

**Craig, Sondra**

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**From:** Deb Miller <coldeb@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, January 6, 2026 7:51 AM  
**To:** ZZ Council Members  
**Subject:** Revocation of Invocation at City Councils

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Hi.

Our Country was founded on Christian principles.

Prayer is major in these. Let's keep proper principles in place.

Honor the God who created us by asking Him to assist in governing bodies like yours.

We the People still believe in God. Keep honoring this Country as well by having the invocation.

Deborah Miller

## Craig, Sondra

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**From:** Tom Sweeney <tom.sweeney.lax@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, January 6, 2026 7:45 AM  
**To:** ZZ Council Members  
**Subject:** Prayer

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Dear Council Members,

Keep Prayer.

Thank you for your consideration.

## Craig, Sondra

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**From:** Evan Rasmussen <rasmusse.evan@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, January 6, 2026 7:25 AM  
**To:** ZZ Council Members  
**Subject:** Invocation

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Good morning,

I saw something being posted on Facebook about the invocation before city committee meetings. I don't know a lot about what this invocation is, but the rest of the message I saw went on to say it is a prayer and a statement of faith.

I am in support of people exercising their right to free speech, religion, and all other opinions....and I also believe in the separation of church and state. This means that I am in support of removing this invocation from any government meetings, votes, discussions, etc.

If you have any further information you can offer about this invocation, I'd be curious to know more, but this is my initial reaction when the words religion and government are used in the same sentence.

Thank you for reading,

--

Evan Rasmussen

**Craig, Sondra**

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**From:** Pam Rodgers <pscr90@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, January 6, 2026 6:22 AM  
**To:** ZZ Council Members  
**Subject:** Keep Invocation at Meetings!

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Dear Council Members:

Please maintain the long-standing tradition of the invocation that precedes council meetings.

Catering to those who want to stop it is rewarding the bullies in society; they can sit quietly for the short time it takes. Stopping this encouraging positive message would be a violation of some of the council members' rights.

Thank you,  
Pam Rodgers

## Craig, Sondra

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**From:** Orion Roen <oreoroen@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, January 5, 2026 10:25 PM  
**To:** ZZ City Clerk External  
**Subject:** Public Comment regarding 25-1370

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Hello,

I am writing to support agenda item 25-1370 sponsored by Mackenzie Mindel.

Removing invocations from city government meetings maintains an environment that equally represents residents, regardless of religious beliefs, practicing or not. The City serves a diverse population of people made up of numerous faiths and views. These invocations can unintentionally exclude and/or alienate those individuals who do not share similar beliefs. City meetings should be kept secular. This will show a commitment to neutrality, inclusiveness, and fairness. Officials should be placing a focus on public business for the betterment of all those in the community. Removing invocations allows all parties involved to practice beliefs in private, leaving government spaces open and without tension.

A simple saying such as "Let us remember our shared humanity and work together for the common good of all citizens" would remove any possible bias whilst accomplishing the goals of the City Council. A Native land acknowledgement would also be appropriate.

I thank Mrs. Mindel for sponsoring this item and hope that the Council considers all points.

*Orion Roen*

May I also include some of the following statements from the City Council Mission page. I have highlighted some points of mention:

<https://www.cityoflacrosse.org/your-government/city-council/city-council-mission>

### Vision

**La Crosse is a city of choice** – a community for a lifetime – that offers the highest possible quality of life.

### Mission

As elected officials, we establish policies to provide services and infrastructure, and to **promote** sustainable economic development, **diverse cultural**, recreational and educational opportunities, and public health and safety.

### Core Values

**Diversity: Active welcoming of all residents, visitors and employers.**

**Communication: Clear, open, respectful dialog with each other, employees, citizens and other stakeholders.**

## Craig, Sondra

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**From:** Lynn Spicer <2411staccato@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, January 6, 2026 8:56 AM  
**To:** ZZ Council Members  
**Subject:** Invocation

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Council Members,

To revoke the Invocation is beyond belief. This country was founded on the right to pray.

Our country is already sliding towards Gomorrah. This is another example. We have freedom of religion, not freedom from religion. Atheists, agnostics can believe as they do, but do not take away a Christian's right to pray in public.

Sincerely,  
Lynn Maher

## Craig, Sondra

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**From:** Anna Sprague <sprague.anna@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, January 6, 2026 9:19 AM  
**To:** ZZ Council Members  
**Subject:** In support of eliminating the prayer at meetings

Some people who received this message don't often get email from sprague.anna@gmail.com. [Learn why this is important](#)

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Hi council members, I'm writing in support for removing the invocation from government meetings. While I myself am a prayerful person, I don't believe this should be a mandate in our government.

If there is concern about a loss of ritual, I'd suggest you open with a moment of gratitude or holding silence for all council members to reflect on the community they are there to serve. Prayer can be powerful but can also be alienating when forced upon a group. There are many other ways to successfully open a meeting.

Thank you for your time,  
Anna Sprague

1715 Barnabee Rd, La Crosse WI

(Please do not use this email obtained through council matters for personal use. Thank you.)

**Craig, Sondra**

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**From:** Paul Pierce <munchkinusnavy@yahoo.com>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, January 6, 2026 11:40 AM  
**To:** ZZ Council Members  
**Subject:** Keep the Invocation!

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Vote to keep the invocation at the beginning of City Council meetings.

Paul Pierce  
La Crosse Resident since 1953

"When tyranny becomes law, rebellion becomes duty."  
Thomas Jefferson

## Craig, Sondra

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**From:** Alice Benson <abenson59@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, January 6, 2026 10:51 AM  
**To:** ZZ Council Members  
**Subject:** Removal of Invocation

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Good Morning,

I recently read that the council is considering removing the invocation from the beginning of the meetings. I think that is a good idea. Our government is and should be a secular one. Mixing religion and politics is in conflict with the Constitution, so banning religion at public meetings is appropriate. The City Council should make every effort to focus on the rule of government and law, not religion. Thank you.

