I now make it my earnest prayer, that God would have you, and the State over which you preside, in his holy protection, that he would incline the hearts of the Citizens to cultivate a spirit of subordination and obedience to Government, to entertain a brotherly affection and love for one another, for their fellow Citizens of the United States at large, and particularly for their brethren who have served in the Field, and finally, that he would most graciously be pleased to dispose us all, to do Justice, to love mercy, and to demean ourselves with that Charity, humility and pacific temper of mind, which were the Characteristicks of the Divine Author of our blessed Religion, and without an humble imitation of whose example in these things, we can never hope to be a happy Nation." *The writings of George Washington from the original manuscript sources 1732-1799*, (ed. John C. Fitzpatrick, U.S. Gov't Print. Off.) Vol. 26, page 496.

September 6, 2011

Let us bow our hearts in prayer. Our Heavenly Father, Karl Marx once said, “If we can rip away history from any people, they will easily be conquered.”¹⁰⁷ We have learned that a bouquet of beautiful roses soon die because they are cut off from their roots. Ethics, morals, standards of behavior, these are not to be determined by a majority of people but by God himself. It was President Harry Truman who said, “The fundamental basis of this nation’s laws were given to Moses on the mountain. The fundamental basis of our bill of rights comes from the teaching of Exodus, Isaiah, St. Matthew and St. Paul.” Let none of us believe the misconception that freedom is a license to sin or to go our own way or to do as we wish, but help us always to understand that freedom is a responsibility and power to do what is right, for no license is secure when removed from the roots that have been established by God. Our U.S. Constitution was written by moral people. It was written for moral people, and it will work for no other people. Our forefathers conceived freedom in their heart and they wrote on our documents and yet freedom is not free. Our freedoms cannot survive without the personal responsibility and our courage and our eternal vigilance. So help each of our civic leaders and each of us as citizens to stand firm. Let us never be intimidated by numbers, but cause us to be men and women of conviction who value moral righteousness above public acclaim. Grant the light of your irresistible presence to avail so that no unrighteousness can prevail. As loyal citizens, we boldly proclaim our nation’s motto, “in God we trust.”

And we invoke your favor upon the city of Pismo Beach as we confess and forsake our sins. Release your blessings upon each of our citizens, all who work at city hall and serve our community. Give your eternal wisdom to our friends who have freely elected to serve on city council. These are our friends. For these we pray daily by name. Help them as they endeavor to make Pismo Beach a better place to live and to enjoy life. And especially this evening, give your divine guidance to our mayor, each council member, and their support staff. As next Sunday, September 11th draws near, we think of the terrorist attack on our nation and its devastation and killing of nearly 3000 of our fellow citizens. We pray for all who yet grieve today because of the unnecessary passing of their loved ones. We also honor the memory of the firefighters and the policemen who gave their lives willingly so that others might be saved. Thank you for your protection upon our land since that fateful day. Long may our land be bright with freedom’s holy light. Protect us by thy might, great God our King. This invocation we pray in the name of our personal Savior and Lord. Amen.

¹⁰⁷ No source can be located for this quote, it appears fictional.

September 20, 2011

Will you please bow your heart with me in prayer? Our Heavenly Father, two great U.S. Presidents of past generations continue to inspire and motivate us today. They are George Washington and Abraham Lincoln. These were men who honored God and led our nation in righteous ways. Although our nation faced extremely troubled times, they led in integrity and in truth. They were men of character who were concerned about doing right more than securing high approval ratings. They read often the Holy Scriptures and found direction and range of motion in them. They were men of prayer and understood that they were answerable to you. As such, they were courageous to walk in obedience to what you required of them. The Bible teaches us “blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord.”¹⁰⁸ Give to our leaders the wisdom to know what is right and the will to do it. Cause us to understand the words of Lincoln when he said, “I have been driven many times upon my knees by the overwhelming conviction that I had nowhere else to go. My own wisdom seemed to me insufficient for the day.” And so tonight we boldly affirm our nation’s motto, “in God we trust.” Let us never forget that God promises security and stability to all who put their trust in him, and history teaches us that God chooses human instruments through whom he can infuse his life and his wisdom with spiritual and civil authority.

We are grateful for our city council and their support staff. Infuse in them your wisdom and your understanding. Many problems they face seem to defy a solution. But your wisdom causes confusion to fade into harmony. When our hearts and our minds are tuned to God in child-like trust, it is then that God the invisible enables us to complete any assignment that he entrusts to us and to do it with courage and successfulness. Tonight we invoke your irresistible presence and will to become the resource that you give to each of the leaders of our city. May proper decisions be made tonight that will honor you and benefit the citizens and guests of our beautiful city. This invocation we pray in the wonderful name of our personal Savior and Lord. Amen.

¹⁰⁸ Psalm 33:12

October 4, 2011
(Dr. Paul Toms)

Eternal God, Our Father, how grateful we are for all your good gifts to us. You protect us and keep us and help us live in a wonderful place. You guide us in your sovereignty and we rejoice and return our thanks to you. We pray today that you will bless our nation. We pray that you will grant that our ideas and our aspirations will be in accordance with your perfect will. Grant unto us in this community just government and just laws and grant unto us a good education system. Grant unto us justice in our relationship to each other. May we please have a spirit of service in helping each other day by day. Have mercy on us. Bless our humanity and its weaknesses. Deliver us from evil¹⁰⁹ and encourage us as we try to do Your Will. We have come to a very important part today of our community life, and we pause for a moment and give you thanks that we are able to do this. There are places in the world where this is not allowed. We are grateful for the freedom that is ours. Bless we pray and help us today in this meeting. We are thankful for people who encourage us and protect us through police department and fire people who serve us in our teaching situation and our doctors and our nurses and all kinds of good neighbors. We are thankful for what you do for us. We seek now your blessing upon this council meeting. Decisions have to be made. They will reflect upon our lives, our money, our future, our children. We commend it all into your loving care and pray that these people may be given divine inspiration and understanding and help today as they make their decisions. We commend this meeting and these your friends into your loving care through Christ, our Lord, we ask it. Amen.

¹⁰⁹ This is a quote from the Lord's prayer, which comes from Matthew 6:9-13 *KJV*:

"After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen."

It is interesting that this Book and Chapter were quoted, but verse 5 may be more apt: "***And when thou prayest, thou shalt not be as the hypocrites are: for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men...***"

November 1, 2011

Will you please bow your heart with me in prayer? Our Heavenly Father, our third President, Thomas Jefferson spoke to our nation in 1781 and he said these words, “God who gave us life, gave us liberty. Can be the liberties of a nation be thought secure when we have removed their only firm basis, a conviction in the minds of the people that these liberties are a gift of God?”¹¹⁰ And, 112 years later, our 24th President, Grover Cleveland, gave these words at his second inaugural address, “Above all I know there is a Supreme Being who rules the affairs of men and whose goodness and mercy have always followed the American people and I know he will not turn from us if we will humbly and reverently seek his powerful aid.” It is in this spirit tonight that we pray this invocation. We are so grateful that our United States Congress passed a resolution in 1954 stating we are one nation under God, and two years later in 1956 they stated that our national motto shall be, “in God we trust.” And so we boldly affirm tonight that in God we trust.

We invoke your blessings upon the city of Pismo Beach and all who live here and all the wonderful guests who visit our beautiful city. Release your blessings upon all who work at city hall and those who serve in our community, in the police vehicles, and in the fire trucks, and we see the pickup trucks going all over town and many men working on projects, and we stop so often and just greet them and let them know how much we appreciate their faithful service to us as citizens of this community. Cause each one to sense the strength and the security of your invisible presence. Give your eternal wisdom to our friends whom we have elected to serve on our city council. From day to day help them as they endeavor to make Pismo Beach a better place to live and to enjoy life. Especially tonight, give your divine wisdom in the thought processes of our Mayor, Shelly Higginbotham, and each of her four council colleagues. May the decisions that are made honor you and be for the betterment of all of our citizens and our guests. This invocation we pray in the name of our wonderful personal Savior and Lord. Amen.

¹¹⁰ Jefferson actually wrote this in two separate places more than 10 years apart.

- 1) “The god who gave us life gave us liberty...” is from *A Summary View of the Rights of British America* (1774). “But let them [members of the parliament of Great Britain] not think to exclude us from going to other markets, to dispose of those commodities which they cannot use, nor to supply those wants which they cannot supply. Still less let it be proposed that our properties within our own territories shall be taxed or regulated by any power on earth but our own. The god who gave us life gave us liberty at the same time: the hand of force may destroy, but cannot disjoin them.”
- 2) “...can the liberties ...Gift of God” is from *Notes on the State of Virginia*, Query XVIII (1785). This is a comment on the country’s acceptance of slavery: “For in a warm climate, no man will labour for himself who can make another labour for him. This is so true, that of the proprietors of slaves a very small proportion indeed are ever seen to labor. And can the liberties of a nation be thought secure when we have removed their only firm basis, a conviction in the minds of the people that these liberties are the gift of God? That they are not to be violated but with his wrath? Indeed I tremble for my country when I reflect that God is just: that his justice cannot sleep for ever . . .”

November 15, 2011

Will you please bow your heart with me in prayer? Our Heavenly Father, we are grateful for the privilege of the public gathering in our Pismo Beach council meeting tonight. We have elected our mayor and her colleagues to our city council, and now in obedience to Holy Scripture we support and undergird them with our prayers and our supplications in order that we may live a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness.¹¹¹ Our U.S. history has taught us that Justice John Jay, the first U.S. Supreme Court Chief Justice authorized prayer to be prayed to open each U.S. Court session,¹¹² and it is in this spirit we offer to you our prayer of invocation tonight.

We pray for our city council publicly, having prayed for them daily by name in our personal prayers. May each member of our city council accept their responsibility to lead our city and each of us as citizens with single-mindedness of purpose and humility of spirit, for only then can we confidently anticipate the favor and the guidance of our eternal God. We pause tonight just to say thank you for the spirit of unity and peace that we enjoy in our city hall and in our city. Guide us with your wisdom tonight to make wise decisions that will honor God and better conditions for the citizens of our beautiful city of Pismo Beach. With your almighty help we can and we will resolve every problem and situation that confronts us. Thank you for hearing our prayer. This invocation we pray in the name of our wonderful Savior and Lord. Amen.

¹¹¹ 1 Timothy 2:1-2.

¹¹² According to John Adams, "When the Congress first met, Mr. Cushing made a motion that it should be opened with prayer. It was opposed by Mr. Jay of New York, and Mr. Rutledge, of South Carolina, because we were so divided in religious sentiments..." John Adams, Sept. 16, 1774 letter to Abigail Adams. Both Jay and Cushing served on the first Supreme Court.

December 6, 2011

Will you please bow your heart in prayer with me? Our Heavenly Father, the story of Christmas is the greatest story ever heard and ever told by mortal man.¹¹³ More than 2000 Christmas days have come and gone, but his story remains sacred memory. The names of Caesars and pharaohs and emperors and kings of all ages have come and gone and they are just a thought on the pages of history. Their powerful armies are dust on the land and their mighty navies rust on the ocean floor, but the message of the baby that was born in Bethlehem's manger continues to live on.¹¹⁴

Today, the celebration of His birthday causes traffic jams in New York City and Tokyo and Rio de Janeiro. Every event in history and every event in our calendar is dated by how many years since this baby boy was born in Bethlehem. His birth divides all time into B.C. (Before Christ) and A.D. (Anno Domini, the year of his dominion).¹¹⁵ Google has 373 million references to Christmas. Little wonder our U.S. Congress 141 years ago, in 1870, by federal resolution, declared Christmas a national holiday. We would pray tonight, oh Heavenly Father, that the peace that He brings to mankind would become a reality in the hearts and minds of all those in the Middle East, in Iraq and Afghanistan, and Iran and the Korean Peninsula. In the truest sense, "let Earth receive her King." The message of Christmas is evident in the lives of our citizens throughout Pismo Beach. In many stores, favorite Christmas carols sing out words like, "Silent Night, Holy Night," "Oh Come All Ye Faithful, joyful and triumphant, and "Joy to the World, the Lord is Come." The strains of music and these words fill the air as they fill our hearts.

Christmas teaches us that God is able and willing to bring life into the most barren settings and bring hope into the most unpromising situations and bring hope into all of life's circumstances for each of us today. Thank you for your many gifts to us and our city this Christmas season. Thank you for the rains that have fallen recently in our area, causing the hills and countryside to begin to turn green. Thank you for our Mayor, Shelly Higginbotham, and our Mayor Pro Tem, Chris Vardas, and all of their colleagues for a united city council and their wonderful support staff. We would invoke your guidance through their skills and their talents, as they dedicate them to make Pismo Beach a better place and a better place to live in 2011 and onward. This invocation we pray in the name of our personal Savior and Lord. Amen.

¹¹³ The Christmas story comes from only one source, the Christian bible. Specifically from Matthew, chapters 1 and 2, and Luke chapters 1 and 2.

¹¹⁴ Luke 2:12.

¹¹⁵ This is not accurate. Buddhism, Islam, Judaism, Baha'i and Hindu all have their own calendar system. Some Eastern Christian sects use the Julian calendar instead of the Gregorian. Ethiopia, Iran, China, and Thailand, both use their own calendars

December 20, 2011

Will you bow your hearts with me in prayer, please? Our Heavenly Father, it is Christmastime in our city and surrounding communities. Stores and shops are filled with carols and the beautiful music of Christmas. We thank you that you have prospered so many of us that we may purchase gifts for those we love and who are so dear to us. Allow your favor to rest upon our business community who have planned so earnestly and worked so diligently to sell their goods and services and send sales tax and bed tax to our city treasury. For your favor we are grateful. Let us understand anew that the message of Christmas simple and beautiful. God wants to enter into all of life's circumstances. And God chooses a beginning point for his wonder workings in human beings.

Everybody is important, but tonight we pray for those families among us whose lives have been so gravely impacted by the economic slowdown. Will you graciously provide for them, as only you know how to do. At this Christmastime we pray for all of our military personnel as they serve the noble cause of freedom and liberty around the world. May each one who is deployed be safe and secure and may their loved ones have God's comfort and presence as families are separated one from another, and we would pause to say thank you, and our president announced this week that the nine year war in Iraq had formally come to an end. For this we thank you. When our next city council meets, the Christmas lights will be out. Christmas trees will have faded. Christmas ribbons will be forgotten and Christmas lights will be packed away, but the babe that was born in Bethlehem's manger will yet remain.¹¹⁶ He will comfort when we are sorrowful. He will provide meaning when life's seasons seem so useless and so empty. He will bring light when the way seems dark and he will provide joy when circumstances are grim, and long after the carols have been hushed and long after the gift certificates have been cashed, the baby that was born so long ago in Bethlehem's manger will continue to bring happiness and satisfaction, for His Name is above all other names. His Reign is above all other rulers. His Lordship is above all other authorities. His Words are above all other voices, and his truth is above all other opinions. His love is above all other affections.

Tonight we would invoke your divine presence. Fill city hall daily with your presence and fill these council chambers tonight with your presence. Give your wisdom to our mayor, her colleagues, and their support staff for the matters that are at hand tonight and in the future. We would thank you, Lord, for the graciousness of George Edes to serve so many years as the chief financial officer for our city. Tonight is the last night that George will be with us in a city council meeting, for he will be retiring at the end of this month. Bless him with health and strength and we would ask, Lord, that you would give us someone in his place who will be as skilled and steadfast as George has been these past years. God, bless America. Protect our great country. Protect the citizens of Pismo Beach and the guests who visit our beautiful city. This invocation we pray this holy Christmas season in the name of Him who was born in Bethlehem's manger and who has become our personal Savior and Lord. Amen.

¹¹⁶ Luke 2:12.

January 17, 2012
(Dr. Paul Toms)

Thank you, madam mayor. It is a pleasure to be with you once again. I am glad to fill in for my friend Paul Jones. It's hard to fill in for him, as you know, but we'll do what we can. So join with me if you will, please, in a moment of prayer. Eternal God, our Heavenly Father, we pause to remember people who have been in our midst. We are aware of the quickly passing events of life. We are aware of the blessings that we have. We are aware of how it is necessary to make the most of what we have day by day. We think you for bringing us together here in this important meeting.

We seek your hand of blessing¹¹⁷ upon us. We pray for our nation today. We are grateful for this country. We are grateful for its past and its history. We are grateful for people who lead us. We thank you for the opportunities that stretch before us, but we need your help. People are telling us every day these days how they can help us and direct us. We need guidance and direction. We need help from your loving hand.¹¹⁸ Bless us as a nation. Thank you for our community. Thank you for the people that surround us. Thank you for the people that help us. Thank you for the people that encourage us. We are grateful specifically for this community that is represented here in the room today.

We seek your blessing upon this council and other people who are here on official business. We are grateful for people who give of themselves in dedication, devotion. We are thankful for people in the police department. We are thankful for people in the fire department, for our school teachers, and others who influence us and help us. We are thankful for families. We rejoice in the sounds of little children's voices here. We seek your blessing upon our families. Watch over them. Help them. Bless our youth and our children. Bring them up, help them; they face all kinds of challenges. We pray that we as older people may be good models and good influences in their lives. Bless us now as we go through these activities today. Give wisdom and understanding. Give a sense of peace and joy to the members of the council that they may find satisfaction in what they do and that their efforts may be well received and blessed of Your Hand.¹¹⁹ Guide us now and keep us and encourage us by your wisdom and by your love. We thank you for all that you do, and we pray these things through Christ our Lord. Amen.

¹¹⁷ See e.g., Isaiah 25:10, 66:14; Psalm 139:5.

¹¹⁸ See next note

¹¹⁹ 1 Chronicles 4:10 – “Jabez cried out to the God of Israel, ‘Oh, that you would bless me and enlarge my territory! Let Your Hand be with me, and keep me from harm so that I will be free from pain.’ And God granted his request.” The Christian bible continually references its god as “Your Hand”. See, e.g., Psalm 21:7-8 “For the king trusts in the Lord; through the unfailing love of the Most High he will not be shaken. Your hand will lay hold on all your enemies; your right hand will seize your foes.”; Psalm 74:10-11 “How long will the enemy mock you, O God? Will the foe revile your name forever? Why do you hold back your hand, your right hand? Take it from the folds of your garment and destroy them!”; Micah 5:9 “Your hand will be lifted up in triumph over your enemies, and all your foes will be destroyed.”; Psalm 139:5, 10; Deuteronomy 3:24; Isaiah 26:11; 1 Kings 8:24; 2 Chronicles 6:15; Acts 4:29-30; Psalm 17:14; Job 1:11; Job 10:7.

