

Rev. Carleen Gerber
The First Congregational church of Old Lyme
Pastoral Prayer for March 22, 2026

From his personal writings, I give you this quote from Albert Camus:

“In the midst of winter, I found there was within me, an invincible summer.”

Would you join me in prayer,

Loving God, in these days of turmoil, these days of war and confusion, we look to the earth for the sustenance that softens the weight of our burdens. The snow drop emerges triumphant from frozen ground, the elegant Hellebore rises from the last of the snow, and the forsythia swells, anticipating the riot of yellow yet to come. In the midst of a long, cold, gray winter, there is within our ponderings, the promise of sun and light and warmth: the promise of a resilience that will leave us never. In the midst of even our longest winters HOPE endures. Our blessings are many. But we are often distracted by the noise of our busy lives. Remind us, Lord. Remind us to look for hidden beauty...to savor the quiet long enough to hear the songs within nature... and to breathe deeply the earthly smell of the warming soil around us. Our blessings are many. Let us not be too distracted to give thanks.

In this past week, the world around us has groaned with the weight of war, and the dangerous tentacles that extend beyond its immediacy. It is a sorrowful enterprise... war. It ravages people's lives, and tears asunder everything that nurtures life.... families.... homes.... villages and cities, libraries and museums, sacred places of worship and quiet forests of retreat. War tears them all asunder. We need your help, God of mercy, to keep accessing the promise of summer that resides deep within our souls in these times of brutality and uncertainty. We need your help, God of mercy, to remember that the human spirit is resilient and will rise out of the ashes of despair once again, as it has in the past.

We are, by nature, gentle creatures who treasure tranquility and fellowship. And yet, there are among us those who portend to know that destruction leads to peace... that disrespect can lead eventually to mutual regard. Somehow, Lord of all creation, we pray that You would work the alchemy of your love around those who, with unbridled arrogance, push us deeper and deeper into the quagmire. We pray that you would use the alchemy of your love to heal those who are wounded by the savages of war... Those who grieve a loved one lost in this war... those who yearn for a quiet night and a promise of peace. Somehow, God of the ages, we pray that you would use the power of your love to heal brokenness and mend hearts and minds.

In the week to come, remind us, we pray, that with your help we can refuse the dark of winter, for it is Your love that is the invincible summer within us. Each one of us carries heartache and loneliness and anxieties that can, at times, make the winter of our souls real and weighty. But beauty is there for us. Love of neighbor and friend is there for us. Your unconditional love, God, is within us and around us – always. It is You, God of infinite mercy, who kindles within us the hope of a future that, together with You, we can build into a world where summer's light can be seen and felt by all people.

This prayer and all our prayers we pray in the name of a God who is far bigger than any name we can assign... but who today we name as Jesus the Christ. Amen.