Alice Benson  
768 Hillview Avenue  
La Crosse, WI 54601  
608-792-8414

## Craig, Sondra

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**From:** Jessica Markofski <jessica.markofski@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, January 6, 2026 12:05 PM  
**To:** ZZ Council Members  
**Subject:** Invocation

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Good afternoon,

I heard that there is a possibility that the invocation before council meetings would be removed. I'm writing in to voice my concern as I personally believe it is of great value to the community to pray and ask God for guidance at every opportunity and I believe many people would be affected if this is removed. My pastor, Matt Schroeder (Horizon Christian Fellowship) has given the invocation before and has been very grateful for the opportunity. Since we are still considered a Christian nation and most of the area claims to be Christian, it makes total sense to me to have a Christian practice in place for the direction of the city's inner workings.

Thank you for your time and consideration,  
Jessica Markofski

## Craig, Sondra

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**From:** Tom Bice <tbice@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, January 5, 2026 11:25 PM  
**To:** ZZ Council Members  
**Subject:** Please leave Tradition Alone

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Please maintain the long-standing tradition of the invocation that precedes council meetings.

Catering to those who want to stop it is rewarding the bullies in society; they can sit quietly for the short time it takes. Stopping this encouraging positive message would be a violation of some of the council members' rights.

**Craig, Sondra**

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**From:** Joella Striebel <joellastriebel@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, January 6, 2026 12:38 PM  
**To:** ZZ City Clerk External; ZZ Council Members  
**Subject:** In Favor of Resolution 25-1370

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Good afternoon,

I am writing in favor of the legislation to eliminate the invocation procedures for Common Council meetings. Given my understanding of the fundamental separation of church and state, it has long struck me as odd and uncomfortable to hear religious invocations when I attend these meetings in person or online. I am grateful to Councilmember Mindel for introducing this long overdue resolution.

Sincerely,

Joella Striebel  
La Crosse

## Craig, Sondra

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**From:** Samantha Gray <samantha.jo.gray24@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, January 6, 2026 11:46 AM  
**To:** ZZ Council Members  
**Subject:** Support for Continuing the City Council Invocation

Some people who received this message don't often get email from samantha.jo.gray24@gmail.com. [Learn why this is important](#)

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Dear Members of the La Crosse City Council,

I am writing to respectfully express my support for continuing the invocation that precedes City Council meetings.

For many years, this invocation has served as a moment of reflection and humility as important decisions are made for our city. It is offered voluntarily and has long been part of La Crosse's civic tradition, providing space to seek wisdom, peace, and guidance for those who serve and for the greater community as a whole.

Many residents believe prayer offers moral grounding and a reminder that leadership carries responsibility beyond policy alone. Maintaining this practice affirms the values of service, care for others, and accountability—principles that benefit all who live and work in our city, regardless of individual belief.

Thank you for your time, service, and thoughtful consideration of this matter.

Respectfully,  
Samantha Gray

## Craig, Sondra

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**From:** Pastor Hatlevig <phconnectchurch@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, January 6, 2026 2:05 PM  
**To:** ZZ Council Members  
**Subject:** LaCrosse City Council for the meeting today.

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As those who serve in the LaCrosse community, and our constituents, we are here sending our request that you do not discontinue the Invocations at the beginning of the council meetings.

It is vital for all our public businesses and ministries to gather for wisdom and positive leadership in the affairs of our community at the opening of any such meetings.

This does not promote religion, but rather respect for God who holds all power and blessing in His authority. We believe everyone is interested in peace and loving human relationships as well as successful communities, so to invoke God's help seems to be a simple fact and a good choice.

Thank you for all you do to serve the city of LaCrosse and your influence in the Coulee Region .

Sincerely, In Christ,

Pastors Jerry & Nancy Hatlevig  
Connect Church

## Craig, Sondra

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**From:** Linse Jo <linsejowilbur@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, January 6, 2026 1:16 PM  
**To:** ZZ Council Members  
**Subject:** Urgent Request to Preserve the Council Invocation

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Dear Members of the Judiciary & Administration Committee,

I am writing as a resident of La Crosse to express my strong concern regarding the proposal to remove the invocation that precedes City Council meetings.

This invocation has been a longstanding part of our civic process and serves as an important moment of reflection, humility, and guidance as city leaders undertake decisions that impact our entire community. For many residents, this prayer represents not exclusion, but a reminder of shared values such as service, accountability, and respect for one another.

The invocation is voluntary and inclusive, and its presence does not restrict participation in city government. Removing it would disregard the voices of many citizens who value this tradition and believe it contributes positively to the tone and seriousness of council proceedings.

I urge the committee to recommend keeping the invocation and to respect the long history and broad community support behind it. Please consider the concerns of residents who believe that eliminating this practice is unnecessary and divisive.

Thank you for your attention to this matter and for your service to our city. I respectfully ask that you act to preserve this important tradition.

Sincerely,  
Linse Wilbur

## Craig, Sondra

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**From:** Avery Van Gaard <averyvangaard@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, January 6, 2026 2:47 PM  
**To:** ZZ Council Members  
**Subject:** Re: Resolution #25-1370

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I wanted to correct the number of the resolution to be overturned (2009-08-022) and add that I believe that the points I am (and I'm sure others are) making still stand whether the invocation is upheld as constitutional by SCOTUS or not. That's an awful lot of hoops to jump through just to "solemnize the proceedings." d

Avery Van Gaard

PS Just wanted to add: I found out about this resolution through a post on a conservative, Christian FB page, calling people to action by talking about how our nation was founded by "leaders seeking God's guidance." It seems clear to me that, for the poster and their audience, the invocation is not about solemnizing proceedings through a rotating selection of clergy from a variety of denominations. It is about keeping God - the Christian God - in public, governmental meetings.

On Tue, Jan 6, 2026 at 2:16 PM Avery Van Gaard <averyvangaard@gmail.com> wrote:

Dear Council Members,

I'm writing in support of resolution 25-1370 and the discontinuation of the invocation procedures at Common Council meetings. Resolution 2009-02-022 seems to me to be a clear violation of the separation of church and state. There is no reason to include an invocation in a governmental meeting. If individual members wish to pray outside of the meeting, they are and always were welcome to do so. However, if I am coming before council, I shouldn't feel pressured to pray with the people of whom I am asking for approval for a license or permit.