February 7, 2012

Will you please bow your heart in prayer with me? Our Heavenly Father, George Washington, the first president of our great country said, "It is the duty of nations to acknowledge the providence of almighty God, to obey his will, to be grateful for his benefits, and to humbly implore his protection and favor." Later, James Madison, the fourth president of our great country said, "Before any man can be a member of civil society, he must be considered as a subject of the governor of the universe." The founding fathers of our country believed wholeheartedly the words of the Holy Scriptures, which are recorded in Psalm 33. "The Word of the Lord is right. The Earth is full of the goodness of the Lord. Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord."¹²⁰ Because of the legacy left to succeeding generations, we understand more fully why the U.S. Congress voted the motto of our nation to be, "in God we trust." And as American citizens of this generation, we proclaim forthrightly in God we trust.

Cause us, Lord, to be ever mindful that no one is secure in their own accomplishments. Our positions, our achievements never make us invincible. God promises to us security and stability to those who choose to put their trust and their confidence in him. May we always seek to live justly and to live righteously and to be zealous for the things that honor God. Thank you for each member of our city council and their capable support staff. Infuse in them your wisdom and your understanding. Give your solution to every difficulty and to every opportunity that they face. We tonight invoke your irresistible presence and will to become the source that you graciously grant to each of the elected leaders of our city. May proper decisions be made tonight that will honor you and benefit the citizens and the guests of our beautiful city. This invocation we pray in the name of our personal Savior and Lord. Amen.

¹²⁰ Psalm 33:4-12

February 21, 2012

Will you bow your heart with me in prayer? Our Heavenly Father, our beloved nation, the United States of America, was founded by men whose think and whose founding documents were influenced by the Bible, the Holy Scriptures of God. Our Declaration of Independence identifies the source of all authority and all rights as their creator. Individual human rights were got-given, not man made. There was no king or established religion that could stand in the way of human liberty and human dignity. These are unique Judeo-Christian ideals. The 55 delegates to the Constitutional Convention represented the religious sentiments of those who shaped the political foundations of our great nation. They were deeply influenced by a biblical view of mankind and government. Their personal writings declare their strong religious beliefs and their faith. Their leadership in establishing and guiding organizations such as the American Bible Society gives overwhelming evidence of their commitment to righteousness.¹²¹ Little wonder, under the leadership of Dwight D. Eisenhower, the Congress passed a resolution declaring our nation's motto to be, "in God we trust." And tonight as American citizens we boldly affirm in God we trust.

We acknowledge your gracious hand and your guiding hand in our nation and in our beautiful city of Pismo Beach. We invite God's blessing to rest upon our mayor and the members of our city council. We have elected these, our fellow citizens, and we pray for them daily. Our city council and their skilled support staff seek earnestly to make Pismo Beach a better place to live and to enjoy life with our families and our friends, and tonight allow the power of your eternal presence to cause their thought processes to respond to your divine guidance. May the decisions that are made tonight honor you and be for the betterment of all our citizens and guests who visit our city. This invocation we pray in the name of our personal Savior and Lord. Amen.

March 6, 2012

Will you please bow your heart in prayer with me? Our Heavenly Father, before Moses, the leader of Israel, had the Israelis enter the Promised Land he reminded them of the choice that God had put before them. In Deuteronomy chapter 30, verse 15 the Holy Scriptures record, “See? I’ve set before you today life and good, death and evil, and that I command you today to love the Lord your God, to walk in his ways, to keep his commandments, his statutes, and his judgments that you may live and multiply and the Lord your God will bless you in the land which you go to possess.”¹²² God is asking America to make the same choice today in order for us to rebuild America’s crumbling moral foundation. God has made it clear that he will continue to bless our land if we choose to love him and walk in his ways. As a nation and as individuals, we can stand before almighty God and say to him, we love you Lord, and as a people we will walk in your ways and keep your commandments.

Daniel Webster, the great American statesman, urged us as a nation under God, “to steadfastly guard our foundation of righteousness.” And in 1852, he declared, “If we reject religious instruction and authority, if we violate the rules of eternal justice, if we trifle with the injunction of morality, if we recklessly destroy the political constitution which holds us together, no man can tell how suddenly a catastrophe may overwhelm us that shall bury all our glory in profound obscurity.” And God has made it clear he will continue to bless our land as long as we choose to love him and walk in his ways. And it is in this spirit that we boldly our nation’s motto, “in God we trust.” The words of King Solomon motivate us tonight, for he said, “The Lord loves those who pursue righteousness, for he pursues righteousness finds life and prosperity and honor.”¹²³

And in heartfelt humility, we invoke your continued favor upon our nation and upon our city. Release your divine wisdom to be graciously bestowed upon each member of our city council and each dedicated staff members. Fill these council chambers as well as each home in our beloved city with the peace and the power of your divine nearness. May each individual citizen and each guest of our city feel the impact of your irresistible presence. Tonight, may God be honored and each of us benefit in all that is said and done. This invocation we pray in the name of our wonderful Savior and Lord. Amen.

¹²² The following verses continue, “But if your heart turns away and you are not obedient, and if you are drawn away to bow down to other gods and worship them, I declare to you this day that you will certainly be destroyed. You will not live long in the land you are crossing the Jordan to enter and possess.”

¹²³ This is a n amalgamation of Proverbs 15:9 and Proverbs 21:21

Proverbs 15:9 “The Lord detests the way of the wicked but he loves those who pursue righteousness.”

Proverbs 21:21 “He who pursues righteousness and love finds life, prosperity and honor.”

March 20, 2012

Will you please bow your heart with me in prayer? Our Heavenly Father, we bow our heads and our hearts in humble gratitude for the needed rain that you sent to our area this past weekend. Thank you that it did not come as hard pelting rain but rather it came somewhat gentle and the ground has received and contained it. The native hillsides are green everywhere. This speaks to our hearts of your loving care for us and our needs and we are so grateful.

Tonight we are reminded of the prayer prayed by Admiral Barry Black who is a retired U.S. Navy Chief of Chaplains and the current Chaplain of the United States Senate. He prayed this prayer more recently, "Lord, thank you for this great land and for our freedom. May the liberty you bring keep our feet in right paths. Eternal Lord God today and always give us wisdom to perceive you. Give us intelligence to understand your ways. Give us diligence to seek you. Give us patience to wait on you. Give us eyes to see you. Give us a heart to meditate on you. And give us a life to proclaim you. Give our leaders in Washington, D.C. and throughout our land the desire to seek your wisdom and the courage to follow your guidance so that your ways will become our chosen paths." We earnestly pray that you will help us to become once again a "nation whose God is the Lord."¹²⁴ From time to time many unfavorable circumstances exist in the lives of citizens in our community. May they receive strength by the promise of Holy Scripture as recorded in Psalm 35:15, which says, "The eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous and his ears are open to their cry."¹²⁵

We are most grateful for each member of our city council and their distinguished staff. Infuse in their hearts and minds your design wisdom and life with spiritual and civil authority. We join with each of them in invoking your divine presence to be the resource that becomes the solution to every situation we face. God bless the citizens and the guests of our beautiful city, and God bless and protect America, our beloved country. This invocation we pray in the name of our Blessed Savior and Lord. Amen.

¹²⁴ Psalm 33:12

¹²⁵ Psalm 34:15 actually, Psalm 35:15 reads "But when I stumbled, they gathered in glee; attackers gathered against me when I was unaware. They slandered me without ceasing."

April 3, 2012

Will you bow your heart with me in prayer? Our Heavenly Father, President John F. Kennedy said in his 1961 inaugural address, “The same beliefs our fore-bearers fought are still at issue around the globe, the belief that the rights of man come not from the generosity of the state but from the hand of God. This generation of Americans are unwilling to permit the slow undoing of these human rights to which this nation has always been committed. We shall pay any price. We shall bear any burden. We shall meet any hardship. We shall support any friend. We shall oppose any foe that would assure the success and the survival of our liberties. Let us go forth to lead the land we love asking God’s blessing and help but knowing that God’s work on Earth must truly be our own.” Then President Ronald Reagan joined in just a little later declaring, “Freedom is never more than a generation away from extinction. We did not pass it to our children in the bloodstream. It must be fought for and protected and handed to them to do the same.” How grateful we are for your abundant blessings which you have bestowed upon our great country, the United States of America. We ask that you will give our leaders the desire to seek your wisdom and the courage to follow your guidance. Help us to be a nation whose God is the Lord.¹²⁶ The goodness of God to American and its citizens is great, and we deeply appreciate them.

And so we pray, long may our land be bright with freedom’s holy light. Protect us by thy might, great God our king. May our military men and women and their families experience your protection and your peace and your loving care. May our President and our national leaders who represent us seek you in your guidance and rest securely in your ability to grant solutions to every problem that our nation faces today and in the future. Cause our united desire to always be that Your Will becomes our chosen path. Tonight we invoke your divine presence to fill city hall and to fill these county chambers. Grant your wisdom to our mayor and to her colleagues and to their support staff for the matters at hand tonight as well as in the future. May we as Americans bless God. And may God bless America. Protect our great country. Protect the citizens of Pismo Beach and protect our guests who visit our beautiful city. This invocation we pray in the name of our personal Savior and Lord. Amen.

¹²⁶ Psalm 33:12

April 17, 2012

Our Heavenly Father, President Abraham Lincoln said on March 30, 1863 “it is the duty of nations as well as individuals to own their dependence upon the overruling power of God.” And the Holy Scriptures announced this sublime truth proven by all history that those nations only are blessed “whose God is the Lord.”¹²⁷ We as a nation have been recipients of the choice bounties of heaven. We have preserved and persevered in peace and prosperity, but we have forgotten the gracious hand that preserved us and multiplied us and enriched us and strengthened us. Societies decay when their foundation principles erode. Great nations die from within. It is the moral influence and the failure of the country to remember what made it great. We are convinced tonight that we, too, must humble ourselves as individuals and as a nation. It is vital that we ask your forgiveness of our sins and our failures, and we declare tonight that our great and beloved nation, the United States of America, will continue to be blessed only as we allow the Lord to be our God. So, boldly tonight we affirm our nation’s motto, “in God we trust.”

In obedience to Holy Scripture, we invoke your divine presence and wisdom upon our mayor and her colleagues and their support staff. We understand that good government is a principle that originated at the heart of God, and so may your wisdom and courage be given to each of them to make good decisions. Grant that each decision will honor God and be for the betterment of all the citizens of Pismo Beach and the wonderful guests that visit our beautiful city. Thank you for Lori who has come once again, having worked here so many years, and now these last months has come to serve as our interim city clerk. We love her and appreciate her. Bless her as again she enters retirement. We thank you for hearing and responding to our prayer. This invocation we pray in the name of our personal Savior and Lord. Amen.

¹²⁷ Psalm 33:12

May 1, 2012

Will you please bow your heart with me in prayer, please? Our Heavenly Father, President Calvin Coolidge, our 30th President of the United States said, "If American democracy is to remain the greatest hope of humanity, it must continue abundantly in the faith of the Bible." The leaders of our nation strongly believe this and in 1952 by a joint resolution of Congress, the first Thursday of May each year was designated as a National Day of Prayer. This day is designated as a day of focused prayer for our nation. The day after tomorrow is May 3rd, the first Thursday of May. Each of us are privileged to be a part in our own time and our own way in the annual observance of this National Day of Prayer. God is true to his character. As we seek his faith in prayer and respond to the Holy Scriptures, it will change the way we think and the way we behave. Sin and spiritual decline removes the favor of God, but if we repent, God will forgive and pardon our sins and replace them with his righteousness in our lives. Each day we rest upon the unfailing promise recorded in Isaiah, chapter 41, verse 10: "Fear not, for I am with you. Be not dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you. I will help you. I will uphold you with my righteous right hand." Knowing this, we confidently affirm our nation's motto, "in God we trust."

And in heartfelt humility, we ask tonight for your protection and your favor upon our nation and its citizens. We especially pray for those who are ill and shut-in. We also remember those who are being adversely affected by the economic slowdown in our nation. We ask your divine presence and power to comfort and to strengthen them and their families. We invoke your divine wisdom to be bestowed on each member of our city council. We ask you to provide solutions to each problem and each need that they face tonight. We declare our responsibility to pray for your leadership in the lives and the decisions of our council and their support. Fill city hall and these council chambers with the peace and the power of your divine presence. May each home and each citizen and each guest of our city sense the impact of your presence in our city. This invocation we pray in the name of our personal Savior and Lord. Amen.

May 15, 2012

Will you bow your heart with me in prayer, please? Our Heavenly Father, Karl Marx once said, “If we can rip history away from people, they will easily be conquered.”¹²⁸ We know that a bouquet of roses die when they are cut off from their roots, and we clearly understand that no liberty and no freedom is secure when our roots are removed, those roots that have been determined by God, for ethics and morals and standards of behavior, these are determined by God. They are not determined by a majority of people. Dr. Robert George of Princeton University said, “Societies decay when their foundational principles erode. Great nations die from within. It is the moral influence, the failure of the country to remember what made it great. History shows that when countries allow their societies to become amoral, they allow different kinds of immoral activities and lifestyles to flourish, and there is a price that’s paid, not just by the individuals engaged in that lifestyle, but by society as a whole.”¹²⁹

So enable each of us, Our Father, to stand firm in our convictions, understanding that it is an honor and a privilege to stand for right. May the deep abiding sense of God’s holiness and God’s righteousness always determine our sets of right and wrong. Tonight, we strongly affirm our nation’s motto, “in God we trust.” Help us to maintain this firm conviction in our hearts and in our lifestyles. Only then we will not be helpless or defenseless as we face the future with confidence.

We thank you for the privilege of meeting tonight in this city council meeting, conducted openly in public for the benefit of our citizens. We ask that your invisible presence will fill our city hall daily as well as our council chambers tonight. We pray that each of our council members will understand that we love them and that we have freely elected them to serve and to govern us. We pray for them publicly tonight, because we have prayed for them by name daily in our private prayers. Grant that our mayor, our city council members, and their support staff will be generously given your divine wisdom and guidance for the matters that are at hand tonight and in the future. God, bless and protect America, our leaders, and our military forces that are deployed around the world. God, bless and protect our citizens of Pismo Beach and the guests who visit our beautiful city. We invoke your divine leadership tonight upon all who lead our city. This invocation we pray in the name of our personal Savior and Lord. Amen.

¹²⁸ No source can be located for this quote, it appears fictional.

¹²⁹ Dubbed by the New York Times “this country’s most influential conservative Christian thinker.” David D. Kirkpatrick, “The Conservative-Christian Big Thinker,” *The New York Times*, Dec. 16, 2009, available at http://www.nytimes.com/2009/12/20/magazine/20george-t.html?pagewanted=all&_r=0.

June 5, 2012
(Reverend Paul Toms)

Join with me please in a moment of prayer. Eternal God, Our Father in heaven, we give you thanks today for your good gifts to us. It is proper and fitting that in the midst of intricate and important discussions we should pause and invoke your presence. The Scripture says that “if any man lack wisdom, let him ask of God who gives to all men liberally.”¹³⁰ We need your wisdom. We need your Will. We need to understand what is right and proper and fitting, and that is not always easy to discover, so we turn to you for help. Bless this council and all who in leadership here today. We commend them into your care. We thank you for people who give of themselves and their backgrounds, their training, and their interests. We seek your blessing upon us. Thank you for all that you do. We are grateful for our community. We are grateful for the people who help us in service, for our police people, our fire department people, and our school people who take care of our children. We thank you for all who give of themselves in service and activity. Bless this community and bless this meeting today and guide us and direct us, we pray, through Christ our Lord. Amen.

¹³⁰ James 1:5

June 19, 2012

Will you bow your heart in prayer with me, please? Our Eternal God, Noah Webster has been called the father of American scholarship and education. He gave us the first American dictionary of the English language. To do so, he learned 26 languages. He said, "Education enlightens the understanding. It corrects the temper and informs the manner and habits of youth, and it fits them for usefulness in their future stations in life. To give them a good education in manners and arts and science is important, but to give them a religious education is indispensable. An attempt to conduct the affairs of a free government with wisdom and impartiality and to preserve the just rights of all citizens without the guidance of divine precepts will certainly end in disappointment, for God is the supreme moral governor of the world that he has made and if men will not submit to be controlled by his laws, they will be punished by the evils resulting from their own disobedience, and any system of education which limits instructions to arts and sciences and rejects the age of religion informing the characters of citizens is essentially defective."

We learn so much from the principles and the statements left to us, Our Father, by our early founding fathers, and tonight in the invocation we sense anew the heart of this American patriot and we boldly affirm our nation's motto, "in God we trust." As our fathers did, so we look to you, the protector and provider and the promise of hope for our nation. Cause us to return to that firm foundation upon which our great nation was built. Let your favor and your blessings be upon each member of our military who serves with dedication and faithfulness throughout our troubled world. We invoke your divine presence to fill these council chambers. Give your wisdom to our mayor, her colleagues, and their support staff. God bless America. God, protect our great country, and God, protect each citizen of Pismo Beach, and protect each guest who visits our beautiful city. This invocation we pray in the name of our Lord and our Dearest Friend. Amen.

July 17, 2012

Will you bow your heart in prayer with me, please? Our Eternal God, Abraham Lincoln is thought by many to be the greatest of all of our 44 presidents. He served during a most difficult period of American history, the Civil War. The statue of Lincoln in the Lincoln Memorial in Washington, D.C. portrays his most admired qualities. One of Lincoln's hands is clutched tightly to indicate determination and strength. The other hand is open and released, demonstrating the President's compassion. Lincoln's goal was preserving the Union as the last best hope on Earth. His reflections of God's role in American history are clearly stated. The Gettysburg Address consists of 267 words and concludes with this phrase, "This nation, under God, shall have a new birth of freedom." His second inaugural address is composed of only 703 words, and in it he mentions God 14 times and quotes the Bible two times.¹³¹ Lincoln relied on the power of divine providence, stating, "He who made the world still governs it."¹³² With such firm resolutions, we tonight affirm boldly affirm our nation's motto, "in God we trust."

And it is in this spirit that we pray this invocation. We invoke your presence and protection upon all of our military men and women, especially those in harm's way. Bring them home speedily to their home and loved ones. We pray your comfort on the family and friends of those who have paid the ultimate sacrifice for our freedoms and our liberty. We invoke you invisible presence in the council meeting tonight. You alone know our future, and only you can provide the strength and the wisdom to our mayor and her colleagues and their support staff to meet the challenges as well as the opportunities that they face. May your blessings rest upon our city. May your blessings rest upon every citizen, and may your blessings rest upon each guest who visits our beautiful city. God, bless and protect America and our City of Pismo Beach. This invocation we pray with a heart of gratitude to God. Amen.

