

Mingled prayers: The Creator loves all and is Lord of all

by [John Buchanan](#) in the [September 11, 2002](#) issue

Anniversaries of traumatic events carry an emotional power. A clinical psychiatrist I know says that remembering and even reliving such traumas, as painful as that is, can be an important part of healing. We mark the anniversary of September 11 in this issue with a series of reflections and remembrances.

What I recall from that time is how people turned to their churches, synagogues and mosques for comfort and solace, and how in a new way religious institutions and communities turned to one another. In the midst of tragedy we learned something about our connectedness as citizens and as human beings, and religious communities helped give expression to that oneness.

One particular event is etched in my memory. The church I serve was hosting a noon-time, interfaith community memorial service a few days after September 11. The sanctuary was full to overflowing with members of our congregation, members of Holy Name Cathedral, members of Congregation Sinai, and many office workers from the area. Father Robert McLaughlin, Rabbi Michael Sternfield and I were in the chancel. Near the end of the service Rabbi Sternfield was offering a prayer and he invited people to participate—Christians by praying the Lord's Prayer and Jews by praying the Kaddish, the prayer for the dead, in Hebrew.

The sound of those prayers in a moment of profoundly shared grief, the precious words and languages of different religious traditions mingling, was deeply moving. This year's Service of Remembrance includes representatives of the Muslim community.

Things are different now. We live with the reminder that life is precious and fragile, and that ordinary people have it within them to be extraordinarily brave. And we learned a lesson that has been difficult for us in the past, particularly those of us who are American Christians, namely that the nations, cultures, and religions of the world cannot live in isolation from one another, and that somehow, in ways that

transcend our separate theological traditions and religious communities, the God who is Creator of all loves all and is Lord of all.