What are the unintended consequences of this prayer? What is it saying to the many atheists, agnostics, and those of non-Christian denominations that live in our city and want or need to participate? Does an invocation (Christian or otherwise) at the beginning of every meeting create a more welcoming and professional space for ALL residents? How might it affect someone who has come to speak on a topic tangent to religious belief? How might it make non-Christian or non-religious council members feel?

Is alienating residents who wish to participate in their local government worth holding onto a tradition that serves one particular religious group?

Avery Van Gaard

## Craig, Sondra

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**From:** Andrew Sherman <andyshermanp@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, January 6, 2026 2:17 PM  
**To:** ZZ City Clerk External  
**Cc:** ZZ Council Members  
**Subject:** Resolution #25-1370 Comment

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Hello,

I am writing to you all in favor of passing resolution #25-1370.

It is important that the city of La Crosse adequately maintains a boundary between the separation of church and state whilst also representing the diverse demographics here in our city. The city of La Crosse is home to multiple constituencies of diverse ethnic and religious background; by continuing the practice of beginning meetings with an invocation, the city alienates its members that are not of Christian faith.

Resolution #25-1370 is not anti-religious in nature; but rather allows for more adequate representation of the citizens of the city of La Crosse by not alienating those who are of different faith. By making city council meetings more inclusive spaces, it allows for La Crosse residents to more readily engage with local issues in spaces of high tension.

Thank you for your consideration on this matter.

## Craig, Sondra

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**From:** Diana Zwart <diana.zwart@yahoo.com>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, January 7, 2026 12:40 PM  
**To:** ZZ Council Members  
**Subject:** Invocation

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Please for the good of all keep the invocation.

An invocation isn't establishing a religion it is respecting that we all need help and to be mindful of the impact we have on others in our decisions and the things we do. We see in our citizens an overwhelming percent have some sort of belief or faith. We see in our help for those experiencing tough times we rely on faith organizations to lend a hand. We see in those that are struggling with addiction or other issues to seek higher power to help them.

I would also like to know what is the reason for the change. What harm has it done? What does the council expect to gain from the change? If these aren't clear or convincing or the answer is only to respond to loud complaints then maybe that is your answer.

Sincerely

Diana Zwart

[Yahoo Mail: Search, Organize, Conquer](#)

## Craig, Sondra

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**From:** Micah Roraff <roraff.micah@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, January 7, 2026 12:36 PM  
**To:** ZZ Council Members  
**Subject:** Please keep prayer before meetings

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To whom it may concern:

I know you have a vote coming this week about whether or not to keep opening prayer before your meeting. Prayer to our Father God is important and powerful. I have seen the effectiveness and power of prayer many times in my life. I ask you to please keep the opening prayer going for the sake of this great city.

Thank you for considering this as you make your choice.

Micah Roraff

Adoration Church

## Craig, Sondra

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**From:** Daniel Skiles <danielj.skiles@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, January 7, 2026 12:23 PM  
**To:** ZZ Council Members  
**Subject:** Prayer before meetings

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I am writing to express my opposition to the ending of the invocation before the council meetings. We have already taken prayer out of ours schools and that is a disaster. We must keep God in everything we do and pray for his guidance with our council members.

Dan Skiles

## Craig, Sondra

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**From:** Yahoo Mail <freedomhearing@yahoo.com>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, January 7, 2026 12:20 PM  
**To:** ZZ Council Members  
**Subject:** CONTINUE HAVING PRAYER IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBERS...

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Do not allow pressure from outside sources to stop prayer in our city council meetings. Stand strong against the anti-God establishment. This will become your "finest hour"!

Andrew Arnold

## Craig, Sondra

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**From:** Joseph Roraff <joeroraff@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, January 7, 2026 11:45 AM  
**To:** ZZ Council Members  
**Subject:** Prayer in the city of La Crosse

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Please do not remove the invocation that precedes the monthly city council meetings.

Every Christian in La Crosse opposes this. It would not be smart to do this.

### Joe Roraff

Real Estate Agent

608.385.6558 | mobile

<http://www.BluffsideRealEstate.com>

*"Since our business survives on referrals our goal is to provide you with the best possible services so you feel comfortable passing on our information to others"*

## Craig, Sondra

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**From:** Derek Mueller <derek@northsidecommunity.org>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, January 7, 2026 11:16 AM  
**To:** ZZ Council Members  
**Subject:** Invocation

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La Crosse City Council Members,

My name is Derek Mueller and I am the pastor at Northside Community Church in La Crosse. I've learned that you are considering removing the invocation from the beginning of city council meetings.

I'll be brief in my thoughts and encouragement to you.

I understand that not everyone on the City Council is a Christian or person of faith. I understand that La Crosse isn't a "Christian" city. And I understand that the invocation is functionally more symbolic than anything else.

Here's why I believe that symbol is important.

Having an invocation recognizes the sacredness of your work. Prayer recognizes something as separate, something as different, as set apart. The work you do in serving our city isn't simply budgets and policies and buildings - it's people. And the work you do is built upon values and principles that serve the good of those people.

And I know you know that. So, of course, you can do the work you do without prayer. You can do the work you do without the acknowledgement of the divine. But taking a moment at the beginning of your times together to recognize the sacredness of what you do and remembering the seriousness of it, I believe still has value for the person of faith and agnostic alike.

I believe it would be a shame to remove something that reminds us of those things.

Sincerely,

Derek Mueller  
Pastor  
Northside Community Church  
[www.northsidecommunity.org](http://www.northsidecommunity.org)

## Craig, Sondra

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**From:** Dan Eumurian <djeumurian@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, January 7, 2026 10:01 AM  
**To:** ZZ Council Members  
**Subject:** Invocation

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Dear City Council members:

I believe I have special standing to address this issue. Back around the 1990s, I was invited by my friend John Medinger to stand for an open seat on the city council. During the interview, a council member asked me, "Don't you think you're unqualified for the position because you have a master's degree in theology?" If I had had my wits about me, I would have replied, "Are you aware that Article Six of the US Constitution states, "...no religious test shall ever be required as a qualification to any office or public trust under the United States." I believe I was a victim of discrimination at the hands of this body.