¹³¹ Lincoln does not get to god until the second half of the speech and he's not so much relying on divine providence as Jones suggests, he's pointing out what a terrible revenge divine providence is exacting: "...Neither party expected for the war the magnitude or the duration which it has already attained. Neither anticipated that the cause of the conflict might cease with or even before the conflict itself should cease. Each looked for an easier triumph, and a result less fundamental and astounding. Both read the same Bible and pray to the same God, and each invokes His aid against the other. It may seem strange that any men should dare to ask a just God's assistance in wringing their bread from the sweat of other men's faces, but let us judge not, that we be not judged. The prayers of both could not be answered. That of neither has been answered fully. The Almighty has His own purposes. "Woe unto the world because of offenses; for it must needs be that offenses come, but woe to that man by whom the offense cometh." If we shall suppose that American slavery is one of those offenses which, in the providence of God, must needs come, but which, having continued through His appointed time, He now wills to remove, and that He gives to both North and South this terrible war as the woe due to those by whom the offense came, shall we discern therein any departure from those divine attributes which the believers in a living God always ascribe to Him? Fondly do we hope, fervently do we pray, that this mighty scourge of war may speedily pass away. Yet, if God wills that it continue until all the wealth piled by the bondsman's two hundred and fifty years of unrequited toil shall be sunk, and until every drop of blood drawn with the lash shall be paid by another drawn with the sword, as was said three thousand years ago, so still it must be said 'the judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether.' With malice toward none, with charity for all, with firmness in the right as God gives us to see the right, let us strive on to finish the work we are in, to bind up the nation's wounds, to care for him who shall have borne the battle and for his widow and his orphan, to do all which may achieve and cherish a just and lasting peace among ourselves and with all nations."

¹³² This is from an Oct. 25, 1862 letter to Eliza P. Gurney, written some three years before the second inaugural, "I have sought his aid—but if after endeavoring to do my best in the light which he affords me, I find my efforts fail, I must believe that for some purpose unknown to me, He wills it otherwise If I had had my way, this war would never have been commenced; If I had been allowed my way this war would have been ended before this, but we find it still continues; and we must believe that He permits it for some wise purpose of his own, mysterious and unknown to us; and though with our limited understandings we may not be able to comprehend it, yet we cannot but believe, that he who made the world still governs it.

August 7, 2012

Our Eternal God, the Pledge of Allegiance to the flag of the United States was created in 1892. It was used in American public schools to celebrate the 400th anniversary of Christopher Columbus discovering the new world. It has become a national oath to our country. It has become a motto of unity. It has become a defense of the American way of life. It was used unofficially but recited daily by school children for 50 years. In 1945 the pledge to the flag received its official title, the Pledge of Allegiance, and in 1954, President Dwight D. Eisenhower approved the words, “under god” in the pledge to differentiate the United States from the officially atheist Soviet Union. He declared, “In this way we are reaffirming the transcendence of religious faith in America’s heritage and in America’s future, and in this way we shall continually strengthen those spiritual weapons which forever will be our country’s most powerful resource in peace and in war.” And so we as citizens of our city join our city council members and our leaders in say aloud in unison the Pledge of Allegiance to the flag of our great country in each official city council meeting. And today we also boldly affirm the motto of our nation, “in God we trust.”

May our military men and women and their families experience your protection and your peace wherever they serve around the world. May our president and our national leaders who represent us in our republic seek you and your guidance. May they rest securely in your ability to grant your solutions to each problem that our nation faces today and in the future. We pray that Your Will becomes our chosen path. We invoke your divine presence to fill city hall and these council chambers. Grant your wisdom to our leaders, to our mayor pro tem, to his colleagues, and to their dedicated support staff for the matters at hand tonight as well as matters in the future. Long may our land be bright with freedom’s holy light. Protect us by thy might, great God Our King.¹³³ This invocation we pray in the name of our Blessed Redeemer and our Dearest Friend. Amen.

¹³³ See, Isaiah 33:22 “For the LORD is our judge, the LORD is our lawgiver, the LORD is our king; it is he who will save us.”; Psalm 5:2 “Listen to my cry for help, my King and my God, for to you I pray.”; Psalm 44:4 “You are my King and my God, who decrees victories for Jacob.”; Psalm 47:7-8 “For God is the King of all the earth; Sing praises with a skillful psalm. God reigns over the nations, God sits on His holy throne.”; Psalm 74:12 “But you, O God, are my king from of old; you bring salvation upon the earth.”; Psalm 95:3 “For the LORD is the great God, the great King above all gods.”; Psalm 145:1 “I will exalt you, my God the King; I will praise your name for ever and ever.”

August 21, 2012

Will you please bow your heart with me in prayer? Our Heavenly Father, John Adams was one of the greatest founding fathers of our nation. He served as vice president under George Washington and then was elected the second president of our great country. In October 1798 he wrote a letter to the militia of Massachusetts. In it he stated, "We have no government armed with power and capable of contending with human passions unbridled by morality and religion. Ambition and revenge or gallantry would break the strongest cords of our constitution as a whale goes through a net. Our constitution was made only for moral and religious people. It is wholly inadequate to the government of any other." And when Dwight D. Eisenhower took the presidential oath of office, he publicly placed his hand on the Bible, opened to Psalm 33:12, which states, "Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord." And it was during his presidential administration that the Congress of the United States passed resolutions to 1) place under God in our pledge of allegiance to our flag, and 2) they voted our nation's motto to be, "in God we trust." As American citizens in the 21st century, we wholeheartedly affirm our nation's motto, "in God we trust."

We bend our hearts and faith in prayer in behalf of our City Manager Kevin Rice. His son was severely injured in an automobile accident a week and a half ago. Already you have responded to the united prayers of the citizens of our city and many others as well. We pray tonight to you as the one who gave him life that you will restore him once again to good health and your blessings. Accept our grateful thanks for his continued improvement. Tonight, we invoke the divine presence of God to fill these council chambers. Give your wisdom generously to our mayor and to her colleagues and to their dedicated support staff. God, bless America. God, protect our beloved country and protect each citizen of Pismo Beach and each guest to visits our beautiful city. This invocation we pray in the name of Him who is our Lord. Amen.

September 4, 2012

Will you please bow your heart with me in prayer? Our Heavenly Father, history has documented that the most frequently cited source in the founding era of our great country was the Bible.¹³⁴ In 1777, Congress desired to have a Bible printed under their care and their encouragement, and then they ordered 20,000 copies of the Bible.¹³⁵ Patrick Henry who was an orator, a statesman, and the first governor of the Commonwealth of Virginia declared that the Bible is worth all the other books that have ever been printed.¹³⁶ President Andrew Jackson said the Bible is the rock on which our republic rests.¹³⁷ And President John Adams reminded his fellow Americans “the safety and prosperity of nations ultimately and essentially depends on the protection and the blessing of almighty God.” It is clear that the Bible has had an incredible influence in shaping the history of our great country, the United States of American. King Solomon wrote in the Holy Scriptures, “Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord.”¹³⁸ And so tonight, we seek your help, oh God, through daily prayer and daily Bible reading that we may be able to guarantee for generations to come that we remain one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all, for the more we absorb the Scriptures and seek to live by its precepts, we discover that God is able to accomplish amazing things for his purposes through our lives, and so unitedly tonight we affirm our nations’ motto, “in God we trust.”

May truth and justice and righteousness prevail and flourish among our generations of Americans, and may we seek to live justly and righteously and be zealous for those things that honor God. Thank you for each member of our city council and their wonderful support staff. Infuse in them your wisdom and your understanding. Give your solutions to every challenge and every opportunity that they face. We invoke your irresistible presence and will to become the resource that you graciously grant to our friends, the leaders we have elected. May proper decisions be made tonight to honor you and to benefit each citizen and each guest in our beautiful city. This invocation we pray in the name of our wonderful

¹³⁴ This claim is untenable and unsupported.

¹³⁵ Congress never printed Bible. During the Revolutionary War, a printer, Robert Aitken, asked to publish a Bible under the authority of Congress and to be commissioned by Congress to do so. Congress declined to do this but did “recommend this edition,” in part because it was “an instance of the progress of arts in this country.” Gaillard Hunt, ed., *Journals of the Continental Congress, 1774-1789*, vol. 23, (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1914), 574. Printing in this country was important because of the British embargo. Aitken used the congressional recommendation to hawk his bibles but, by his own account, they sold so poorly that he lost over £3,000 on the endeavor and could not get Congress to reimburse him or buy the bibles. Robert Aitken to George Washington, June 9, 1790, George Washington Papers at the Library of Congress, 1741-1799: Series 4, General Correspondence.

¹³⁶ This is not a direct quote from Henry, it is a secondary quote about Henry, first published more than 90 years after his death in William Wirt Henry, *Patrick Henry: Life, Correspondence, and Speeches* (1891), vol. 2, p. 519. Wirt’s source is a “Statement of George Dabney, MS. Letter to Mr. Wirt, Wirt’s Henry.” The source has not been verified. The full quote given is actually this: “This book is worth all the books that ever were printed, and it has been my misfortune that I have never found time to read it with the proper attention and feeling till lately.”

¹³⁷ No primary source provided or discernable. The earliest located source is Frederic William Farrar, *History of Interpretation: eight lectures preached before the University of Oxford in the year MDCCCLXXXV on the foundation of the late Rev. John Bampton*, page xxvii (MacMillan and Co., London, 1886), http://books.google.com/books?id=kVX92B3TRkMC&printsec=frontcover&source=gbs_ge_summary_r&cad=0#v=onepage&q&f=false. According to the title page, Farrar was Archdeacon and Canon of Westminster and Chaplain in Ordinary to the Queen. The Jackson quote is buried in a paragraph that begins, “My main wish has been to show the true basis whereon rests the sacredness of Holy Scripture... It is because there is no Book and no Literature which can for a moment supply the place of the Bible in the moral and spiritual education of mankind that I would do my utmost to save it from the injury of false theories and impossible interpretations.” Although Farrar cites several sources just a few pages earlier, no source is provided for the deathbed quote by Jackson: “ ‘That book sir,’ said the American President, Andrew Jackson, pointing to the family Bible during his last illness, ‘is the rock on which our Republic rests.’ ”

¹³⁸ Psalm 33:12

Lord. Amen.

September 18, 2012

Will you please bow your heart with me in prayer? Our Heavenly Father, it was President George Washington who said “it is impossible to govern the world without God and the Bible.”¹³⁹ In 1864 during the Civil War, the U.S. Congress approved engraving the phrase, “In God we trust” on the three cent coin. Forty-four years later in 1908, legislation was passed to engrave “In God we trust” on all U.S. coins. Then 47 years later in 1955, Congress passed a resolution that the phrase, “in God we trust” would be printed on all coins and paper currency and one year later in 1956, “in God we trust” became the national motto of our great country. And tonight as American citizens we boldly affirm as a nation and as individual citizens, in God we trust.

And it is in this spirit that we pray this invocation tonight. As American citizens in this great nation we enjoy the blessings of freedom given to us by God. And as such, we join our voices with President Warren Harding who said, “I implore the favor and the guidance of God in heaven.” We pray especially tonight that you would allow your protection and your power to strengthen all of our American citizens who travel abroad. We pray especially for each of our American military personnel and our American citizens who find themselves in areas where Islamic extremists are demonstrating radically. Surround them with your safety. We pray you will bless all who work and serve us in our city hall. Cause them to serve with the strength and the security of your invisible presence.

Bless our city council whom we have freely elected and our friends for whom we pray for by name each day. May the members of our city council understand that they cannot properly discharge their responsibilities or the tasks that have been assigned to them without your help, oh God. And tonight, we ask you will crown this council meeting with your nearness. Give your divine guidance and your direction in each of the thought processes of our leaders. May each decision that is made honor you and be for the betterment of all of our citizens and guests. This invocation we pray in the name of our personal Savior and Lord. Amen.

¹³⁹ This is not accurate. There is no evidence recording that Washington said or wrote such a statement.

October 2, 2012

Will you please bow your heart with me in prayer? Our Eternal God, the founders of our great country, the United States of America, stated over and over again that no nation can long endure without morality and virtue in our citizens. A loss of principles and manners is the greatest threat to free people and will cause its downfall more surely than any foreign enemy. Samuel Adams, the father of the American Revolution said, “While the people are virtuous they cannot be subdued.”¹⁴⁰ And then he added, “The greatest security from enslavement in a country is morality among the people, desiring to please their Loving Father and Great Creator, they live in accordance with his righteous standards.”¹⁴¹ Noah Webster, one of our well-known founding fathers said, “The moral principles contained in the Holy Scriptures form the basis of all of our civil constitutions and civil laws. And all the miseries and evils men suffer from vice and crime and injustice proceed from neglecting the precepts contained in the Bible.”¹⁴²

So we ask that you would forgive us of our sins and our failures and place in our hearts a fervent desire for your divine leadership to reign in our lives. Direct our paths in your way so that Your Will becomes our desire and your way becomes our delight. In this season when our citizens are seeking public offices in the political realm from the White House to the local city councils, may Your Will be done. May every citizen perform their civic duty and go the polls and vote. May the power of your presence bind us together as a people of one nation under God, and to this end, once again we boldly affirm our nation’s motto, “In God we trust.” In the dignity of this city council meeting, we invoke your divine wisdom and guidance to be upon our mayor and her colleagues and their support staff. May righteousness fill city hall and fill these council chambers so that each decision will be a good decision that will honor you and improve the lives of each of our citizens and each guest in our beautiful city. This invocation we pray in our Savior’s name. Amen.

¹⁴⁰ “This torrent [of levity, vanity, luxury, dissipation, and indeed vice of every kind] must be stemmed, and in order to do it effectually, there must be an association of men of unshaken fortitude. While the people are virtuous they cannot be subdued; but when once they lose their virtue they will be ready to surrender their liberties to the first external or internal invader. How necessary then is it for those who are determined to transmit the blessings of liberty as a fair inheritance to posterity, to associate on public principles in support of public virtue. ... If you are of my mind, and I think you are, the necessity of supporting the education of our country must be strongly impressed on your mind... Virginia is duly sensible of the great importance of education, and, as a friend in that country informs me, has lately adopted an effectual plan for that necessary purpose. If virtue and knowledge are diffused among the people, they will never be enslaved. This will be their great security.” Samuel Adams, February 12, 1779 letter to James Warren, *The Writings of Samuel Adams*, Vol. IV, 1778-1802, p. 123-124 (Ed. Harry Alonzo Cushing)(GP Putnam’s Sons, 1908).

¹⁴¹ This is not found in the letter that contains Jones’ preceding quote, nor anywhere else. As stated in the previous footnote, Adams does write something similar regarding public education, “If virtue and knowledge are diffused among the people, they will never be enslaved,” but he never mentions a Loving Father, Great Creator, god or righteous standards of any of the above. There is no evidence to suggest that Samuel Adams ever said this.

¹⁴² This somewhat truncated: “But were we assured that there is to be no future life, and that men are to perish at death like the beasts of the field; the moral principles and precepts contained in the scriptures ought to form the basis of all our civil constitutions and laws. ...” Noah Webster, *History of the United State to which is prefixed a brief historical account of our [English] ancestors from the dispersion at Babel, to their migration to America and of the Conquest of South America by the Spaniards*, 309 (Durrice & Peck, 1832). This is also not an exposition on Webster’s views of government, it is from chapter 18 titled “Advice to the Young,” on the preceding page he writes, “To young men I would recommend that their treatment of females should be always characterized by kindness, delicacy and respect. The tender sex look to men for protection and support. Females when properly educated and devoted to their appropriate duties, are qualified to add greatly to the happiness of society, and of domestic life.” *Id.* at 308.

October 16, 2012

Will you please bow your heart with me in prayer? Our Heavenly Father, this is the last council meeting before our all important election on Tuesday, November 6. In our own city, two council members will be elected. All 435 members of the House of Representatives and one-third of our U.S. Senate will be elected, and nationally we will elect our nation's president. We humbly ask that people of honesty and truthfulness and integrity will be elected. While hundreds of millions of dollars have been spent in advertising this vital event, hundreds of thousands of hours of earnest prayer have been invested by the people of God, our own citizens.

King Solomon was a political leader where peace and unprecedented prosperity was enjoyed by the citizens of his nation. And he proclaimed the greatest political idea of all generations. It is written in Holy Scripture and I quote, "Righteousness exalts a nation, but sin is a reproach and an embarrassment to any people."¹⁴³ And he further stated, "The way of the Lord is strength for the upright and he who walks in integrity walks securely. The righteous has an everlasting foundation and will never be moved, and the memory of the righteous is blessed."¹⁴⁴ Many of our citizens and leaders have turned from the path of righteousness in our lives and lifestyles. Infuse this ideal from King Solomon once again into our public mind, and may it be practiced by our citizens.

We ask that you will cause every citizen to perform their civic duty and vote this season. Cause us to elect leaders who will stand up for the clear standards that are expressed in the Bible, the Holy Writings of God. May they stand firm for our freedoms to live by these standards. May we remember corporate righteousness produces corporate benefits. Help us to recall our firm alliance on the protection of divine providence and to give thanks for the freedoms and the prosperities that the people of our nation enjoy. We pray for your continued help and guidance, our wise and loving creator.

Allow your infinite wisdom to be graciously bestowed on our city council tonight, these persons whom we have freely elected. May your leadership be manifested in their lives and in their decisions as well as the staff that support them. We seek your wisdom for the solutions to every situation that they consider. Fill city hall and these council chambers with the peace and power of your eternal presence, and cause every home and every citizen in Pismo Beach to feel the impact. This invocation we pray in the strong name of our Loving Lord. Amen.

¹⁴³ Proverbs 14:34

¹⁴⁴ This is an amalgamation of several verses of Proverbs Chapter 10 from the Amplified Bible.

Proverbs, 10:29 "The way of the Lord is strength and a stronghold to the upright, but it is destruction to the workers of iniquity."

Proverbs 10:25 "When the whirlwind passes, the wicked are no more, but the [uncompromisingly] righteous have an everlasting foundation."

Proverbs 10:7 "The memory of the [uncompromisingly] righteous is a blessing, but the name of the wicked shall rot."

November 6, 2012
(City Manager Kevin Rice)

God Our Father,¹⁴⁵ creator of all,¹⁴⁶ thank you for our many blessings. Thank you for this beautiful day on the Central Coast of California. Thank you for being able to live and work in the United States of America. Thank you for our nation's democracy where the supreme power rests in all the citizens entitled to vote. Thank you for our friends and families. Thank you, God, for our city council members who are the elected representatives of the people of Pismo Beach. As Veteran's Day approaches this weekend on November 11th, God, please remember to protect those currently serving in the U.S. Armed Forces and who are in harm's way. Also, please care for and protect all Americans serving overseas and give their families strength. God, please hear our invocation. Amen.

