

"Deliver us from the evil one..."



From the Director
by Ann Dugger

At the close of President Bush's inauguration Jan. 20, Kirbyjon Caldwell, senior pastor of Windsor Village United Methodist Church in Houston, delivered a memorable benediction. Following is the transcript:

"Oh Lord God Almighty, the supply and supplier of faith and freedom, how excellent is Your Name in all the earth. You are great and greatly to be praised. God, as we conclude this 55th inaugural ceremony, we conclude it with an attitude of thanksgiving. Thank You for protecting America's borders. After all, the Psalmist reminds us, 'unless You, O God, guard the territory, our efforts will be in vain.'

"Thank You for our armed service personnel. And it is with

unswerving thanksgiving that we pause to remember the persons who have made the ultimate sacrifice to help ensure America's safety. Thank You, O God, for surrounding our personnel, their families, their friends and our allies with Your favor and Your faithfulness.

"Deploy Your hosts from heaven so that Your will for America will be performed on earth as it is already perfected in heaven. I confess that Your face will shine upon the United States of America, granting us social peace and economic prosperity, particularly for the weary and the poor.

"I also confess, God, that each American's latter days will be better than their former days. Let it be unto us according to Your Word.

"Rally the Republicans, the Democrats and the Independents around Your common good so that America will truly become one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty, justice and equal opportunity for all — including

the least, the last and the lost.

"Bless every elected official right now. God, I declare Your blessings to shower upon our president, George W. Bush. Bless him, his family and his administration. I once again declare that no weapon formed against them shall prosper.

"God, forgive us for becoming so ensnared in petty partisan politics that we miss Your glory and block our purpose. Deliver us from the evil one, from evil itself and from the mere appearance of evil.

"Give us clean hearts, so that we might have clean agendas, clean priorities and programs and even clean financial statements.

"Now, unto You, O God, the One who always has been and always will be, the one King of kings and the true power broker, we glorify and honor You. Respecting persons of all faiths, I humbly submit this prayer in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen."

I was struck by Rev.

Caldwell's entreaty for God to give us clean hearts, clean agendas and clean priorities, and to deliver us from the evil one. As I read today's headlines about a young boy, kidnapped and beaten to death, about yet another baby callously discarded like so much garbage, and about a young girl being raped in a school restroom, my heart is grieved for the suffering victims of evildoers.

I am outraged, yet again, that it is our innocent children who suffer most. A young boy, dying from blunt force trauma to his chest — what agony he must have endured. A talented young girl, just going about her business at school, robbed of her innocence — how will this trauma affect her promising future?

How can this be? Who should be held accountable for these heinous crimes? Everyone wants to shift the blame, but we MUST hold the guilty accountable. Our schools MUST be a safe haven for our children.

Our children MUST be our number one priority.

And our daily prayer should be: "...guard our territory..." and "...deliver us from evil, from evil itself and from the mere appearance of evil."

Upcoming Events

April Sexual Assault Awareness Month

7 — *Take Back the Night* event at the Women's Center of Jacksonville, 5644 Colcord Ave., 4 p.m.

10-16 — *Victims' Rights Week*

14 — *Victims Rights Luncheon*,* Radisson Riverwalk Conference Center on Prudential Dr. 12:00 noon.

May
21 — *Annual Ride for Justice* (motorcycle ride through Jacksonville) Kickstands up at 11:00 am.

June
Together We Can breakfast
Date TBA.

*If you would like to sponsor a table for victims or the Justice Coalition staff, please call Ann Dugger at 783-6312.

Inspirational Thought

The Spirit itself bears witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose. If God be for us, who can be against us?

— Romans 8:16, 28, 31

Faith Corner

The Faith Community holds the key to true Restorative Justice for all mankind. Many churches and businesses support this concept. The Justice Coalition wishes to thank the following for their support in our quest for this goal of compassion and understanding:

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If your business or church would like to appear in this section, please contact us at 783-6312.

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