The City Council deals with many issues affected by faith--or absence of faith. Among them are:

1. Accountability. If humans are merely the result of a random, purposeless process, the default ethic would be the "law of the jungle." We could be ruled by plutocrats (the richest), technocrats (the most clever), or autocrats (the most arrogantly powerful). My Christian belief system values liberty, yet acknowledges the law of cause and effect and the prospect of ultimate accountability.
2. Discomfort. One council member has been quoted as saying that "...some members of the public expressed discomfort with the prayer during city council meetings." Discomfort comes with maturation and growth. The following quotation from Thomas Jefferson is inscribed on the Northwest Wall of the Jefferson Memorial in Washington, DC: "God who gave us life gave us liberty. Can the liberties of a nation be secure when we have removed a conviction that these liberties are the gift of God? Indeed I tremble for my country when I reflect that God is just, that his justice cannot sleep forever...."
3. History. Prominent history writer Tom Holland's *Dominion: How the Christian revolution remade the world* has been summarized in part by one reviewer as saying that the "foundational teachings [of Christian doctrine] on human equality, ethics, and the individual's value have shaped our modern societal norms and legal systems."

Dominion Book Summary by Tom Holland <https://share.google/2hHcFnFdYu1mLBOqe>

Our country and city could be ruled by a worldview that would dictate and enforce every action of the public. They could abdicate authority to predatory gangs, destructive philosophies, or tyrannical rulers, or they could accept their high calling and ask a Higher Power--if you will the Grand Designer of Stephen Hawking's "Grand Design," the Judge of all the Earth, and perhaps the Good Shepherd, the Suffering Servant, the Prince of Peace, for wisdom in deliberations and decisions.

Pastor Kael Clemmerson has offered to provide invocations. I am not an ordained minister, but I would offer to help as well.

Daniel J. Eumurian  
1634 Barlow St.  
La Crosse, WI 54601  
c608-790-8863

## Craig, Sondra

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**From:** Our Savior's Pastor <pastor@oursaviorslutheranchurch.net>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, January 7, 2026 10:12 AM  
**To:** ZZ Council Members  
**Subject:** in support of removing invocation from city council meetings

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City Council members.

I write to you in support of the decision to remove the invocation from city council meetings. When invited to pray, I have consistently chosen to not respond to the invitation, firmly believing having an invocation at city council meetings violates the separation of church and state. If I could be assured leaders from a variety of traditions were invited to "pray," not limited to Judaism/Christianity, I would be more inclined to want the tradition of having an invocation continued. I have no such assurance.

The argument is being made that the city and its people need prayer, hence we need to continue the tradition of having an invocation. I would suggest that, although I agree prayer is always needed, there is nothing stopping those of us who pray from praying at other times in other places in other ways. Placing spatial limits on God and God's people is a sign of weakness and distrust in the God who is being prayed to.

Thank you for reading my message of support.

Pastor Joanne Richmond  
Senior Pastor, Our Savior's Lutheran Church  
612 Division St. La Crosse

## Craig, Sondra

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**From:** William Jaekel <wrjaekel@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, January 7, 2026 10:03 AM  
**To:** ZZ Council Members  
**Subject:** Invocation

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Please support the continuation of the invocation prayer before Council meetings. We all need help in these troubling times.

Thank you  
Bill Jaekel

## Craig, Sondra

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**From:** Laurie Abeyta <labeyta5260@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, January 7, 2026 9:55 AM  
**To:** ZZ Council Members  
**Subject:** Invocation

Some people who received this message don't often get email from labeyta5260@gmail.com. [Learn why this is important](#)

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Dear Council Members of La Crosse,

I am writing in response to the vote on removing invocation from the council meetings. I would encourage you to keep this very important part of your meetings. If anything, providential guidance is more than ever needed. I have watch as crime, drugs and homelessness have increased greatly over the years since my family moved to La Crosse County 25 years ago. When we moved here, the news stories were often stories of good deeds of community towards one another to now eerily similar to the stories we heard regularly on the news where we moved from. Your constituents are moving away from La Crosse to the point where a decision is considered to be made to combine schools because the enrollment has dropped dramatically.

You as a committee need to invoke wisdom from on high more than ever. I would implore you to please do not remove this very important part of your meetings.

Sincerely,

Laurie Abeyta

Sent from Gmail Mobile

## Craig, Sondra

---

**From:** Pastor Phil <PastorPhil@Trinitylutheranlax.org>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, January 7, 2026 9:51 AM  
**To:** ZZ Council Members  
**Subject:** Invocation

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Greetings,

I pray this email finds you all well.

As you are probably aware, I am quite passionate about community. Community is the bedrock of which nurtures positive lives and deeper relationships. It is with a warm heart that I thank you all for taking the time and energy to assist in leading with best intentions and your experience in this community. With that shared, are you aware of the positive power and strong light into which Invocations help to provide positive accountability and a reminder to what the council's responsibilities are and for whom they represent. This includes faith. It may not reflect an individual's faith life or beliefs; however, that reason the for ecumenical and/or interfaith invocations. The listener absorbs the meaning for which it is intended. Removing the invocation projects the desire for not investing in accountability and community foundations.

It is my hope that the invocation remains, if not for the council's individual personal agendas, but for the respect and honor of the community.

Blessings,  
Pastor Phil

**(This email does not reflect the belief or voice of Trinity, but my own personal belief.)**



Reverend Phillip Waselik

608-782-6200

1010 Sill Street

La Crosse, WI 54603

## Craig, Sondra

---

**From:** Dave Konkol <davekonkol@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, January 7, 2026 9:08 AM  
**To:** ZZ Council Members  
**Subject:** Invocation

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I understand that the city council has voted to end the invocation (prayer) that has opened council meetings for a number of years. I'm sad that it has come to this.