¹⁴⁵ This is typical of the Christian Bible, specifically the writings attributed to Paul. Paul begins most of his letters with a greeting that references "God Our Father." *See* Romans 1:7; 1 Corinthians 1:3; 2 Corinthians 1:2; Galatians 1:3; Ephesians 1:2; Philippians 1:2; Colossians 1:2; 2 Thessalonians 1:1; 2 Thessalonians 2:16; Philemon 1:3. *See also* James 1:27.

¹⁴⁶ Even taken as a whole this phrase is sectarian Christian. *See*, 1 Corinthians 8:6 *NLT*, "But we know that there is only one God, the Father, who created everything, and we live for him. And there is only one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom God made everything and through whom we have been given life."; Malachi 2:10 "Have we not all one Father? Did not one God create us? Why do we profane the covenant of our fathers by breaking faith with one another?"; Deuteronomy 32:6 "Is this the way you repay the LORD, O foolish and unwise people? Is he not your Father, your Creator, who made you and formed you?"

December 4, 2012

Will you please bow your heart with me in prayer? Our Heavenly Father, as grateful citizens of Pismo Beach, we express to you our gratitude for the rain that has fallen the past three to four days upon our city and region. Much of it fell so gently and soaked into the ground and as a result the air is clean and the hills are turning green. Today, our city council concludes once phase of its administration. We thank you for Ted Ehring who has served so faithfully the past eight years. He has given untiringly of his knowledge and his skills and expended his efforts to better our city. Reward him and his lovely wife Pat with your presence and your blessings in their lives and home. As a new council begins their administration, we humbly seek your wisdom and guidance to be granted to each of them.

We remember history September 7, 1774, the first prayer that was prayed in Congress. History says Washington was kneeling there and Patrick Henry and Randolph and Rutledge and Lee and John Jay and to their side there stood many bowed in reverence, the patron puritans of New England who at that moment had reason to believe that armed soldiers were wasting their humble households.¹⁴⁷ It was believed that Boston had been bombarded and destroyed, but they prayed fervently for America, for Congress, and for the province of Massachusetts Bay, and especially for the town of Boston. Who can realize the emotions with which they turned imploringly to Heaven for divine interposition? Vice President John Adams said it was enough to melt a heart of stone.¹⁴⁸ Included in that prayer were these words: "Be present, oh God of wisdom, and direct the council of this honorable assembly, and enable them to settle all things on the best and surest foundations that order and harmony and peace may be effectually restored and that truth and justice and religion and piety may prevail and flourish among the people. Preserve the health of their bodies and preserve the vigor of their mind." And in 1789 the newly inaugurated President George Washington gave a prophetic word at Federal Hall in New York City. He declared that America's prosperity and protection were dependent upon their adherence to God, and later the political leaders of that young nation gathered at St. Paul's Chapel to pray and commit the nation's future to God's purposes. That chapel is located at ground zero and miraculously survived 9/11 virtually unscathed.¹⁴⁹ With such a national legacy, we boldly proclaim our nation's

¹⁴⁷ Jones appears to be describing an artistic rendition of this prayer and calling it history. See "The First Prayer In Congress," painted by T. H. Matteson and engraved by Henry Sadd (1848). Matteson was born 39 years after and painted the work 74 years after the event he portrayed.

¹⁴⁸ See footnote for April 19, 2011 prayer discussing this letter. Indeed much of Jones history of this 1774 prayer appears to come from a fabricated letter. Compare the John Adams letter of September 7, 1774 on this link <http://www.revolutionary-war-and-beyond.com/john-adams-quotes-2.html> which is mostly accurate until about two thirds of the way down, "It had excellent effect upon every body there. I must beg you to read the Psalm." At which point the letter is a fabrication as can be seen from the original images at the Massachusetts Historical Society website, <http://www.masshist.org/digitaladams/aea/cfm/doc.cfm?id=L17740916ja>.

¹⁴⁹ This passage, beginning "And in 1789..." was lifted almost verbatim from www.WND.com from one of multiple stories that essentially claim that 9/11 (and Superstorm Sandy and the recession) were God's punishment to America for turning our back on him (the main purpose of the articles appears to be to sell a documentary and book with this same hypothesis). The WND paragraph reads:

In 1789, newly inaugurated President George Washington gave a prophetic warning at Federal Hall in New York City. He declared that America's prosperity and protection were dependent upon its adherence to God. Later, the political leaders of the young nation gathered at St. Paul's Chapel to commit the nation's future to God's purposes. That chapel is located at Ground Zero and miraculously survived 9/11 virtually unscathed.

It appears in at least six WND stories, including: "Mark this Date for Potential Disaster, Isaiah 9:10 Code suggests watchful eye on specific day," (5/14/2012) <http://www.wnd.com/2012/05/mark-this-date-for-potential-disaster/#48Oo0hYMuHSaK151.99>; "Obama 'Fulfills' Isaiah 9:10 Prophecy – Again," (6/15/2012)

motto tonight, in God we trust.

Gratefully, we gather in this public city council meeting. We have fully elected our friends, the mayor, and her colleague to our city council to serve us. In obedience to Holy Scripture, we pray for each of them tonight as in our daily prayers.¹⁵⁰ Good government is a principle that originated in the heart of God, so cause each council member to sense the power of your invisible presence and allow your divine wisdom to be given to them to make good and wise decisions, and may each decision honor God and be for the betterment of all the citizens and guests of our beautiful city. This invocation we pray in the name of our Lord. Amen.

<http://www.wnd.com/2012/06/obama-fulfills-isaiah-910-prophecy-again/#uAUSY3sOIJRJIMBz.99>; “Sound off on Whether God is Warning America: Share your thoughts on ‘The Harbinger,’ ‘Isaiah 9:10 Judgment,’” (8/9/2012). <http://www.wnd.com/2012/08/sound-off-on-whether-god-is-warning-america/#Ij9kjl8HD7K3W1C.99>; “No. 1 Christian Author Defends... Promoting his Book: Under Attack from fellow believers for interviews with certain programs,” (8/9/2012) <http://www.wnd.com/2012/08/no-1-christian-author-defends-promoting-his-book/#16J3bHqW4i766Xe2.99>; “Isaiah 9:10 Redux in Sandy Aftermath,” (11/4/2012) <http://www.wnd.com/2012/11/isaiah-910-redux-in-sandy-aftermath/#azd6XoQLAghrwSIE.99>; “Isaiah 9:10 Linked to 9/11 – Again!,” (11/22/2012) <http://www.wnd.com/2012/11/isaiah-910-linked-to-911-again/#jPVzrQxfGwAM3dZM.99>; “Fall of New York Stock Exchange: The 10th Harbinger?,” (12/21/2012) <http://www.wnd.com/2012/12/fall-of-new-york-stock-exchange-the-10th-harbinger/#CQ6f7kgTTfZDJb70.99>

And the church was not spared, the organ was “badly damaged by smoke and dirt churned up by the falling twin towers.” Joe Kemp and Corky Siemaszko, “Church Organ from St. Paul’s Chapel damaged in 9/11 attacks returned in time for Easter,” *NY Daily News*, April 9, 2009.

¹⁵⁰ 1 Timothy 2:1-2.

December 18, 2012

(Mayor asked for a “moment of silence for those in Connecticut” prior to invocation.)

Will you please bow your heart with me in prayer? Our Heavenly Father, it is Christmastime in our city and in the surrounding community stores and shops are filled with carols and beautiful Christmas music. Thank you that you have prospered so many that we may purchase gifts to those we love who are so dear to us. Allow your favor to rest upon our business community, those who have planned so earnestly and worked so diligently to sell their goods and services and then send sales tax and bed tax to our city treasurer. For your favor we are grateful. Let us understand that the message of Christmas is simple, and yet it is so wonderful. God wants to enter into all of life’s circumstances and God chooses a beginning point for his wonder workings. To God, everybody is important.

Already we have bowed in a moment of silent prayer, but may we just continue tonight, Our Father, and pray especially for those families in Connecticut whose school children and adult officials at the school were so senselessly gunned down some days ago. May their grieving and sorrowing spirits be brightened by your eternal presence. At this Christmastime we pray for all of our military personnel as they serve the noble causes of freedom and liberty around the world. May each one who is deployed be safe and secure, and may their loved ones here at home have God’s comfort and his presence as they are separated one from another.

When our next city council meets, the Christmas lights will be out. Christmas trees will have faded. Christmas ribbons will be forgotten and Christmas lights will be packed away, but the babe that was born in Bethlehem’s manger will yet remain.¹⁵¹ He will comfort when we are sorrowful. He will provide meaning when life’s seasons seem so useless and so empty. He will bring light when the way seems dark and he will provide joy when circumstances are grim, and long after the carols have been hushed and long after the gift certificates have been cashed, the one whose birthday we celebrate will continue to bring happiness and satisfaction.

Eric Howell is our newest city council member who begins his first full council meeting tonight. May he sense your leadership in his new venture and may the spirit of unity that has characterized our city council these past years continue among us in the days that are ahead. Tonight we invoke your divine presence to fill city hall daily and to fill these council chambers tonight. Give your wisdom to our mayor, her colleagues, and their support staff for the matters that are at hand tonight and in the future. God, bless America. Protect our great country. Protect our citizens young and older. Protect every citizen in Pismo Beach and protect the guests who visit our beautiful city. This invocation we pray this holy Christmas season in the name of our personal Lord. Amen.

¹⁵¹ Luke 2:12

January 15, 2013

Would you please bow your heart with me in prayer? Our Heavenly Father, this meeting tonight is the first city council meeting of the New Year 2013. We pause tonight to thank you for the privilege to be citizens of our great nation, the United States of America. The spiritual heritage of our country is a continuing source of inspiration to us today. It was in the year 1800, when the construction of the U.S. Capitol building was finished, and one of the first acts of Congress, was to approve the largest room in the Capitol, the Hall of the U.S. House of Representatives as a church facility.¹⁵² Each Sunday, services alternated between the chaplain of the House of Representatives the chaplain of the Senate. U.S. Senators, U.S. Representatives, and U.S. Presidents such as Thomas Jefferson and James Madison, and John Quincy Adams regularly attended that church.¹⁵³ By 1867, the church at the Capitol had become the largest church in Washington D.C. and one of the largest in the nation. Many of our forefathers diligently honored God. All 50 of our U.S. state constitutions acknowledge God in their preambles. For example, Connecticut begins by saying, “We acknowledge with gratitude the good providence of God, in permitting us to enjoy a free government.” The constitution of Florida begins, “We the people of the state of Florida are grateful to Almighty God, for our constitutional liberty.” And our own state of California, our constitution begins by saying, “We the people of the state of California, grateful to Almighty God for our freedom, in order to secure and perpetuate its blessings do establish this constitution.” With such a spiritual heritage, as citizens of the 21st century we do not forget but we boldly proclaim and affirm our nation’s motto, in God we trust.

Tonight we pray for our mayor, members of our city council, and their support staff. We invoke God’s divine wisdom and courage to be freely given to each of them. May each determination that is made bring esteem and righteousness toward God and may each decision bring justice and fairness and worth to each citizen and each guest that visits our beautiful city. May your protection and your favor be in

¹⁵² The source of this story is inconclusive. A total of one sentence is devoted to the issue: “The Speaker informed that House that the Chaplains had proposed, if agreeable to the House, to hold divine service every Sunday in their Chamber.” *Debates and Proceedings in the Congress of the United States* (Washington: Gales and Seaton, 1853), p. 797, Sixth Congress, December 4, 1800. No vote is recorded on the issue even though another issue was voted on that same day and the vote recorded. See *Id.* at 799. No authorization, law, or act is mentioned, just the chaplains’ request.

¹⁵³ Thomas Jefferson’s attendance at Sunday services in the Capitol is misleading and can be traced to selective quoting of Margaret Bayard Smith’s descriptions of the events which show them to be less religious and more social:

...I have called these Sunday assemblies in the capitol, a *congregation*, but the almost exclusive appropriation of that word to religious assemblies, prevents its being a descriptive term as applied in the present case, since the gay company who thronged the H. R. looked very little like a religious assembly. The occasion presented for display was not only a novel, but a favourable one for the youth, beauty and fashion of the city, Georgetown and environs. The members of Congress, gladly gave up their seats for such fair auditors, and either lounged in the lobbies, or round the fire places, or stood beside the ladies of their acquaintance. This sabbathday-resort became so fashionable, that the floor of the house offered insufficient space, the platform behind the Speaker’s chair, and every spot where a chair could be wedged in was crowded with ladies in their gayest costume and their attendant beaux and who led them to their seats with the same gallantry as is exhibited in a ball room. Smiles, nods, whispers, nay sometimes tittering marked their recognition of each other, and beguiled the tedium of the service. Often, when cold, a lady would leave her seat and led by her attending beau would make her way through the crowd to one of the fire-places where she could laugh and talk at her ease. One of the officers of the house, followed by his attendant with a great bag over his shoulder, precisely at 12 o’clock, would make his way through the hall to the depository of letters to put them in the mail-bag, which sometimes had a most ludicrous effect, and always diverted attention from the preacher. The musick was as little in union with devotional feelings, as the place. Gaillard Hunt, ed., *The First Forty Years of Washington Society, Portrayed by the Family Letters of Mrs. Samuel Harrison Smith (Margaret Bayard) from the Collection of Her Grandson, J. Henley Smith*, (New York, C. Scribner’s Sons, 1906), 14-15.

Smith describes the eventual change to a more solemn tone in the proceedings, but that is not how they began.

abundance upon our leaders and each of our citizens. Thank you for hearing and responding to this prayer of invocation, we pray it in name of our Loving Lord. Amen.

February 5, 2013

Would you please bow your heart with me in prayer. Our Heavenly Father, as we read and reread the writings of our nation's founding fathers we are continually admonished to honor you and to live daily in your righteous ways. Holy Scripture teaches us that "righteousness exalts a nation, but sin is a reproach and an embarrassment to any people."¹⁵⁴ It was George Washington, our first U.S. President who said, "Faith is absolutely vital to good government and to strong leadership. A moral nation cannot be maintained without reliance on faith. Of all that leads to political prosperity," he said, "religion and morality are indispensable supports. Let us not suppose that morality can be maintained without religion, for reason and experience both forbid us to expect that our national morality can prevail in the exclusion of religious principle."¹⁵⁵ And in 1781 Thomas Jefferson, our third president said, "God who gave us life, gave us liberty. Can the liberties of a nation be thought secure if we remove them from the only firm basis, a conviction in the minds of the people that their liberties are a gift from God."¹⁵⁶ So tonight it is in this spirit that we offer this invocation and once again we boldly declare and affirm our nation's motto, in God we trust.

We're exceedingly grateful for the bounties of Heaven that has preserved our great nation. We enjoy peace and prosperity and power and wealth that is unknown by any other people on earth. And we acknowledge your gracious guiding hand¹⁵⁷ in our great country and our beloved city. We pause tonight to say thank you, that the little five-year-old boy who was held captive in an underground bunker in Alabama for seven days was released unharmed yesterday. So many people throughout our

¹⁵⁴ Psalm 14:34

¹⁵⁵ Some of this quote comes from George Washington's Farewell Address of 1796, "Of all the dispositions and habits which lead to political prosperity, religion and morality are indispensable supports... And let us with caution indulge the supposition that morality can be maintained without religion. Whatever may be conceded to the influence of refined education on minds of peculiar structure, reason and experience both forbid us to expect that national morality can prevail in exclusion of religious principle." The beginning of the quote is fictional.

¹⁵⁶ Jefferson actually wrote this in two separate places more than 10 years apart.

- 1) "The god who gave us life gave us liberty..." is from *A Summary View of the Rights of British America* (1774). "But let them [members of the parliament of Great Britain] not think to exclude us from going to other markets, to dispose of those commodities which they cannot use, nor to supply those wants which they cannot supply. Still less let it be proposed that our properties within our own territories shall be taxed or regulated by any power on earth but our own. The god who gave us life gave us liberty at the same time: the hand of force may destroy, but cannot disjoin them."
- 2) "...can the liberties ...Gift of God" is from *Notes on the State of Virginia*, Query XVIII (1785). "For in a warm climate, no man will labour for himself who can make another labour for him. This is so true, that of the proprietors of slaves a very small proportion indeed are ever seen to labor. And can the liberties of a nation be thought secure when we have removed their only firm basis, a conviction in the minds of the people that these liberties are the gift of God? That they are not to be violated but with his wrath? Indeed I tremble for my country when I reflect that God is just: that his justice cannot sleep for ever . . ."

¹⁵⁷ Nehemiah 2:18, *see also*, 1 Chronicles 4:10 – "Jabez cried out to the God of Israel, 'Oh, that you would bless me and enlarge my territory! Let Your Hand be with me, and keep me from harm so that I will be free from pain.' And God granted his request." The Christian bible continually references its god as "Your Hand". *See, e.g.*, Psalm 21:7-8 "For the king trusts in the Lord; through the unfailing love of the Most High he will not be shaken. Your hand will lay hold on all your enemies; your right hand will seize your foes."; Psalm 74:10-11 "How long will the enemy mock you, O God? Will the foe revile your name forever? Why do you hold back your hand, your right hand? Take it from the folds of your garment and destroy them!"; Micah 5:9 "Your hand will be lifted up in triumph over your enemies, and all your foes will be destroyed."; Psalm 139:5, 10; Deuteronomy 3:24; Isaiah 26:11; 1 Kings 8:24; 2 Chronicles 6:15; Acts 4:29-30; Psalm 17:14; Job 1:11; Job 10:7.

nation united in their prayers and you responded so graciously. So tonight we invoke your blessing and your wisdom to rest upon our mayor, the members of our city council and their support staff. Even now, allow the power of your eternal presence and a new dimension of your divine enablement to enter their thought processes to respond tonight to your guiding divine guidance. May the decisions that are made tonight honor you and be for the betterment of our beautiful city all of our citizens and each of our visiting guests. This invocation we pray in the name of our personal Lord. Amen.

February 19, 2013

Our Heavenly Father, yesterday, Monday, February 18th, we as citizens of our great country celebrated President's Day, honoring the birthdays of President George Washington and President Abraham Lincoln, whose birthdays are only a few days apart this month. Both of these honorable men are remembered as esteemed leaders. In his first inaugural address, President Washington opened with a heartfelt prayer and said, and I quote, "It would be impossible and improper to omit in this first official Act my fervent supplications and prayers to that Almighty Being who rules over the Universe, who presides in the Council of Nations, and whose providential aid can supply every human defect..." Then concluding his inaugural address in a strong spiritual tone, he called each citizen to remember and acknowledge God saying, "We ought to be no less persuaded that the favorable smiles of heaven can never be expected on a nation that disregards the eternal rules of order and right, which Heaven itself has ordained..."¹⁵⁸ unquote.

Tonight, we honor these great presidents of our nation. We also offer extreme gratitude for the gift that God has given to our city these past nine years in the person of our City Manager, Kevin M. Rice. He became our city manager March the first 2004. One of his primary responsibilities as city manager is to deal with the city's annual budget and during his leadership our country and our county has faced the greatest recession since the great depression. But Kevin Rice has managed our city's revenues and helped Pismo Beach become the counties strongest city in terms of financial reserves. This gives such a sense and a feeling of security to our leaders and to each of us as citizens. He has encouraged our counsel to set mid-range and long-term goals. And these goal-setting sessions each year allows our city to accomplish good things for our citizens on schedule.

Tonight is the final council meeting Kevin will conduct before his retirement and we say thank you Kevin we deeply appreciate you, your leadership and your lifestyle, has enriched each of us. May god's blessings continue to rest upon you. And, Our Father, we invoke your blessings upon all who work at city hall. May each one sense the strength and the power of your enabling presence. Grant our mayor and each counsel member and their support staff your divine direction may they receive your solution for every challenge and need that they encounter tonight and in the future. May each decision that is made honor you and benefit our citizens and benefit the guests that visit our beautiful city. This invocation we pray in the name of our Loving Lord. Amen.

¹⁵⁸ This was not really the conclusion of Washington's address. This is from the fourth of seven paragraphs—the middle of the address.

March 5, 2013

Will you please bow your heart in prayer with me? Our Heavenly Father we thank you for our great nation, the United States of America. We are grateful for every blessing and benefit that is continually bestowed upon us as citizens. It was June 1954 when an amendment was made by the Congress to add the words "under God" to our Pledge of allegiance to our nation's flag. President Dwight D. Eisenhower, who was president said, and I quote, "In this way we are affirming the transcendence of religious faith in America's heritage and in its future. In this way we shall constantly strengthen those spiritual weapons which forever will be our country's most powerful resource in peace and in war. We thank You tonight that we are one nation under God." And as such we reaffirm our nation's motto "in God we trust."

We're so pleased that you've sent to us our new city manager, Mr. Jim Lewis. We welcome him wholeheartedly. He has studied and applied himself, thus gaining knowledge. Now in addition to this we ask that you would grant him your divine wisdom and your understanding and as such he will be prepared to face each challenge and each opportunity in a positive and a rewarding manner. May it be evident that he and our City Council work as a team with ease toward future progress in our city. We invoke your blessings on all who work at City Hall. May our mayor and the members of the City Council and their support staff each sense the strength and the power of Your enabling presence so that they may receive your solutions to each item on tonight's agenda and in the future. May you be honored and may every citizen and each guest in our beautiful city be benefited. This invocation we pray in the name of our Eternal Lord. Amen.

March 19, 2013

Will you again bow your heart with me in prayer? Our Heavenly Father, we're reminded tonight of the words that were prayed by president Abraham Lincoln in 1863 during the Civil War. Our beloved country so greatly needed Your divine help and intervention and he prayed these words: "It is the duty of nations as well as men to owe their dependence upon the over ruling power of God. And to confess their sins and transgressions and humble sorrow yet with assured hope that genuine repentance will lead to mercy and pardon. And to recognize the sublime truth announced in the Holy Scriptures and proven by all history, that those nations only are blessed whose God is the Lord."

And tonight our Heavenly Father, it is in this spirit that we pray this invocation. We do acknowledge Your divine providence and we do desire to do Your will. We are extremely grateful for all of your benefits: For life, and friends, and health, and prosperity, and your protection upon our beloved land. In heartfelt humility we invoke your divine wisdom to be graciously bestowed upon every member of our City Council. Grant solutions to each problem and each need so you, oh God, will be honored and we will be benefited. We pray again the prayer of President Theodore Roosevelt who prayed a one-sentence prayer, saying, "We invoke the direction and the favor of almighty God for our guidance." We declare our dependability and our responsibility and intention to pray daily for your leadership in the lives and the decisions of each council member and their support staff. We ask you to fill City Hall and these council chambers with the peace and the power of your divine presence. May each home and each citizen and each guest feel the impact of your powerful presence in our city. Thank you for responding to our united prayers. This invocation we pray in the name of our personal Lord. Amen.

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April 2, 2013

May I ask you to bow your hearts in prayer? Our Heavenly Father we thank you for the privilege to be American citizens, with all the privileges and responsibilities that this entails. Our founding fathers believed America's government must be a government under God and wrote protection for the freedoms we enjoy. History and biblical writings taught them that devastation always accompanies sin and sinful lifestyles. However, God's favor accompanies righteousness and anyone who lives without compromise. These men knew that public prayer and public acknowledgement of God both reflect our national character and promote our common good. Your continued favor has been graciously demonstrated to our nation and to each of us since 9/11. On numerous occasions you have shown your protection upon citizens of our great nation. Today we remember to say thank you and to ask your continued blessings upon those who serve in the FBI and the CIA at home and abroad. And we boldly declare our nation's motto "In God We Trust." We invite you to reign supreme in our nation and in our city. May the light of your presence and the light of your power so avail that unrighteousness and no strong hold of evil can ever prevail.

We give thanks for our mayor and her colleagues on our city council whom we have freely elected to serve us. These are our friends. We're grateful for their leadership. And for their concern of our city of Pismo Beach and for each of us as citizens. May your divine guidance be generously bestowed on them tonight and this council meeting. Work through them and their gracious support staff that proper solutions may be given for each item on tonight's agenda. We invoke the direction and the favor of Almighty God to be our guide. Long may our land be bright with freedom's Holy Light. Protect us by thy might Great God our King. This invocation we pray in the name of our personal Lord. Amen.

May 7, 2013

Our Heavenly Father, last Thursday, May 2, was celebrated in our nation as a National Day of Prayer. Hundreds of thousands of citizens gathered in groups large and small. We united our voices in prayer to God, to affirm a living faith in our eternal God, and to seek His favor and His blessings upon our beloved country, the United States of America.

This annual event was established by a Joint Resolution of Congress, April 17, 1952, and signed into law by President Harry Truman. This is not a political event, but a day that causes us to remember how our Founding Fathers sought the wisdom of God for solutions to critical decisions. Recognizing our sins and our shortcomings, we ask God to grant us His forgiveness. As well, we are aware that our country needs a deep moral and spiritual renewal. So humbly we come before God, seeking His guidance for each of our leaders, and His grace upon us as individual citizens.

It was President Franklin Roosevelt who declared, “We cannot read the history of the rise and development as a nation without reckoning the place the Bible has occupied in shaping the advances of our republic. Where we have been the truest and the most consistent in obeying the Scriptures, we have attained the greatest measure of contentment and prosperity.” For the Bible says, “Blessed is the man who trust in the Lord.”¹⁵⁹

Once again tonight, we boldly proclaim our nation’s motto “In God We Trust,” and we invoke your divine wisdom upon each member of our City Council and their talented support staff. We ask you to provide solutions to each challenge and each opportunity that they consider, in order that You may be honored and we may be benefitted. Fill City Hall and these council chambers with the peace and the power of your divine presence, and may each home and each citizen and each guest sense the impact of your presence in our beautiful city. This invocation we pray in the name of our Loving Lord. Amen.

¹⁵⁹ Jeremiah 17:7. This passage is meant to be read with 17:5-6: “Thus saith the LORD; Cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth from the LORD. For he shall be like the heath in the desert, and shall not see when good cometh; but shall inhabit the parched places in the wilderness, in a salt land and not inhabited.”

May 21, 2013

Our Heavenly Father, throughout history many nations have built monuments to record victories in battle and peoples they have conquered. National monuments and symbols reflect the hearts of the people, and identify what they believe is the source of their nation's greatness and achievements. But America, our country, is unique. Our monuments have no record of peoples conquered or nations conquered, or the destruction of cities and empires. Our monuments contain the declaration that the source of our birth, the source of our liberties, and the source of our greatness, is God.

Our nation was birthed by men who had a firm reliance upon almighty God, and particularly expressed in our nation's capital, Washington, D.C., is our nation's faith in God. And it is inscribed on our buildings and our monuments and our national symbols. In the great hall of the Jefferson building are the Gutenberg Bible and a hand-copied giant Bible.

President Andrew Jackson declared, "The Bible is the source upon which our republic rest."¹⁶⁰ And many Bible quotations can be found on the ceilings and walls, such as Micah 6:8, which says, "What does the Lord require of you but to do justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with thy God."¹⁶¹ President Calvin Coolidge, our thirtieth U.S. President, said, "The strength of our country is the strength of its religious convictions." The foundations of our society and our government rest on the teachings of the Bible. And tonight, we are most grateful for the national heritage left us by our forefathers and our founders. And it is in this spirit that we boldly affirm our nation's motto "In God We Trust."

As we pray tonight, we will not forget our fellow citizens in Oklahoma and elsewhere. They have suffered because of the powerful tornadoes packing up to 200 mile an hour winds. Whole communities have been destroyed. Many have lost loved ones and family members, and we pray earnestly and sincerely tonight, Our Father, that you would cause them to experience your comfort and your love and your powerful presence. Sustain them in this time of personal loss.

And tonight at this City Council meeting we ask that you would cause each of our friends whom we have freely elected to serve on our City Council, that they would lead us on righteous paths. May they manifest integrity of heart and transparency of spirit. Cause each council member that they would receive a new dimension of your divine enablement. Function through them as you did through King

¹⁶⁰ No primary source provided or discernable. The earliest located source is Frederic William Farrar, *History of Interpretation: eight lectures preached before the University of Oxford in the year MDCCCLXXXV on the foundation of the late Rev. John Bampton*, page xxvii (MacMillan and Co., London, 1886), http://books.google.com/books?id=kVX92B3TRkMC&printsec=frontcover&source=gbs_ge_summary_r&cad=0#v=onepage&q&f=false. According to the title page, Farrar was Archdeacon and Canon of Westminster and Chaplain in Ordinary to the Queen. The Jackson quote is buried in a paragraph that begins, "My main wish has been to show the true basis whereon rests the sacredness of Holy Scripture... It is because there is no Book and no Literature which can for a moment supply the place of the Bible in the moral and spiritual education of mankind that I would do my utmost to save it from the injury of false theories and impossible interpretations." Although Farrar cites several sources just a few pages earlier, no source is provided for the deathbed quote by Jackson: " 'That book sir,' said the American President, Andrew Jackson, pointing to the family Bible during his last illness, 'is the rock on which our Republic rests.' "

¹⁶¹ Micah 6:8 - "He has shown you, O mortal, what is good. And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God." This quote is on one of the nine symbolic statues in the Library of Congress representing the areas of knowledge. The statues are: Art, Commerce, History, Law, Philosophy, Poetry, Religion and Science. The quote appears about the Religion statue.

David of whom the Bible records, “He led them according to the integrity of his heart, and he guided them by the skillfulness of his hands.”¹⁶² We entrust our City Council and their support staff and each citizen to your care and to your keeping, for your honor and our good tonight and in the future. This invocation we pray in the name of our loving and gracious Lord. Amen.

¹⁶² Psalm 78:72

June 4, 2013

Would you please join me in prayer? Our Heavenly Father, we are very mindful of our fellow citizens who have suffered so deeply because of the powerhouse fires in southern California. Some have lost their homes and all their belongings. Several of our courageous firefighters have been injured. Give proper weather conditions we ask, so that these fires will be totally contained and extinguished quickly. Allow your loving concern to bring peace and comfort to each heart and each life.

We express our thanks for all the manifold blessings and your continued favors that we receive, and it is our desire to honor you in our daily lives. With great appreciation we boldly proclaim tonight our nation's motto "In God We Trust." Solomon, the wisest king who ever ruled, penned in the Holy Scriptures these words: "Righteousness exalts a nation, but sin is a reproach and an embarrassment to any people."¹⁶³ Tonight, we ally ourselves with the words of one of our greatest statesmen, Daniel Webster. He served as a United States Senator, and then later as Secretary of State. 150 years ago he declared, "If we abide by the principles taught in the Holy Bible, our country will go on prospering and to prosper. But if we in our posterity neglect the instructions and the authority of the Bible, no man can tell how sudden a catastrophe may overwhelm us, and bury all of our glory into profound obscurity."¹⁶⁴ So cause each of us to accept such wise instruction personally, and make it a part of our lives and our lifestyles daily.

Tonight, in the dignity of this City Council meeting, we invoke your wisdom to guide our Mayor, her colleagues, and their support staff. May they make wise decisions that will honor you and make better conditions for the citizens and the guests who visit our beautiful city of Pismo Beach. Together with your almighty help, combined with your divine wisdom, we are convinced that every challenge that confronts our City Council will find your solution and be properly resolved. God grant this. Thank you for hearing our united prayers. This invocation we pray in the blessed name in the wonderful name of our Savior and Lord. Amen.

¹⁶³ Proverbs 14:34

¹⁶⁴ This quote is inaccurate. The true quote does not mention the "Holy Bible" or the "Bible" at all. It does mention religious institutions, but only in conjunction with morality and our political constitution. The following is accurate:

"...if we maintain those institutions of government and that political union, exceeding all praise as much as it exceeds all former examples of political associations, we may be sure of one thing, that, while our country furnishes material for a thousand masters of the historic art, it will afford no topic for a Gibbon. It will have no Decline and Fall. It will go on prospering and to prosper. But if we and our posterity reject religious institutions and authority, violate the rules of eternal justice, trifle with the injunctions of morality, and recklessly destroy the political constitution which holds us together, no man can tell how sudden a catastrophe may overwhelm us that shall bury all our glory in profound obscurity. Should that catastrophe happen, let it have no history! Let the horrible narrative never be written! Let its fate be like that of the lost books of Livy, which no human eye shall ever read, or the missing Pleiad, of which no man can ever know more than that it is lost, and lost forever!"

Daniel Webster, An Address Delivered before the New York Historical Society, February 23, 1852, available at <http://archive.org/stream/cu31924064123064#page/n5/mode/2up>

June 18, 2013

Would you please bow your heart with me in prayer? Our Heavenly Father, our nation, the United States of America, has been bathed in prayer and respect for the teaching of the Bible since our earliest beginnings. In 1787 at the Constitutional Convention, James Madison read from the Bible, Isaiah 33:22, “The Lord is our judge, the Lord is our lawgiver, the Lord is our king; he will save us.” And on the basis of the Bible reading, he proposed the plan to divide our central government into three branches: judicial, God our judge; legislative, God our lawgiver; and executive, God our king. He discovered our model of government from the eternal governor.¹⁶⁵

In 1800 John Jay, the first Chief Justice of the U.S. Supreme Court, said, “The most effective means of securing the continuance of our civil and religious liberties is to always remember with reverence and gratitude the source from which they flowed.” Warren G. Harding, our 29th president, said, “I implore the favor and the guidance of God in Heaven. With these, I am unafraid and confidently face the future.”

And in June 1954 Congress added the words “Under God” to our Pledge. President Eisenhower said in that day, “In this way we reaffirm the transcendence of religious faith in America’s heritage and America’s future. By this, we shall constantly strengthen the spiritual weapons, which forever will be our country’s most powerful resource in peace and in war.” And so we now boldly reaffirm our nation’s motto “In God We Trust.”

Tonight, in the dignity of this public City Council meeting, we invoke your divine presence to fill these council chambers. Give your wisdom generously to our mayor and her colleagues for the matters placed on the agenda. With your omnipotent help and with your divine wisdom, guide them to think clearly and wisely regarding each challenge that confronts them tonight. Grant to them your solutions to properly resolve each matter that they consider. May you be honored and may each citizen benefit from their decisions. God, bless and protect our beloved country and our beautiful city, and bless and protect each citizen. This invocation we pray in the name of our Loving Lord. Amen.

¹⁶⁵ This is simply false. Madison did no such thing. Historians are certain that this idea did not come from the Bible. It came from Montesquieu who never mentioned or referred to the Bible in his discussion of the separation. See Barron Charles Louis Joseph de Secondat Montesquieu *The Spirit of the Laws*, Book XI. The Federalist no. 47 is entirely devoted to laying out the workings of “this invaluable precept in the science of politics.” James Madison, the author, wrote that “no political truth is certainly of greater intrinsic value, or is stamped with the authority of more enlightened patrons of liberty, than that [of separation of powers.]” He goes on to say “[t]he oracle who is always consulted and cited on this subject is the celebrated Montesquieu.”

Furthermore this biblical passage does not separate power; it concentrates power in one being. This is exactly what the Constitution sought to avoid. The founders thought that “concentrating these [powers] in the same hands is precisely the definition of despotic government” (Thomas Jefferson, Notes on the State of Virginia, Query 13, 120-121, 1784) and that such a concentration was “the very definition of tyranny.” The Federalist No. 47 (James Madison). Furthermore, the founders thought that “without separation of persons there cannot be a meaningful separation of powers.” The Founders' Constitution: Vol. I Major Themes 312 (Philip B. Kurland, Ralph Lerner eds., Liberty Fund)(2000).

July 2, 2013

Will you please bow your heart with me in prayer? Our Heavenly Father, our hearts grieve when we think of the 19 firefighters who died last Sunday fighting an out of control wildfire in Yarnell, Arizona, near Phoenix. So many were young men, leaving wives and children. We pray your comfort to strengthen and to sustain each of them and their loved ones who mourn such great loss. Bless and protect our firefighters and our first responders everywhere.

July 4 will be a reality in just two days. All around our great country and in our city, millions of our citizens will celebrate the great document we hold so dear to our hearts, the Declaration of Independence. King George III of England declared the power of the divine right of kings. As such, he held firmly the establishment of absolute tyranny over the 13 colony states. Judges were totally dependent on his will, with a deaf ear to the voice of justice. Patrick Henry, the first elected governor of Virginia, addressed the legislature with eyes uplifted, his hands aloft, and his whole soul burning with divine inspiration,¹⁶⁶ he reminded them how God supernaturally delivered Israel from the tyranny of Pharaoh and the Egyptian army.¹⁶⁷ He then declared, “The same God still rules in Heaven, and is watching from His throne the oppression of His people in America. He is still strong and mighty to save.”¹⁶⁸ And then he spoke so movingly, “I know not what course others may take, but as for me, give me liberty or give me death.” Our Declaration of Independence clearly states that all men are created equal and are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights. Among them are life and liberty and the pursuit of happiness, and that to secure these rights, governments are instituted.

When the document was read publicly in Philadelphia, great celebration followed. The Liberty Bell rang loudly. It was called the Liberty Bell because on the words of that bell these words were engraved from the Bible: Leviticus 25:12: “Proclaim liberty throughout all the land.”¹⁶⁹ The 56 signers declared their integrity: “We mutually pledge to each other our lives, our fortunes, and our sacred honor.”