But I am also aware that for the most part this prayer has been tolerated as not much more than a perfunctory tradition with few council members taking it seriously. I guess it's better to stop pretending that prayer has any meaning to council members than to continue, for most members I would imagine, a meaningless ritual.

May God have mercy on us.

Dave Konkol

## Craig, Sondra

---

**From:** DeanPeter <brotherlylove1@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, January 7, 2026 8:29 AM  
**To:** ZZ Council Members  
**Subject:** Keep invocation

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This letter is meant in love and respect for the city of La Crosse, its history and its need for more prayer in these days not less or none. The power of prayer is the most powerful tool we have as humans, brothers and sisters to lift each other up to our Divine Creator for wisdom, protection, peace and provision along with many other issues we may encounter. I realize there are those who may not believe in the power of prayer. I pray for them too. I was one of those for many years. Then, through prayer and prayer alone my very life was drastically saved. Prayer has become the number one tool in my heart since then and it works. Please keep the invocation prayers going prior to council meetings. I ask this in Jesus name

Thank you  
Dean Ciokiewicz  
Peace B with U

## Craig, Sondra

---

**From:** Jeanine Doherty <jeaninerdoherty@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, January 7, 2026 7:15 AM  
**To:** ZZ Council Members  
**Subject:** Prayer

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You do not understand the power of prayer because if you did you would want it before your meetings. You are making decisions about my community and you need God's guidance.

Thank you

Jeanine Doherty

## Craig, Sondra

---

**From:** Deb Miller <coldeb@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, January 6, 2026 8:11 PM  
**To:** ZZ Council Members  
**Subject:** Keep the Invocation

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Keep the invocation before the meeting!!

Keep the history of this country alive!! We are founded on Christian faith and principles!!

**Craig, Sondra**

---

**From:** cjmuller@couleeconservatives.com  
**Sent:** Tuesday, January 6, 2026 8:01 PM  
**To:** ZZ Council Members  
**Subject:** KEEP PRAYER

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On behalf of several hundred members of CouleeConservatives.com residing in La Crosse and surrounding communities:

Keep Prayer

Thank you for considering our voices when making your decision.

Chris Muller  
CouleeConservatives.com

## Craig, Sondra

---

**From:** ffgreg32@aol.com  
**Sent:** Tuesday, January 6, 2026 4:55 PM  
**To:** ZZ Council Members

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I add my voice to the ones in La Crosse, to uphold the invocation of God's wisdom and help in our city government. Please do not deny the providence of God to favor our city. Thanks you, Greg Olsen (La Crosse)

**Craig, Sondra**

---

**From:** KA Hansen <kim123163@yahoo.com>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, January 6, 2026 4:40 PM  
**To:** ZZ Council Members  
**Subject:** Invocations At Council Meetings

Some people who received this message don't often get email from kim123163@yahoo.com. [Learn why this is important](#)

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Please eliminate the use of invocations at the beginning of council meetings.

Thank you.  
Kim Hansen

## Craig, Sondra

---

**From:** laura abellera <laura.abellera@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, January 6, 2026 2:21 PM  
**To:** ZZ Council Members  
**Cc:** ZZ City Clerk External  
**Subject:** Support for Resolution #25-1370

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Dear City Council Members & Community Leaders:

I am a homeowner residing in downtown La Crosse, District 6. My partner and I have chosen to make La Crosse our home after both living in much more diverse, inclusive places across the Midwest. We chose La Crosse because of its promising growth, seedlings of innovation, and (hopefully) the ability of longstanding institutions to evolve alongside the community members they serve.

I am so glad to see this resolution come before the council, as this ongoing practice is both embarrassingly antiquated and antithetical to a purported commitment to freedom of religion in public spaces. I want to express strong support for this resolution and gratitude to its author for taking the time to remove this archaic, exclusionary custom.

To be clear, removal of this practice is NOT anti-religious. As someone with deep faith in my people and community, and trust in our shared vision for a better future, I see this move forward as only strengthening protections for religious freedom by ensuring that government is kept out of religious affairs and vice versa.

The ACLU said it best in a classic briefing paper regarding the importance of the separation of church and state as it pertains to public spaces: "*maintaining the boundary between private worship and state endorsement is integral to the concept of religious freedom*" (1999).

Thank you for your time!

--

**laura abellera**  
**city of la crosse, district 6**

## Craig, Sondra

---

**From:** Barb Swieczak <bswieciak@diolc.org>  
**Sent:** Thursday, January 8, 2026 4:52 AM  
**To:** ZZ Council Members  
**Subject:** invocation in question

Some people who received this message don't often get email from bswieczak@diolc.org. [Learn why this is important](#)

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Dear Members of the City Council,

It saddened my heart to hear of your desire to remove the invocation of prayer from before your meetings. Being of service to the people created by God calls forth humility doing good for others not self centered desires.

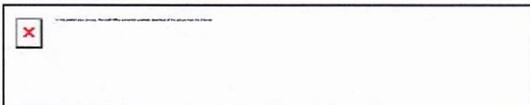
Pride seeks into our service in many forms.

When we keep our focus on the reality of humility in service following the examples our FAITH gives us then we are truly servants of the community

I will pray for you

Miss Barbara Swieczak

**Barbara Swieczak**



3710 East Ave. South, PO Box 4004 | La Crosse, WI 54602-4004

Direct | 608.788.7700 ext. 2271

[bswieciak@diolc.org](mailto:bswieciak@diolc.org) | [diolc.org](http://diolc.org)

## Craig, Sondra

---

**From:** Bryan gmail McGrath <mcgrathb.rom10.9@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, January 7, 2026 11:40 PM  
**To:** ZZ Council Members  
**Subject:** Invocation Continuance

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Greetings City of LaCrosse Council Members,  
My name is Bryan McGrath and am a long standing resident of the city of LaCrosse.

I attended the last City council meeting where the topic of continuing to include an invocation prior to meetings was the main topic at hand.

I am in favor of continuing invocations prior to meetings according to the established guidelines. I believe that the continuance of invocations opens the door to wisdom and unity amongst all...as you discuss the complex issues that we face. With the varying opinions when issues come to the table, I truly believe that the invocation jumpstarts better laws in our City to bring about the peace we all want and currently enjoy.

Thank you for all you do.

Sincerely,

LaCrosse Resident  
Bryan McGrath

**Craig, Sondra**

---

**From:** Chaplain Jason Kalember <chaplain@lacrossejailministry.org>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, January 7, 2026 7:02 PM  
**To:** ZZ Council Members  
**Subject:** Invocation before City Council Meetings

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Greetings,

Please reconsider your initiative to remove the invocation that is given before city council meetings as it is not only important but it helps to create unity and solidarity in the community which we serve.

Blessings,

Chaplain Jason Kalember  
La Crosse Jail Ministry  
[Chaplain@lacrossejailministry.org](mailto:Chaplain@lacrossejailministry.org)  
333 Vine Street  
La Crosse, WI 54601  
608-785-9772  
[lacrossejailministry.org](http://lacrossejailministry.org)



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## Craig, Sondra

---

**From:** Dallas Werner <dallas@firstamericanroofing.com>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, January 7, 2026 5:27 PM  
**To:** ZZ Council Members  
**Subject:** Invocation

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Dear Members of the La Crosse City Council,

I am writing to respectfully urge you to **retain the opening invocation** that has preceded La Crosse City Council meetings for decades.

The invocation has long been offered by rotating local clergy in a respectful, voluntary, and inclusive manner. It is not coercive, nor does it compel participation. Instead, it serves as a moment of reflection, humility, and unity before you undertake the serious work of governing a city that impacts thousands of lives across our region.

The recent recommendation by the J&A Committee to remove the invocation—made with little notice and limited public awareness—has raised serious concern among many community members, including myself, a business leader in the La Crosse Area. Despite the short timeframe, citizens showed up, spoke respectfully, and made their voices heard. The majority of those who testified and wrote in support keeping the invocation.

For many residents, prayer is not about exclusion or politics—it is about seeking wisdom, accountability, and guidance for leaders making difficult decisions. Our city leaders need prayer. Those struggling in our community need prayer. The invocation harms no one, yet its removal would silence a tradition that has served La Crosse well for generations.

I respectfully ask you to consider the history, intent, and broad community support for this practice and to **vote against removing the invocation** at the upcoming council meeting tomorrow, January 8th.

Thank you for your service to our city and for taking the time to consider the voices of your constituents.

**Respectfully,**

Dallas Werner  
Owner/President  
Office: 608-783-3101  
Cell: 608-792-3037

Email: [dallas@firstamericanroofing.com](mailto:dallas@firstamericanroofing.com)



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**Craig, Sondra**

---

**From:** David Riel <driel1974@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Thursday, January 8, 2026 12:46 AM  
**To:** ZZ Council Members  
**Cc:** ZZ City Clerk External; Washington-Spivey, Shaundel  
**Subject:** Support The Proposed Ban On Religious Invocations

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Dear City Leaders,

Please support the proposed ban on religious invocations at city meetings. The religious invocations run counter to everything the Founders of this country fought for.

For example, ten days after becoming the Governor of Virginia in 1779, Thomas Jefferson proposed The Virginia Statute for Religious Freedom. He stated in part "that our civil rights have no dependence on religious opinions."

As members of civil government, you should honor our founding ideals to completely separate civil matters from religious matters.

With Kind Regards,

-David Riel-

## Craig, Sondra

---

**From:** Diana McGrath <dmcgrath88@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, January 7, 2026 5:23 PM  
**To:** ZZ Council Members  
**Subject:** I support invocations!

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Greeting City Council members,

I attended the Judiciary and Administration Committee meeting yesterday to voice my support to continue with invocations.

I'm a resident of the city of La Crosse. I also am a chaplain serving our local police departments.

I am in favor of continuing the practice of prayer before common council meetings. There is NO violation of the constitution in this, and this does not put the city in any legal jeopardy.

My understanding is the Wisconsin House of Representative, the Wisconsin State Senate, the US House of Representatives, and the US Senate all open with an invocation and I would encourage we maintain this long standing practice.

The church I attend used to help schedule the invocations and would email the City Clerk's office quarterly the schedule until a few years ago. We are willing to do that again, if that would be helpful.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak last night and for the opportunity to email you all. I appreciate all that you sacrifice here in service to our city!

Sincerely,

Diana McGrath

## Craig, Sondra

---

**From:** Jacob Eichers <PastorEichers@faithonmain.com>  
**Sent:** Thursday, January 8, 2026 4:59 AM  
**To:** ZZ Council Members  
**Subject:** Re. Resolution 2009-08-022

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Good morning,

My name is Jacob Eichers. I am the pastor at Faith Lutheran Church in La Crosse, Wisconsin. It has recently come to my attention that you will be voting on a resolution to discontinue invocations before city council meetings later today.

Unfortunately, I am unable to attend tonight's common council meeting due to me leading a church service at the same time. However, I wanted to express my opposition to this resolution. I believe the invocations before the common council meetings are beneficial to all those who attend.

As a minister who has made it a point to participate in this yearly since I moved to La Crosse in 2018, I would be disappointed if this practice were to discontinue. I believe the invocation can be done in a respectful, ecumenical way that doesn't unduly lengthen the meeting or disparage anyone. The invitation is open to religious leaders of all denominations and religions, and leaders of all faiths are given an opportunity to open the meeting with prayer.

I hope you will reconsider this motion. Whichever way this motion is decided, I will not stop praying for you all in my personal prayers and in our prayers at church, that the Lord Jesus Christ would guide you to lead our city in justice and for the good of all its citizens.

--

In Christ,

Pastor Jacob Eichers

Pastor, Faith Lutheran Church & Student Center  
1407 Main Street  
La Crosse, WI 54601  
cell: (414) 659-8379  
office: (608) 782-3696

## Craig, Sondra

---

**From:** Kael Clemmerson <kaelclemmerson@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, January 7, 2026 9:29 PM  
**To:** ZZ Council Members  
**Subject:** Removal of Invocation

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Hello Council Members,

I am writing to you to ask you to keep the invocation as made by a variety of faith leaders as part of the City Council Monthly agenda. It is my hope that this email will be an encouragement even if you choose to do away with this practice.