We are grateful tonight for God’s favor upon our country, and we are proud to be called Americans. We invoke your richest favor and wisdom upon each member of our City Council as they lead our citizens to honor God. May your paths become our chosen ways. We conclude this invocation with words written by Samuel Francis Smith in 1831: “My native country thee, land of the noble free, thy name I love. I love thy rocks and rills, thy woods and templed hills, my heart with rapture fills, like that above. Let music swell the breeze, and ring from all the trees, sweet freedom’s song. Let mortals tongue awake, and let all that breathe partake, let rocks their silence break, the sound prolong. Our

¹⁶⁶ The text of Patrick Henry’s Give me liberty or give me death speech (23 March 1775) is based on supposition. It comes from a biography of Henry written by William Wirt (*Sketches of the Life and Character of Patrick Henry* (Philadelphia) 1836), who was three years old when Henry gave the speech. Wirt began to collect materials for Henry’s biography in 1808, nine years after Henry died. He published the book in 1817, more than 15 years after Henry died. In the words of one writer: “There are no videotapes or films of that day, no audio recordings, not even a stenographer’s record of Henry’s words. We have nothing to guide us but the memories, years removed from the time, of those who were there.” Jim Cox, “The Speech: It may not be the one that Patrick Henry so famously made,” *Colonial Williamsburg Journal*, Winter 02-03, available at <http://www.history.org/foundation/journal/winter02-03/speech.cfm>. And Wirt’s biography was “a romanticized, exaggerated, one-sided story.” *Id.* A computer analysis of the linguistic style of speech shows it to be from Henry Tucker, a source of Wirt and friend of Henry, but not of Henry himself. *Id.*

¹⁶⁷ This allusion does not appear in Wirt, or any reputable source’s rendition of the speech. It appears to be invented.

¹⁶⁸ Nor does this quote appear in Wirt, or any reputable source’s rendition of the speech. It appears to be invented.

¹⁶⁹ The Liberty Bell was forged in 1752 but didn’t get its moniker until the 1830’s when it was adopted by abolitionists. Gary B. Nash *The Liberty Bell*, 36-38 Yale University Press, (2010).

fathers' God to Thee, author of liberty, to Thee we sing. Long may our land be bright, with freedom's holy light, protect us by Thy might, great God our King." Amen.

July 16, 2013
Dr. Paul Toms

Join with me please in a moment of prayer. Eternal God our Heavenly Father, we come before you with thanksgiving this afternoon. We're grateful for the community in which we live. We're grateful for all the beauties and the things that we enjoy. We're grateful for your provision for us and for our families. We're grateful for every good and perfect gift¹⁷⁰ and we begin our meeting today with thanksgiving for all your blessings. We seek today your hand of guidance¹⁷¹ and direction upon us.

We thank you for policemen, for firemen, for our schoolteachers, for our doctors and our nurses, our public servants, our families, for our children and youth, for all the good gifts that we have day by day. We think of the great turmoil that goes on in so many parts of the world, even in our own country, and here we are in quietness and peace, and we're grateful for it.

Not only do you tell us to return thanks to you for your blessing but you ask us to give you petitions and prayers.¹⁷² And so we come to you today with our needs. This is a busy and significant time, these are public servants that have come today to do work and activities and make decisions that will affect the lives of our community and we commend each one of these people into your care.¹⁷³ Your Book says, "if any man lack wisdom let him ask of God, who giveth to all men liberally."¹⁷⁴ And so we need decisions that will be made in keeping with Your Plan and Your Will, that will bless our community, that will bless our young people, that will bless our families, that will help us all. So today we commend this meeting into your care.¹⁷⁵ Thank you for public servants, thank you for people who assume responsibility bless every person here today in this room and give us wisdom and guidance and understanding. May the Joy of the Lord be our strength, may the Peace of God guide and keep us and we will be grateful to you for every good and perfect gift that comes down through Christ, Jesus our Lord¹⁷⁶ we pray. Amen

¹⁷⁰ See James 1:17 (KJV) "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning."

¹⁷¹ See e.g., Isaiah 25:10, 66:14; Psalm 139:5 (NLT)

¹⁷² Philippians 4:6 "Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God."

¹⁷³ See Acts 20:32 (KJV) "And now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified."

¹⁷⁴ James 1:5 (KJV) "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all *men* liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him."

¹⁷⁵ See Acts 20:32 (KJV) "And now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified."

¹⁷⁶ See James 1:17 (KJV) "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning."

August 20, 2013

Our Heavenly Father, in our great country we recognize that prayer is a gift from God to every human being. It is a gift that permits us to come before God our Creator with heartfelt worship and request, and with our deepest hopes. Prayer reminds us that when we bow our hearts or fall on our knees, we are all equal in the eyes of the Living God.¹⁷⁷

In prayer we are assured that we are never alone in times of personal difficulty or individual suffering. This is why Benjamin Franklin proposed that the Constitutional Convention of 1787 begin each day with prayer and out of this group of public leaders who gave themselves to public prayer¹⁷⁸ was born the Constitution of the United States on September 18,¹⁷⁹ 1787, nearly 226 years ago. No legal document ever written by man has done so much good for so many people and has become the hope and the envy of every generation. Our founding fathers left us a legacy and a testimony to the role of God in American history.

And so tonight we remember the civil strife in Egypt and Syria where innocent men, women, and children are being killed every day by fellow citizens of opposing political persuasion. These needless killings have continued for weeks and even months with seemingly no benefit to society. And so tonight in prayer we pray that there may be a speedy cessation of these hostilities.

The Holy Scriptures strongly teach us, and I quote, “Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord.”¹⁸⁰ And so today we once again give our personal affirmation to our nation’s motto, “In God We Trust.” And in the dignity of this city council meeting, we invoke your Divine Wisdom and Guidance to be upon our mayor and her colleagues as well as their support staff. May righteousness always fill city hall. May righteousness always fill these council chambers. Then each decision will be a good decision and this will honor god and improve the lives of each citizen and each guest in our beautiful city. This invocation we pray in our Savior’s name. Amen

¹⁷⁷ Jeremiah 10:10 (NIV) “But the LORD is the true God; he is the living God, the eternal King. When he is angry, the earth trembles; the nations cannot endure his wrath.” *See also*, Matthew 16:15 “ ‘But what about you?’ [Jesus] asked. ‘Who do you say I am?’ Simon Peter answered, ‘You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God.’ ”

¹⁷⁸ Again, no prayer occurred at the Constitutional Convention — Franklin’s motion failed. And if prayer had occurred, it would not have been public prayer—the Convention proceedings were conducted in secret. *See* Edward J. Larson and Michael P. Winship *The Constitutional Convention: A Narrative History from the Notes of James Madison* (2005).

¹⁷⁹ The Constitution was signed on September 17, 1787, that is why Constitution Day is celebrated on September 17.

¹⁸⁰ Psalm 33:12.

September 3, 2013
Dr Paul Toms, no audio available.

September 17, 2013

Will you bow your heart in prayer with me? Our Heavenly Father, our hearts have been deeply touched by the torrential rains that have fallen in and around Boulder, Colorado. Bridges have been knocked out and roads have been washed away and several people have drowned and hundreds are still missing. Many have lost considerable possessions including their homes. And we ask that God would sustain and comfort their hearts and their lives. And yesterday our nation was shocked as a gunman fired a weapon killing 12 people and wounding many more before he himself was killed. So many families and loved ones have been effected by this senseless action at the Washington D.C. Navy Yard. May the families and the friends of the fallen and injured be strengthened by the power of your presence.

We join our hearts today with countless thousands of our citizens who are praying for a spiritual awakening among the citizens of our country. Many of our peoples and our leaders have turned from the path of righteousness in their own lives and lifestyles. King Solomon was a political leader where peace and unprecedented prosperity was enjoyed by the citizens of his nation and he proclaimed the greatest political idea of all generations, it's written in Holy Scripture, it says: "Righteousness exalts a nation, but sin is a reproach and an embarrassment to any people."¹⁸¹ He further stated, "The way of the Lord is strength for the upright."¹⁸² And he concluded by saying that "He who walks in integrity walks securely."¹⁸³

Cause our leaders and our citizens to stand up for clear standards expressed in the Bible, the Holy Writings of God. May they stand firm for our freedoms to live by these standards. Corporate righteousness produces corporate benefits. So help us to refirm—to recall what our forefathers called our firm reliance on the protection of Divine Providence and give thanks for the freedoms and prosperities that the people of nation enjoy. We pray for your continued help and guidance. Allow your Infinite Wisdom to be graciously bestowed on our city council whom we have freely elected. May your leadership be manifested in their lives and in their decisions as well as the staff that supports them. We seek your wisdom for the solutions to every situation that they consider. Fill city hall and these council chambers with the peace and the power of your eternal presence and cause every home and every citizen in Pismo Beach to feel the impact. This invocation we pray in the strong name of our Loving Lord. Amen.

¹⁸¹ Proverbs 14:34.

¹⁸² Proverbs 10:29.

¹⁸³ Proverbs 10:9.

October 1, 2013
Rajan Zed

[audio cut off] ... Glory of the Deity Supreme, who is inside the heart of the Earth, inside the life of the sky, and inside the soul of the Heaven. May He stimulate and illuminate our minds.¹⁸⁴

Lead me from the unreal to the real, lead me from darkness to light, lead me from death to immortality.¹⁸⁵

Fulfill all your duties, action is better than inaction, even to maintain your body you are obliged to act. Selfish action imprisons the world. Act selflessly without any thought of personal profit.¹⁸⁶

Strive constantly to serve the welfare of the world. By devotion to selfless, one attains the supreme goal of life. Do your work with the welfare of others always in mind.¹⁸⁷

May we be protected together. May we be nourished together. May we work together with great vigor. May our study be enlightening. May no obstacle arise between us.¹⁸⁸

United your resolve, united your hearts, may your spirits be as one, that you may long dwell in unity and concord. Peace, peace, peace be unto all.¹⁸⁹ OM. Thank you.

[The City Chaplain gave the pledge of allegiance, not Mr. Zed]

¹⁸⁴ This prayer begins with the Gayatri Mantra, “the most hallowed mantra” of Hindu Scripture. See Sri Chinmoy, *Commentaries on the Veda, the Upanishads and the Bhagavad Gita*, 87 (Aum Publications, 1996).

¹⁸⁵ This is a quote from the Upanishads, the texts on which the Hindu religion is based. Like the Christian Bible, they contain revealed truth and make claims about the nature of reality. This particular quote is from the Brihadâranyaka Upanishad, First Adhyaya, Third Brahmana, para. 27. See *The Upanishads*, Part 2, 83-84 (Max Muller, trans., 1879) available at <http://www.sacred-texts.com/hin/sbe15/sbe15054.htm>.

¹⁸⁶ This quote is from the *Bhagavad Gita*, 3.08-3.09. Lord Krishna, the eighth incarnation of Lord Vishnu, speaks these words to Arjuna.

¹⁸⁷ This is a quote from the Bhagavad-Gita.

¹⁸⁸ This is a quote from the Upanishads, it appears several times in the Taittiriya Upanishad.

¹⁸⁹ Rig Veda X, 191, 3.

October 15, 2013

Our Heavenly Father, President George Washington spoke so clearly to his day and to our day when he declared and I quote, “No people can be bound to acknowledge and adore the invincible hand,¹⁹⁰ which conducts the affairs of men more than those of the United States.” So we offer to you tonight our God, sincere gratitude and appreciation for your continued blessings and protection and bountifulness to our country and to our citizens. We ask that you would continue to endow our intelligence community with your favor and your skills as they seek each moment to protect each of us as citizens at home and abroad. And tonight we unite our hearts as a grateful people and boldly affirm our nation’s motto, “In God We Trust.”

Even now, we bow our hearts in true humility and ask your forgiveness for our personal sins and our sins as a nation. Cause us to walk uprightly¹⁹¹ and to pursue righteousness. The Bible teaches us from the writings of King Solomon that “Righteousness exalts a nation, but sin is a reproach and an embarrassment to any people.”¹⁹² Tonight we invoke your invisible presence to hallow these city council chambers. May your wisdom and your understanding be freely granted to our mayor, her fellow council members and their support staff. We pray this to be the resource that becomes the solution to each challenge and each opportunity we face.

We give you our thanks and our gratitude for the manner in which you continue to bless our city financially. This past July, the transient occupancy tax, the tax our guests pay when they stay in our hotel rooms again exceeded one million dollars in one month. Thank you for blessing our diligent business people, which in turn has blessed our city treasury. God, bless the citizens and the guests of our beautiful city of Pismo Beach. God, bless America and, God, protect America. This invocation we pray in the wonderful name of our Loving Lord. Amen.

¹⁹⁰ From Washington’s first inaugural address, but it actually said “invisible hand,” not invincible hand.

¹⁹¹ Proverbs 10:29.

¹⁹² Proverbs 14:34.



PROCLAMATION

A PROCLAMATION OF THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PISMO BEACH HONORING DR. PAUL E. JONES FOR HIS 60 YEARS OF ORDAINED SERVICE

WHEREAS, Dr. Paul E. Jones graduated from Life Seminary with a Doctor of Theology Degree in 1950; and

WHEREAS, Dr. Jones was ordained in Public Ministry in 1950; and

WHEREAS, Dr. Jones was Pastor of the Four Square Church in Canon City, Colorado for seven years; Pastor in Portland, Oregon for three years, Pastor in Denver, Colorado for nine years, and Pastor in Santa Fe Springs, California for four years; and

WHEREAS, Dr. Jones served as the Supervising Bishop for 16 years for the Southern California District where he planted 125 new churches, resulting in 206 churches and 600 Pastors within the District; and

WHEREAS, Dr. Jones has served as the Assistant Protestant Chaplain for the Colorado State Penitentiary for five years; Chaplain of the Civil Air Patrol for 15 years, retiring in rank as Lt. Colonel; Board of Regents for Life Seminary for 10 years; and has served as the Pismo Beach City Chaplin for the past five years; and

WHEREAS, Dr. Jones has been awarded the Honorary Degree of Doctor of Divinity and recently honored with the Gold Ministerial Lapel Pin.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the City Council of the City of Pismo Beach hereby honors Dr. Paul E. Jones for his 60 years of ordained service and for his outstanding integrity and devotion to serving his fellow man.

Dated this 15th of June 2010

Mary Ann Reiss
Mayor



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Copy

Do NOT Remove

AGENDA

City of Pismo Beach
City Council Closed Session

Tuesday, March 1, 2005 – 4:00 p.m.

760 Mattie Road
Pismo Beach, California

**CALL TO ORDER:
ROLL CALL:**

Mayor Reiss

Mayor Reiss
Mayor Pro Tem Gonzales-Gee
Councilmembers: Higginbotham, Natoli, Rabenaldt

PUBLIC COMMENTS:

Mayor to ask for public comments specific to the below listed items.

AGENDA ITEM (S):

Item 1: CONFERENCE WITH LEGAL COUNSEL – REGARDING PENDING LITIGATION 54956.9:

City of Pismo Beach v. Gragg Canyon Partners, LLC

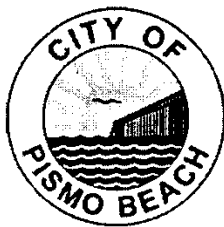
It is noted that the contents of closed session meetings are confidential and exempt from disclosure.

ADJOURNMENT

Affidavit Date & Time of Posting

Date: February 24, 2005 Time: 10:30 a.m.

By: Lori Grigsby, CMC, City Clerk Title: City Clerk



AGENDA
City of Pismo Beach
REGULAR
City Council Meeting

Tuesday, March 1, 2005 – 4:30 p.m.

760 Mattie Road
Pismo Beach, California

CALL TO ORDER

ROLL CALL:

Mayor:	Reiss
Mayor Pro Tem:	Gonzales-Gee
Councilmembers:	Higginbotham, Rabenaldt, Natoli

INVOCATION: Dr. Paul Jones

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE:

Next Resolution No. R-05-009

Next Ordinance No. O-05-03

1. PRESENTATIONS

Item 1.A: A Proclamation of the City Council of the City of Pismo Beach Honoring Kay Luis.

Recommendation Mayor to present Proclamation to Harry Luis.

Item 1.B: Proclamation regarding American Red Cross Month.

Recommendation: Mayor to present Proclamation to Kelly Van Buren, Public Support Director.

6. BUSINESS ITEMS

Item 6.A: A Resolution of the City Council of the City of Pismo Beach Allocating \$25,000 from the General Fund Contingency Account to Fund the New Arroyo Grande High School Pool.

Recommendation: Mr. Starkie to request funding and Council adopt Resolution by roll call vote.

Item 6.B: Request from Mayor Pro Tem Gonzales-Gee regarding appointing a City Chaplain.

Recommendation: Discussion and Direction

7. CITY MANAGER'S REPORT

8. CITY ATTORNEY'S REPORT

9. COUNCIL SUBCOMMITTEE REPORTS

1. Area Agency on Aging – Natoli/Gonzales-Gee
2. Dinosaur Caves Preservation Society – Gonzales-Gee/Higginbotham
3. Economic Vitality Corporation – Rabenaldt/Natoli
4. Pismo Beach Conference & Visitors Bureau – Higginbotham
5. Friends of Price House – Gonzales-Gee/Higginbotham
6. Integrated Waste Management Authority JPA – Natoli
7. Mobile Home Rent Stabilization – Gonzales-Gee/Natoli
8. SLO Council of Governments – Reiss/Gonzales-Gee (alt)
9. SLO Regional Transit Authority – Reiss
10. Zone 3 Advisory Committee – Rabenaldt/Natoli (alt)
11. SLO County Water Resources Advisory Committee – Vacant
12. SLO South County Area Transit – Gonzales-Gee
13. SLO Air Pollution Control District – Gonzales-Gee/Reiss (alt)
14. Scenic Highway Committee – Natoli
15. South County Youth Coalition – Higginbotham/Natoli (alt)
16. EOC – Higginbotham
17. Community Improvement Group – Gonzales-Gee/Rabenaldt
18. Ventana Fire Station – Gonzales-Gee/Higginbotham
19. California Joint Powers Insurance Authority – Reiss

10. PULLED CONSENT AGENDA ITEMS

11. ADJOURNMENT

The Council meeting will adjourn by 11:00 p.m. unless a four-fifths vote of the Council wishes to continue past that time. If the meeting is adjourned at 11:00 p.m. any remaining agenda items will be continued to the next regular meeting.

Affidavit Date & Time of Posting

By: _____

Date: February 24, 2005

Title: City Clerk

Time: 4:30 p.m.

General Information: The City of Pismo Beach meets on the First Tuesday at 4:30 p.m. and Third Tuesdays of each month at 4:30 p.m., unless otherwise noticed.

Council Agendas: The City Council agenda is now available for public review at the City's website at www.pismo-beach.org and the City Clerk's Office, 760 Mattie Road, Pismo Beach, California on the Thursday, prior to the scheduled meeting.

Council Meeting Broadcasting is on Channel 20 three times a day.