I want to start by saying that I pray for each member of the La Crosse City Council often. I pray that you and your families are blessed; I pray that you lead this community with integrity and purpose beyond yourselves; I pray that when governance feels heavy that your high calling of government leadership that was placed on you when you were elected is lightened. See, praying for government officials is commanded by my Christian faith. I would pray for those in authority even if it weren't, as I genuinely believe that prayer changes circumstances. I also believe that God will grant wisdom to those who ask for it. While this can be done privately, by allowing an invocation, you are asking for wisdom by proxy. It sets an example to those who attend our gatherings of the way they should respect and pray for those in government as well. It encourages us to care for those with whom we might disagree. When that care through prayer is exemplified and shown publicly it breaks down hatred and helps us realize the truth of being equal. The founding of the Declaration of Independence starts by saying "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal". An invocation calling out to our creator directly aligns with the foundation of why we are here.

I would also like to take a moment to share something I found odd. I called to sign up to do the invocation for 1-8-2026 and was told that no one would be scheduled because of this pending legislation. It gives the appearance that the decision to remove the invocation was made before the legislation was even voted on. While it is my sincere hope that this would never be the case, it seemed prudent to point out how it could potentially appear.

In closing, I offer this prayer: God please bless each and every member of Council. I ask that you bless their families. I know that they do truly want what is the best for La Crosse. Please grant them wisdom and favor. May their minds and hearts be at peace with the decisions made, knowing you can and will work things together toward the good. Thank you Lord for each of these truly wonderful people that are created in Your image.

Many Blessings,

Kael Clemmerson  
Community Outreach Director  
New Beginnings  
608-317-8331

## Craig, Sondra

---

**From:** Kael-Jen Clemmerson <flushyourmud@yahoo.com>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, January 7, 2026 9:49 PM  
**To:** ZZ Council Members  
**Subject:** Invocation

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Dear City Council Members,

I heard today that you are voting to cancel the invocation at the beginning of City Council meetings. That it should end, saddens me.

I believe that this short moment is a reminder to all, that government leadership is a high calling with important ramifications. Most decisions made at a state or federal level never appear (even if they do) to affect our every day lives. However, every decision made at the local government level clearly affects the course of our daily lives.

Whether one believes in a Higher Power or not, an invocation is a reminder that the government of our city is called to the highest standard—to do the greatest good. We may not always agree with what that is, but an invocation is a way to remind those present of the values that make our city great—values such as wisdom, justice, cooperation, and the well-being of the community. It also sets a respectful tone, as it encourages a spirit of service and unity among all those present.

Sincerely,

Jen Clemmerson

**Craig, Sondra**

---

**From:** Keith Krejchik <keithkrejchik@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, January 7, 2026 8:24 PM  
**To:** ZZ Council Members  
**Subject:** Council meeting invocation

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I am writing to encourage the members to vote in favor of keeping the invocation in place as part of council meetings.

Sent from my iPhone

## Craig, Sondra

---

**From:** lxffemt <lxffemt@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, January 7, 2026 3:21 PM  
**To:** ZZ Council Members  
**Subject:** Invocation

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Dear members of the council

It has come to my attention that you are looking to get rid of invocation before your monthly meetings. I would highly encourage you to reconsider. Look what happened when prayer was taken out of schools or what happened to the democratic party since they took prayer out of their convention. The party is in chaos. If you look in the Bible when the children of God turned away from Him, God did not bless them. I thought you wanted God's help and His blessing at your meetings. Don't rely on your own strength but His. I hope and pray that you keep the people of God to continue praying before your meetings.

Tony Nickelatti

Sent from my Galaxy

## Craig, Sondra

---

**From:** Maureen Freedland <maureenfreedland@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, January 7, 2026 10:06 PM  
**To:** ZZ Council Members  
**Subject:** Invocations at City Hall - personal reflections

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Dear La Crosse City Council Members,

I spoke at J&A on Jan. 7, 2026 in favor of ending invocations at City Hall. I let an old hurt in La Crosse I felt 30 years ago, but still fresh to me, drive some of my emotion: a spray-painted swastika on a footbridge in Myrick Park that was apparently ignored by city staff and everyone else, as no one thought to call it in to remove it for about a year until I noticed it was still there.

I want to be a little more personal here and give you a clearer sense of what it feels like to be a person not in the majority in a “captured” audience in order to petition my civic government or have my civic governmental affairs decided. It is a sense of alienation and exclusion. It is a feeling of intrusiveness, with a more dominant religion explaining to me. It is the feeling that I am not protected as a minority member even despite American principles that the minority should be protected against the inherent power of the majority. It is something I cannot just “ignore” if I don’t feel “comfortable with it. It is not ignorable, if I am present in Chambers. I object to being made invisible

I hear this discomfort from other people in La Crosse in minority religions, those who do not have a formal religion, or are part of a faith tradition that simply keeps to itself rather than appear publicly to instruct and lecture on wisdom and offer blessings. This can be for any number of private and valid policy reasons of their own. I know very well from personal experience what it feels like to be public on some issues and to be targeted for expressing my opinion. Usually in fact I say a prayer to myself before I go to the podium – but that’s my choice.

In my faith tradition, we do a beautiful prayer for the government each week from our prayer book. But it isn’t part of our local tradition or policy to stand in city hall to pray directly to its elected officials.

I know that Congress and other legislative bodies may begin with prayer. Courts including the U.S. Supreme Court in many instances allow prayer. But please consider that here on our local level, where we know our people, our neighbors, we try to broadly extend ourselves to make everyone feels included and wanted. We actually have the ability to do that, and it is even in our policy

interests to do so. We want to protect their freedom of religion and of speech, by not bringing into our civic, governmental building that which they may not have a choice about.

I wouldn't dream of being disrespectful by not standing up when prayer is offered.

I also have little doubt that I would be singled out for it.