Notice Regarding Americans with Disabilities Act

In compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act, if you need special assistance to participate in this meeting, please contact the City Clerk's Office at 773-7003 at least 48 hours prior to the meeting to ensure that reasonable arrangements can be made to provide accessibility to the meeting. (28CFR 35.102-35.104 ADA Title II).



PISMO BEACH COUNCIL AGENDA REPORT

SUBJECT/TITLE:

A RESOLUTION OF THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PISMO BEACH TO ESTABLISH THE POSITION OF CITY CHAPLAIN.

RECOMMENDATION:

Council receives report from City Attorney and City Manager and discusses whether it is appropriate to establish the position of City Chaplain.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

Council directed staff to agendize a discussion of whether to establish the new position of City Chaplain. Presently, Pismo Beach has no such position. Of the 58 California cities responding to staff's question concerning the same, only three cities responded that they have a City Chaplain (Attachment 1).

In October of every year, the staff sends a letter to local ministers and churches asking them to consider volunteering to give an invocation/prayer at the beginning of every regularly scheduled City Council meeting. Prior to 2003, many local ministers volunteered to give an invocation at the City Council meeting. Subsequent to the decision in the Rubin v. City of Burbank case (2002), Pismo Beach had approximately two ministers volunteer to give a prayer. The essence of the Rubin v. Burbank case is that sectarian invocations are improper at a City Council meeting. **On the 5th of August 2003 the City Council of Pismo Beach unanimously passed a resolution prohibiting invocations that are sectarian in nature (Attachment2).**

If the effect of establishing a City Chaplain position would be to preclude other ministers from giving an invocation, then the City is assuming some undetermined legal risk. Further, since the City has no historical chaplaincy program, instituting such a program may have significant constitutional obstacles especially in California's litigious climate.

If Council decides to establish the position of City Chaplain, staff recommends that the Council appoint an individual to fill the position for a one-year term, as this would permit various ministers to volunteer for the position. Ultimately the Council would interview candidates and make the selection.

FISCAL IMPACT:

No cost as this position would not be a paid position.

OPTIONS:

1. Establish the new Chaplain position by Resolution.
2. Continue under current City procedures.

Agenda Item: 6.B
Page 1

ATTACHMENTS:

1. Survey of California Cities
2. Resolution R-03-058 dated 5 August, 2003
3. Resolution

Prepared by: Kevin Rice, City Manager

Meeting Date: March 1, 2005

City Manager Approval:



Agenda Item: 6.B
Page 2

Attachment 1

SURVEY
Cities that Utilize a Chaplain
January 25, 2005

[CITY]*

[YES]*

[NO]*

**[Police
chaplain]***

Atwater		X	X
Burbank		X	X
Chino		X	X
Desert Hot Springs		X	X
Diamond Bar		X	
East Palo Alto		X	X
El Monte		X	X
Emeryville		X	X
Fort Bragg		X	
Fortuna		X	X
Galt		X	X
Gilroy		X	X
Glendora		X	X
Gridley		X	X (2)
Hanford		X	X
Hollister		X	?
Irvine		X	X
Kingsburg		X	X
La Quinta		X	
Lodi		X	X

130 *Plaintiff's have added this text, it appears in the heading of the chart but cannot be read by the scanner. The police chaplain heading is based on inference

SURVEY
Cities that Utilize a Chaplain
January 25, 2005

[CITY]*	[YES]*	[NO]*	[Police chaplain]*
Martinez		X	
Milpitas		X	
Monrovia		X	X
Moreno Valley		X	
Murrieta		X	X
Newark		X	X
Oceanside		X	X
Pico Rivera		X	
Pinole		X	
Pittsburg		X	X
Redding		X	X
Redlands	X		X
Richmond		X	
Salinas		X	
San Clemente		X	
San Dimas		X	
San Leandro		X	
San Marino		X	
Santa Clara	X		
Santa Clarita		X	

131 *Plaintiff's have added this text, it appears in the heading of the chart but cannot be read by the scanner. The police chaplain heading is based on inference

SURVEY
Cities that Utilize a Chaplain
January 25, 2005

[CITY]* [YES]* [NO]* [Police chaplain]*

	YES	NO	
Santa Paula		X	X (Fire)
Selma		X	
Simi Valley	X		X
Solvang		X	
St. Helena		X	
Susanville		X	
Temecula		X	X
Tiburon		X	
Vacaville		X	X
Whittier		X	X
Winters		X	
Woodland		X	X (3)
Yuba City		X	X

132 ***Plaintiff's have added this text, it appears in the heading of the chart but cannot be read by the scanner. The police chaplain heading is based on inference**

RESOLUTION NO. R-03-53

**A RESOLUTION OF THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PISMO BEACH
ADOPTING AN INVOCATION POLICY FOR CITY COUNCIL MEETINGS**

WHEREAS, the City of Pismo Beach Council meetings currently includes an invocation at the beginning of each Council meeting; and

WHEREAS, the Court in *Rubin v. City of Burbank* (2002) 101 Cal.App.4th 1194, held that invocations which are sectarian in nature, i.e., those which specifically recognize a religious faith, violate the establishment clause under the First Amendment of the United States Constitution; and

WHEREAS, the Court in *Rubin v. City of Burbank* permanently enjoined the City of Burbank from "knowingly and intentionally allowing sectarian prayer at city council meetings" and ordered the city to advise anyone conducting a prayer as part of the city council meeting that sectarian prayers are not permitted; and

WHEREAS, the City of Pismo Beach wishes to adopt an invocation policy which meets constitutional standards consistent with the Court of Appeals' ruling in *Rubin v. City of Burbank*.

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, by the City Council of the City of Pismo Beach as follows:

1. The City Council adopts the following invocation policy:

- (a) The City Council prohibits the offering of an invocation that is sectarian in nature, i.e., the City Council will not permit reference to any particular deity; and**
- (b) The City Council will advise anyone wishing to offer an invocation at City Council meetings that invocations that are sectarian in nature are not permitted.**

PASSED AND ADOPTED by the City Council of the City of Pismo Beach by motion of Councilmember Reiss, seconded by Councilmember Rabenaldt at the regular meeting City Council Meeting held this 5th day of August 2003, by the following roll call vote:

AYES: Councilmembers Reiss, Rabenaldt, Gonzales-Gee, Natoli and Mayor Crescione
NOES: None
ABSENT: None
ABSTAIN: None


Benito J. Crescione, Mayor

ATTEST:

Lori Grigsby, City Clerk

Resolution R-05-_____

**A RESOLUTION OF THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PISMO BEACH
ESTABLISHING THE NON-PAID POSITION OF CITY CHAPLAIN**

Whereas, the City Council of Pismo Beach acknowledges the blessings that the creator has bestowed on the citizens of Pismo Beach; and

Whereas, the City Council of Pismo Beach believes it is necessary and appropriate to commence every Council meeting with a non-sectarian prayer.

BE IT RESOLVED by the City Council of the City of Pismo Beach to establish the position of City Chaplain. Said position will be non-paid and filled on a one-year term. Annually, Council will interview candidates for the Chaplain position and select the Chaplain by voting.

UPON MOTION of Councilmember _____ seconded by Councilmember _____ the foregoing Resolution is hereby approved and adopted the 1st day of March, 2005 by the following roll call vote, to wit:

AYES:
NOES:
ABSTAIN:
ABSENT:

Mayor, Mary Ann Reiss

ATTEST:

Lori Grigsby, CMC, City Clerk

Agenda Item: 6.B
Page 7



MINUTES

City of Pismo Beach

REGULAR

City Council Meeting

Tuesday, March 1, 2005 – 4:30 p.m.

The City Council of the City of Pismo Beach met this date in a regular session at 4:33 p.m. in the City Council Chambers, 760 Mattie Road, Pismo Beach, California with Mayor Reiss presiding.

CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Reiss

ROLL CALL:

Present:

Mayor:	Reiss
Mayor Pro Tem:	Gonzales-Gee
Councilmembers:	Higginbotham, Rabenaldt, Natoli

INVOCATION: was given by Dr. Paul Jones

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE: was lead by Mayor Pro Tem Gonzales-Gee

Next Resolution No. R-05-009

Next Ordinance No. O-05-03

1. PRESENTATIONS

Item 1.A: A Proclamation of the City Council of the City of Pismo Beach Honoring Kay Luis.

Mayor Reiss presented a Proclamation to the family of Kay Luis.

Item 1.B: Proclamation regarding American Red Cross Month.

Mayor Reiss presented a Proclamation to Phil Harwick, Public Support Director for the American Red Cross.

2. PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD

At this time, members of the public may comment on any item NOT appearing on the agenda except for Consent Calendar items. Under State Law, matters presented under this item cannot be discussed or acted upon by the City Council at this time. For items appearing on the agenda, the public will be invited to make comments at the time the item comes up for Council consideration. At all times please use the microphone.

In response to your comments, the Mayor or presiding Councilmember may:

- ◆ Direct staff to assist or coordinate with you.
- ◆ A Councilmember may state a desire to meet with you.

The following citizens spoke:

Lorraine Trussler, Joan Knowlton, Steve Anderson, Dee Sannum, Rebecca Reibel, Alan Kaloian, Paul Sawko, Shelia Blakely, Jan McKibbin, Jean Edlund, Marti Anderson all spoke regarding this item.

MOTION 5.A:

Motion by Councilmember Rabenaldt seconded by Mayor Pro Tem Gonzales-Gee to vote in favor of the position of the appellant by Resolution # R-05-009. This item was approved by roll call vote. Passed 5-0.

AYES: Rabenaldt, Gonzales-Gee, Natoli, Higginbotham, Reiss
NOES: None

6. BUSINESS ITEMS

Item 6.A: A Resolution of the City Council of the City of Pismo Beach Allocating \$25,000 from the General Fund Contingency Account to Fund the New Arroyo Grande High School Pool.

Recommendation: Mr. Starkie to request funding and Council adopt Resolution by roll call vote.

Mr. Starkie spoke to Council regarding the AGHS pool facility.

Mayor Reiss asked for comments from the public. The following citizens spoke: John Fisher spoke regarding his approval of this resolution; Bill Worger noted the pool would be a great addition to the community.

MOTION 6.A:

Motion by Councilmember Rabenaldt seconded by Councilmember Higginbotham to approve Resolution# 05-010 contingent upon the use agreement being reviewed and approved by Council before release of funding and that all other agencies will contribute up to \$225,000 with the City of Pismo Beach contributing the final \$25,000 for AGHS to meet their goal of \$250,000 for the facility. This item was approved by roll call vote. Passed 5-0.

AYES: Gonzales-Gee, Natoli, Rabenaldt, Higginbotham, Reiss
NOES: None

Item 6.B: Request from Mayor Pro Tem Gonzales-Gee regarding appointing a City Chaplain.

Recommendation: Discussion and Direction

Mayor Reiss asked for public comments regarding this item. The following citizens spoke:

Don Day spoke regarding this item and feels Dr. Jones is giving back to the community.

Roscoe Mathieu spoke regarding the separation of church and state and the infringement on the rights of citizens and believes it's inappropriate.

MOTION 6.B:

Motion by Mayor Pro Tem Gonzales-Gee seconded by Councilmember Natoli to approve Resolution #05-011, establish the position of City Chaplain and order business cards and name badge. This item was approved by roll call vote. Passed 5-0.

AYES: Gonzales-Gee, Natoli, Rabenaldt, Higginbotham, Reiss

NOES: None

7. CITY MANAGER'S REPORT

City Manager, Kevin Rice reported on the following items: Remind everyone regarding the March 9, 2005 5:00 p.m. Budget Workshop and Public Hearing. Mr. Rice noted the hard work of Randy Bloom and his staff.

8. CITY ATTORNEY'S REPORT

City Attorney, Dave Fleishman noted that there have been reports of secret meetings of the Council. As far as Mr. Fleishman is concerned no Brown Act violation has occurred under his watch.

9. COUNCIL SUBCOMMITTEE REPORTS

1. Area Agency on Aging – Natoli/Gonzales-Gee
2. Dinosaur Caves Preservation Society – Gonzales-Gee/Higginbotham
3. Economic Vitality Corporation – Rabenaldt/Natoli
4. Pismo Beach Conference & Visitors Bureau – Higginbotham
5. Friends of Price House – Gonzales-Gee/Higginbotham
6. Integrated Waste Management Authority JPA – Natoli
7. Mobile Home Rent Stabilization – Gonzales-Gee/Natoli
8. SLO Council of Governments – Reiss/Gonzales-Gee (alt)
9. SLO Regional Transit Authority – Reiss
10. Zone 3 Advisory Committee – Rabenaldt/Natoli (alt)
11. SLO County Water Resources Advisory Committee – Vacant
12. SLO South County Area Transit – Gonzales-Gee
13. SLO Air Pollution Control District – Gonzales-Gee/Reiss (alt)

14. Scenic Highway Committee – Natoli
15. South County Youth Coalition – Higginbotham/Natoli (alt)
16. EOC – Higginbotham
17. Community Improvement Group – Gonzales-Gee/Rabenaldt
18. Ventana Fire Station –Gonzales-Gee/Higginbotham
19. California Joint Powers Insurance Authority – Reiss

Councilmember Natoli traveled to Navajo and reported on his meeting.

Councilmember Higginbotham attended the EOC meeting and reported the concerns of budget cuts and eliminating the CDBG Grants. She also attended the CVB meeting with Mike Madden and reported on the upcoming car show.

Councilmember Rabenaldt reported that he would be on the Dave Cogelton radio show, KVEC 940 AM, this Thursday at 4:00 p.m.

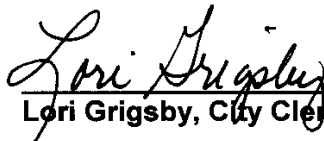
Mayor Reiss attended the Mayor's meeting, they discussed funding for cities.

10. PULLED CONSENT AGENDA ITEMS
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11. ADJOURNMENT


There being no further business, Council adjourned at 7:09 p.m.

ATTEST:



Lori Grigsby, City Clerk

APPROVED:



Mayor Mary Ann Reiss



<http://www.meetup.com/San-Luis-Obispo-Atheists/>

DATE: May 15, 2012

Contact: atheistsunited.slo@gmail.com

Objection to Invocations at the City Council Meetings of Pismo Beach

Atheists United of San Luis Obispo objects to both the content and intent of invocations preceding the main City Council meetings of the City of Pismo Beach. The practice of giving invocations is inherently based in religion, and the courts have recognized that giving invocations at government meetings is likely to be prejudicial to members of the community who do not share the faith of the person giving the invocation (for example, *Joyner v. Forsythe County*). While Atheists United of San Luis Obispo strongly believes that invocations are inherently dismissive to non-religious persons, the invocations used in Pismo Beach do not even fall within the permissive standards currently accepted in law.

Courts have ruled that invocations can mention “God” as long as they do not mention any particular god. This rule of thumb is often jokingly referred to as the “don't say Jesus” rule. While Dr. Paul Jones, who nearly always gives the invocations, does refrain from mentioning Jesus specifically, he routinely and blatantly violates the spirit of the rule.

Jones frequently uses explicitly Christian turns of phrase such as “Our Lord and Savior” and “Our Heavenly Father.” For example, at the December 20th meeting, Jones stated “the baby that was born so long ago in Bethlehem's manger will continue to bring happiness and satisfaction, for his name is above all other names, his reign is above all other rulers, his Lordship is above all other authorities, his words are above all other voices, and his truth is above all other opinions . . .” While Jones does not mention Jesus by name, we know *exactly* which deity he is referring to and that he is placing that deity in a position of primacy in this community with the tacit endorsement of its elected and appointed officials present.

These sorts of statements, which are routine in Jones' invocations, privilege Christian beliefs over those of other faiths, and over those without faith. In addition, a frequent theme of Jones' is to state that the civic order is dependent on religious faith. This latter type of statement is highly exclusionary to the non-religious as it claims that people of faith are the ones creating community – and implies that non-religious residents of and visitors to the Central Coast are not a part of the community. While Jones is entitled to his opinions, and entitled to express them, giving him a forum at these meetings constitutes an endorsement of his speech by the City Council. The City Council cannot seriously claim to be a secular body when meetings are routinely preceded by such exclusionary statements.

We also contend that an honest appraisal of invocations would recognize that invocations are *inherently* dismissive of non-religious persons. To *invoke* is to call upon an authority or justification for one's actions – and even a generically religious invocation implies that the authority of the City Council does not derive from state law and the consent of the governed but rather from some sort of divine mandate. Both the United States and California Constitutions claim authority on the basis of the general consent of the governed. Authority based on divine mandate is not simply unmentioned, it is explicitly rejected, most famously in the Establishment Clause of the First Amendment. Article 16, section 5 of California's Constitution also forbids local governments from providing aid of any kind to particular religious organizations or creeds.

The City Council of Pismo Beach should recognize that their authority derives from the general consent of the community, not a divine mandate envisioned by particular members of that community. Atheists United calls upon the City Council of Pismo Beach to immediately cease using invocations at its meetings.

Sincerely,

Atheists United of San Luis Obispo

FREEDOM FROM RELIGION *foundation*

P.O. BOX 750 • MADISON, WI 53701 • (608) 256-8900 • WWW.FFRF.ORG

August 15, 2012

SENT BY MAIL AND EMAIL TO shigginbotham@pismo-beach.org

Ms. Shelly Higginbotham
Mayor of Pismo Beach
760 Mattie Road
Pismo Beach, CA 93449

Re: Opening Pismo Beach City Council Meetings with Unconstitutional Prayer

Dear Mayor Higginbotham and Pismo Beach City Council:

I am writing on behalf members of the Freedom From Religion Foundation (FFRF), including Pismo Beach members who object to the religious prayers opening Pismo Beach City Council meetings. A local complainant brought this matter to our attention. FFRF is a nationwide nonprofit organization, which works to protect the constitutional principle of separation of church and state. FFRF represents more than 19,000 members across the country including more than 2,900 members in California.

It is our understanding that Pismo Beach City Council ("Council") meetings open with prayers that are pervasively Christian. It is our understanding that from January 15, 2008, through June 19, 2012, every single Council meeting began with a sectarian, Christian prayer. In the 99 meetings that occurred during that time Paul Jones gave 89 prayers, Paul Toms gave 8 prayers, and Victor Abegg and Rebecca McMurray each gave one prayer. Each of these prayers was given in the name of a Christian deity: "in the name of our Personal Savior and Lord," "in your holy and redemptive Name," in our Saviour's [or Lord's] name," "in the name of the Great Redeemer, Your Divine Son," or "through Christ our Lord." The Judeo-Christian bible was referenced or invoked 82 times. The prayers often contain historical revisions and distortions unworthy of a government body.

First and foremost, prayer at government meetings is unnecessary, inappropriate, and divisive. Council members are free to pray privately or to worship on their own time in their own way. They do not need to worship on taxpayers' time. The Council ought not to lend its power and prestige to religion, amounting to a governmental endorsement that excludes the 15% of the American population that is nonreligious. *American Religious Identification Survey*, 2008.

Calling upon Council members and citizens to pray is coercive and beyond the authority of the local government. Citizens are compelled to come before you on important civic matters, to seek licenses, permits, to participate in important decisions affecting their livelihood, their property, and quality of life. These citizens should not be made to feel offended, excluded, or like political outsiders because the local government they support with their taxes imposes religious ritual at civil government meetings. Local government should not be in the business

of performing religious rituals, or exhorting all citizens, regardless of beliefs, to participate in a Christian prayer, or even asking citizens to show deference or obeisance to this ritual.

Sectarian Prayers

The Council compounds the violation when a majority of the prayers are to Jesus and/or a majority of the officiants are Christian or Christian clergy. Sectarian prayers make religious minorities and nonbelievers feel like political outsiders in their own community, and show an unconstitutional governmental preference for Christianity over other faiths and for religion over non-religion.

The prayers here flagrantly exceed the constraints of the 1983 Supreme Court decision, *Marsh v. Chambers*, 463 U.S. 783 (1983), which carved out a narrow exception to the Establishment Clause for legislative prayer as a nod to history and custom. The *Marsh* exception was confined to a situation involving a nonsectarian, nondenominational prayer, led by an officiant who had not been selected based upon any impermissible religious motive, and which was addressed to the body of legislators present, and to no one else. Additionally, *Marsh* held that legislators must have the option not to participate. The prayer opportunity may not be “exploited to proselytize or advance any one, or to disparage any other, faith or belief.” The Supreme Court has reiterated, “not even the ‘unique history’ of legislative prayer, can justify contemporary legislative prayers that have the effect of affiliating the government with any one specific faith or belief.” *County of Allegheny v. ACLU Greater Pittsburgh Chapter*, 492 U.S. 573, 603 (1989). The Court explained, “The legislative prayers involved in *Marsh* did not violate this principle because the particular chaplain had ‘removed all references to Christ.’” *Id.*

The *Marsh* decision is often misunderstood or misrepresented. Therefore, it is important to see how courts interpret the decision. Courts continually find sectarian government prayers to be a constitutional violation, and in January 2012, the Supreme Court declined to hear an appeal in a case declaring a county government’s prayers to Jesus unconstitutional. See *Joyner v. Forsyth County*, 653 F.3d 341 (4th Cir. 2011), *cert. denied* 132 S.Ct. 1097 (2012).

Time and again, federal courts overturn government-sponsored prayers that are sectarian, denominational, or invoke a particular faith or deity. See, e.g., *Id.*; *Galloway v. Town of Greece*, 681 F.3d 20 (2nd Cir. 2012)(town council prayers that contain Christian references two thirds of the time, even when other faiths also give prayers, unconstitutionally affiliates the town with Christianity); *Wynne v. Town of Great Falls*, 376 F.3d 292 (4th Cir. 2004)(held that town board prayers referencing Jesus Christ violate Constitution), *cert. denied*, 545 U.S. 1152 (2005); *Turner v. Fredericksburg*, 534 F.3d 352 (4th Cir. 2004), *cert. denied*, 555 U.S. 1099 (2009)(finding constitutional a city policy prohibiting sectarian prayers); *Bacus v. Palo Verde Unified School District*, 52 Fed.Appx. 355 (9th Cir. 2002)(unpublished)(prayers before school board meetings “in the name of Jesus” declared unconstitutional); *Doe v. Tangipahoa Parish School Bd.*, 473 F.3d 188 (5th Cir. 2006)(sectarian prayers before Board meetings violated the Establishment Clause)(later dismissed *en banc* for lack of standing); *Hinrichs v. Bosma*, 440 F.3d 393 (7th Cir. 2006)(declined to stay an injunction against opening legislative sessions with prayer, finding that *Marsh* precludes sectarian legislative prayer) (later dismissed *en banc* for lack of standing); *Rubin v. City of Burbank*, 101 Cal. App. 4th 1194, (Cal. App. 2 Dist., 2002) (city council prayer ending “in the name of Jesus Christ” violated the Establishment Clause; even

when only 20% of prayers had such references, *Marsh* precludes prayers that advance any one religion), *cert.i denied* 123 S.Ct. 2091 (2003).

In *Wynne*, both the presence and participation of town citizens were crucial to the court's determination that the government's prayers advanced the Christian faith. *See Wynne*, 376 F.3d at 301. Ultimately, the court concluded:

"Marsh does not permit legislators to ... engage, as part of public business and for the citizenry as a whole, in prayers that contain explicit references to a deity in whose divinity only those of one faith believe. The invocations at issue here, which specifically call upon Jesus Christ, are simply not constitutionally acceptable legislative prayer like that approved in Marsh. Rather they embody the precise kind of 'advancement' of that Marsh cautioned against." Id. (emphasis added).

The prayers currently invoked at Council meetings impermissibly advance Christianity and lead a reasonable observer to believe that the Council is endorsing not only religion over non-religion, but also Christianity over other faiths. This practice inappropriately alienates non-Christians and nonbelievers. Their efforts to participate in public meetings are adversely affected by these types of prayers, which turn nonbelievers and non-Christians into political outsiders of their own community and government.

The U.S. was Founded on Separation of State and Church

Although not unconstitutional, it is irresponsible to allow the abysmal historical distortions Paul Jones inflicts on the people of Pismo Beach.

The Founders who adopted our entirely secular Constitution knew that religious liberty does not exist without the freedom to dissent. Our nation is founded on a godless Constitution, whose only references to religion in government are exclusionary, such as "no religious test shall ever be required" for public office. (U.S. Const. art. VI). The United States was the first nation to adopt a secular constitution, investing sovereignty in "We the People," not a divine entity. Significantly, there was no prayer during the Constitutional Convention (Jones' claims to the contrary are wrong, Franklin proposed prayer once but his motion was not even voted on, let alone passed). Surely if the founders did not need prayer to write the document that founded our nation, the Council can successfully conduct its business without prayer as well.

President Thomas Jefferson recognized the intrinsic problems when religion and government mix and actively opposed government sponsorship of prayer:

I consider the government of the U.S. as interdicted by the Constitution from intermeddling with religious institutions, their doctrines, discipline, or exercises . . . I do not believe it is for the interest of religion to invite the civil magistrate to direct its exercises, its discipline, or its doctrines; nor of the religious societies that the general government should be invested with the power of effecting any uniformity of time or matter among them. Fasting & prayer are religious exercises. The enjoining them an act of discipline. (Jefferson's letter to Rev. Samuel Miller, 1808).

Likewise, James Madison, the primary architect of the U.S. Constitution and Bill of Rights, and our fourth president, opposed government prayers and congressional chaplaincies. In his *Detached Memoranda*, Madison wrote, "Is the appointment of Chaplains to the two Houses of Congress consistent with the Constitution, and with the pure principle of religious freedom? In strictness the answer on both points must be in the negative. The Constitution of the U. S. forbids everything like an establishment of a national religion... The establishment of the chaplainship to Congress is a palpable violation of equal rights, as well as of Constitutional principles." Madison was equally critical of presidential and governmental prayer:

"Religious proclamations by the Executive recommending thanksgivings & fasts are shoots from the same root... Although recommendations only, they imply a religious agency, making no part of the trust delegated to political rulers. ... An *advisory* Government is a contradiction in terms. The members of a Government as such can in no sense, be regarded as possessing an advisory trust from their Constituents in their religious capacities. In their individual capacities, as distinct from their official station, they might unite in recommendations of any sort whatever, in the same manner as any other individuals might do." *Id.*

Jones besmirches Madison and the Council's reputations by falsely claiming that Madison thought this country based on the Ten Commandments. Madison made no such claim.

Solution is to Discontinue Prayer

The constitutional rights of citizens to participate in government meetings, including the Council's meetings, should not be predicated upon being subjected to Christian-based, or even non-denominational prayer. By hosting prayers, which inevitably show preference for Christianity, the Council is illegally and inappropriately imposing its religious beliefs on the citizens of Pismo Beach who attend these meetings for public business.

Moreover, public, government prayers not only conflict with the Constitution, but also with biblical teachings. Christians who know their bible are familiar with the injunction of Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount, condemning public prayer as hypocrisy. "When thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret." (Matthew 6:5-6).

To avoid the constitutional concerns and the divisiveness these prayers cause within the community ***the solution is simple: discontinue official, government prayers before government meetings.*** Follow the wise counsel of Jefferson and Madison by stopping these divisive, unconstitutional prayers. We request a prompt response in writing about what steps you are taking to respect the Establishment Clause and remedy these constitutional violations.

Sincerely,



Andrew L. Seidel
Staff Attorney



MINUTES
City of Pismo Beach
REGULAR
City Council Meeting

Tuesday, August 5, 2003

The City Council of the City of Pismo Beach met this date in a regular session at 6:32 p.m. in the City Council Chambers, 760 Mattie Road, Pismo Beach, California with Mayor Crescione presiding.

ROLL CALL:

Present:

Mayor:	Crescione
Mayor Pro Tem:	Rabenaldt
Councilmembers:	Gonzales-Gee, Natoli, Reiss

INVOCATION: was led by Dr. Paul Jones

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE: was led by Councilmember Reiss

Next Resolution No. R-03-51

Next Ordinance No. O-03-03

1. PRESENTATIONS

2. PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD

At this time, members of the public may comment on any item NOT appearing on the agenda. It is recommended to keep your comments to 3 minutes. Under State Law, matters presented under this item cannot be discussed or acted upon by the City Council at this time. For items appearing on the agenda, the public will be invited to make comments at the time the item comes up for Council consideration. At all times please use the microphone.

Marjorie Elwood spoke regarding the special class that Shell Beach Elementary School had during the summer months and congratulated the school board for promoting such an outstanding teacher and program.

Mike Rose spoke regarding the issue of the meaning of "major" and "minor" for construction. He would like a good interpretation of the Municipal Code pertaining to this item.

Motion by Councilmember Reiss seconded by Councilmember Natoli to approve Resolution No. R-03-52 with the placement of the name Dolliver to another street within the City. Staff is to look at Shell Beach Road as possible PCH name for the future. This item was approved by the following voice vote.

AYES: Gonzales-Gee, Rabenaldt, Reiss, Natoli, Crescione
NOES: None

6. BUSINESS ITEMS

Item 6.A: A Resolution of the City Council of the City of Pismo Beach Adopting an Invocation Policy Prohibiting Council Meeting Invocation Prayer that at is Sectarian in Nature i.e., No Reference to any Particular "God" in Light of Recent Court of Appeals Decision in Rubin v. City of Burbank. (Dietrick – File #111.1)

Recommendation: Adopt Resolution by roll call vote.

Christine Dietrick, City Attorney gave the staff report.

Mike Rose spoke regarding his opposition of this resolution.

David Taub spoke in support of this resolution.

ACTION: Passed 5/0 by the following motion:

MOTION 6.A:

Motion by Councilmember Reiss, seconded by Mayor Pro Tem Rabenaldt to approve Resolution # R-03-53. This item was approved by the following roll call vote.

AYES: Gonzales-Gee, Rabenaldt, Reiss, Natoli, Crescione
NOES: None

Item 6.B: Consideration and discussion regarding recruitment of City Attorney pertaining to In-House or Contract hire. (Grigsby)

Recommendation: Discussion and Direction

A lengthy discussion ensued regarding this item.

ACTION: Passed 3/2 by the following motion:

MOTION 6.B:

Resolution R-05-_____

**A RESOLUTION OF THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PISMO BEACH
ESTABLISHING THE NON-PAID POSITION OF CITY CHAPLAIN**

Whereas, the City Council of Pismo Beach acknowledges the blessings that the creator has bestowed on the citizens of Pismo Beach; and

Whereas, the City Council of Pismo Beach believes it is necessary and appropriate to commence every Council meeting with a non-sectarian prayer.

BE IT RESOLVED by the City Council of the City of Pismo Beach to establish the position of City Chaplain. Said position will be non-paid and filled on a one-year term. Annually, Council will interview candidates for the Chaplain position and select the Chaplain by voting.

UPON MOTION of Councilmember _____ seconded by Councilmember _____ the foregoing Resolution is hereby approved and adopted the 1st day of March, 2005 by the following roll call vote, to wit:

AYES:
NOES:
ABSTAIN:
ABSENT:

Mayor, Mary Ann Reiss

ATTEST:

Lori Grigsby, CMC, City Clerk

**Agenda Item: 6.B
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MINUTES
City of Pismo Beach
REGULAR
City Council Meeting

Tuesday, May 19, 2009

The City Council of the City of Pismo Beach met this date in a regular session at 5:36 pm City Council Chambers, 760 Mattie Road, Pismo Beach California with Mayor Reiss presiding.

CALL TO ORDER: Mayor Reiss

1. ROLL CALL:

Present:

Mayor Reiss
Mayor Pro Tem Higginbotham
Councilmember Ehring
Councilmember Vardas
Councilmember Waage

Staff

Present:

Kevin Rice, City Manager
Dave Fleishman, City Attorney
Randy Bloom, Community Development Director
Emily Colborn, Deputy City Clerk
Greg Ray, Acting Public Works Director/City Engineer

Absent:

Dwayne Chisam, Public Works Director/City Engineer
George Edes, Administrative Services Director

2. INVOCATION: Dr. Paul Toms**3. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE: Dr. Paul Toms**

At this time, Mayor Reiss recessed the City Council meeting to the Closed Session previously convened at 4:30 p.m.

4. PRESENTATIONS

No items scheduled.

At 6:10 p.m. Mayor Reiss reconvened the City Council meeting and announced no reportable action was taken at the Closed Session.

5. PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD

Shell Beach Elementary G.A.T.E. Students: Jocelyn Reynolds, Palak Patel and Leila Assal invited Council to attend the annual G.A.T.E. Olympics (Gifted and Talented Education). The event will be held Saturday, May 30, from 10:51 a.m. - 3:03 p.m. at Shell Beach Elementary School.

Tom Murray representing SLO Green Build announced the Green Retrofit Sweepstakes for residents of older homes in San Luis Obispo County. Additional information is available at www.slogreenbuild.org.

Grover Beach Mayor John Shoals and Mayor Pro Tem Bill Nicolls presented Council with the Grover Beach Rotary Annual Bowl-A-Thon Fundraiser plaque in honor of their win during the 2009 City Council Challenge.

Chet Hogoboom Manager of the SeaVenture Hotel invited Council to attend the annual Volunteer Appreciation lunch in honor of the beach clean up volunteers. The lunch is scheduled for Saturday, June 6th at 1:00 p.m.

6. CONSENT CALENDAR

Item 6.A: Clerk's Report of Posting. The agenda of the regular May 19, 2009 City Council meeting was posted on the City Council Chamber bulletin board on May 14, 2009. (Frontella)



MINUTES
City of Pismo Beach
REGULAR
City Council Meeting

Tuesday, February 2, 2010

The City Council of the City of Pismo Beach met this date in a regular session at 5:30 pm City Council Chambers, 760 Mattie Road, Pismo Beach California with Mayor Reiss presiding.

CALL TO ORDER: Mayor Reiss

1. ROLL CALL:

Present:

Mayor Reiss
Mayor Pro Tem Higginbotham
Councilmember Ehring
Councilmember Vardas
Councilmember Waage

Staff

Present:

Kevin M. Rice, City Manager
Dave Fleishman, City Attorney
Emily Colborn, City Clerk
Randy Bloom, Community Development Director
Dwayne Chisam, Public Works Director/City Engineer
George Edes, Administrative Services Director

Absent:

None

2. INVOCATION: Dr. Paul Jones

3. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE: Dr. Paul Jones

4. PRESENTATIONS

Item 4.A: Presentation by Elected Official(s), if any.

No presentations were given at this time.

Item 4.B: Employee of the Year Presentations. (Garcia)

The City Council read the proclamation into the record with Mayor Reiss presenting the proclamation to Suzen Brasile, Mid-Manager of the Year 2009.

Item 4.C: Proclamation Declaring February 2010 as Grand Jury Awareness Month. (Dorothy Schlitz)

The City Council read the proclamation into the record with Mayor Reiss presenting the proclamation to Val McClure and Frank Fink.

Item 4.D: Proclamation Declaring the Month of February as Heart Healthy Month. (Brasile)

The City Council read the proclamation into the record with Mayor Reiss presenting the proclamation to Suzen Brasile, CVB Director.

5. PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD

Marilee Hyman asked if the Council will report on their Goal Setting session. Kevin Rice, City Manager announced that a detailed report would be made at the next Council meeting on February 16, 2010.

Kiana Underwood from Destination Imagination thanked the Council for their support of the Destination Imagination program. She reported on their work with Special Education students and presented invitations to the Council for their upcoming production of the "Three Piggy Opera."



MINUTES
City of Pismo Beach
REGULAR
City Council Meeting

Tuesday, June 7, 2011

The City Council of the City of Pismo Beach met this date in a regular session at 5:30 am City Council Chambers, 760 Mattie Road, Pismo Beach California with Mayor Higginbotham presiding.

CALL TO ORDER: Mayor Higginbotham

1. ROLL CALL:

Present:

Mayor Higginbotham
Mayor Pro Tem Vardas
Councilmember Ehring
Councilmember Reiss
Councilmember Waage

Staff

Present:

Kevin Rice, City Manager
David Fleishman, City Attorney
Emily Colborn, City Clerk
Jon Biggs, Community Development Director
George Edes, Administrative Services Director
Dwayne Chisam, Public Works. Director/City Engineer

Absent:

None

2. INVOCATION: Dr. Paul Jones

3. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE: Dr. Paul Jones

4. PRESENTATIONS

Item 4.A: Presentation by Elected Official(s), if any.

No presentations were given at this time.

Item 4.B: Proclamation for Hunter Norton. (Council)

The City Council read the Proclamation into the record with Mayor Higginbotham presenting the Proclamation to Hunter Norton.

Item 4.C: Presentation by Destination Imagination. (Michelle Berlin)

Mike Liebo, Head of the Drama Department and Michelle Berlin, Drama Coach, spoke regarding Destination Imagination and thanked the City Council for all their continuous support. Students spoke regarding their experiences while being a part of Destination Imagination.

5. PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD

Laurie Nunez, owner/operator of Confusion Culinary mobile catering, asked Council to review the prohibition of mobile catering within the City.

Diane Cotter brought attention to a perceived blighted area on Dolliver Street and Stimson Avenue.

Don Day requested that Council consider pulling Item 6.E: from the Consent Agenda; a resolution approving the updated Engineer's Parcel/EDU Table, setting the water service special tax rate for FY 12 to \$181.50, and approving posting of said tax to the County Assessment Roll.

6. CONSENT CALENDAR