Allowing "an opportunity" to bring in clergy is hollow. I don't believe the city should be keeping "a data base" on the "authenticity" of a religious organization, and be able to scrutinize it to see if it would "legitimately qualify for Section 501(c)(3) tax-exempt status." I am shocked that the 2009 resolution and Policy and Procedure in 7-9-09 for opening invocations even has that in it. It is not the City's right to essentially judge the worth of another's religious group. It is not right to require "an established presence in the community" before being granted this license. This is not the government's business. It does not serve any policy. It is exclusionary rather than inclusive. It is an unwelcome and excessive interference.

That virtually no faith leaders come to City Council other than Christian clergy clearly shows the failure of the 2009 resolution.

I write to you as a citizen very involved in faith activity under government authority. I served on the La Crosse Jail Ministry Board for over 10 years, including several as President. The difference is that the inmates request to interact with the chaplain, and the chaplain is prepared to help any inmate of any faith, creed, or belief system – without testing its validity.

Exchange of ideas and cooperation, and active fellowship with members of many faith communities in La Crosse has been something I've loved and appreciated most about La Crosse – I deeply value the Iverson Freking Ecumenical Recognition I received in 2017 from Bethany St. Joseph and the Christian Communities of the greater La Crosse area.

Those are spaces I choose to engage in.

Invocation at city hall is not simply old fashioned -- it flies in the face of where we are going in diverse, multicultural, multi-religion La Crosse. Almost all of the many public community events I attend as an active citizen give heartfelt, universal spiritual invocations that do not directly tie to one religion. If they are religious prayers – well, I've usually chosen to be there, and I respect them.

Acts of antisemitism have not disappeared in La Crosse since I saw that swastika in Myrick Park in 1995. Remember too, that La Crosse was once a Sundown City where Black people had virtually no respected space. Remember the local anti-Muslim activity in recent years.

Finally, I ask the question, what governmental purpose is served with prayer to the clergy? How does it fit in with what City Hall must accomplish? Can we make decisions about taxes, the homeless,

liquor licenses, snow removal, etc. without divine intervention directed to our council members for their “benefit and blessings?” What do we gain by keeping it, other than more divisiveness? I believe our conscientious, duly elected city council members, who by and large come from strong faith backgrounds, can rely on their deep, personal value systems to continue their responsibilities and their fine work for us.

The La Crosse County Board eliminated prayer around 20 years ago after debate because of its divisiveness, and we are doing just fine without prayer given to us. (Still the 4<sup>th</sup> lowest county property tax rate per person in Wisconsin, we’ll often tell ya.)

We’ve gotten so much more aware through the years.

Please, appreciate the full effects on others, on everyone, of prayers at government meetings. Please know how invocations make people feel unwelcome, even though this may be unintentional.

As a wise person willing to listen with their heart and intellect once acknowledged to me, “(Some) may be able to just move through the system with blind spots to other people’s discomfort, but others cannot.”

Thank you for the opportunity to speak to you.

Maureen Freedland

---

**Maureen Freedland**  
**2641 Schubert Place**  
**La Crosse, Wisconsin 54601**  
**Tel. 608-796-1076**  
[maureenfreedland@gmail.com](mailto:maureenfreedland@gmail.com)

## Craig, Sondra

---

**From:** nschaller04 <nschaller04@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, January 7, 2026 11:25 PM  
**To:** ZZ Council Members  
**Subject:** Keep prayer in City Council Meetings

Some people who received this message don't often get email from nschaller04@gmail.com. [Learn why this is important](#)

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I just want to share my opinion that I think the City of LA Crosse should KEEP PRAYER as an opening invocation for City Council meetings. Please continue to lead the Council meetings with prayer. Thank you

Naomi Schaller

Sent from my U.S.Cellular© Smartphone

## Craig, Sondra

---

**From:** Sharon Olson <sharonolson4859@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, January 7, 2026 9:38 PM  
**To:** ZZ Council Members

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Do not remove the invocation before council meeting. The council has already taken enough away from us, especially on the Northside.

## Craig, Sondra

---

**From:** Sue Groetsch <skgroetsch3@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, January 7, 2026 8:54 PM  
**To:** ZZ Council Members  
**Subject:** Invocation before Meetings

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Please DO NOT remove the invocation that is given before city council meetings. We want our clergy to continue praying for our leadership before city council meetings.

Thank you!

Kerry & Sue Groetsch  
La Crosse

## **Craig, Sondra**

---

**From:** Joy Buchman <momof2marines@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Thursday, January 8, 2026 8:35 AM  
**To:** ZZ Council Members  
**Subject:** Invocation Removal

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I am against the council voting to remove the invocation at the start of council meetings.

Joy Buchman  
La Crosse, WI 54603

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## Craig, Sondra

---

**From:** Chris Brown <cbrown2822@aol.com>  
**Sent:** Thursday, January 8, 2026 8:06 AM  
**To:** ZZ Council Members  
**Subject:** Invocation before meetings

Some people who received this message don't often get email from cbrown2822@aol.com. [Learn why this is important](#)

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Hello. I am a life long resident of La Crosse and understand there is a motion to stop saying an invocation before the city meetings.

I would like to express a strong desire to keep a prayer before the meetings.

Thank you for your consideration.

Chris Brown  
[Sent from AOL on Android](#)

## Craig, Sondra

---

**From:** Christopher Ruff <cruff@diolc.org>  
**Sent:** Thursday, January 8, 2026 8:02 AM  
**To:** ZZ Council Members  
**Subject:** Invocation at meetings

Some people who received this message don't often get email from cruff@diolc.org. [Learn why this is important](#)

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Dear City Council Members,

Please continue the time honored practice of starting your meetings with an invocation. This is a core part of our nation's heritage, reflected at every level of government. The simple acknowledgment of God and our need for his blessings certainly dates from the founding fathers and is far from being an establishment of a state religion. To stop doing would not be progressive, but regressive. Thank you.

**Christopher J. Ruff, S.T.L.**

Director of the Office for Ministries and Social Concerns

3710 East Ave. South, PO Box 4004 | La Crosse, WI 54602-4004  
608.791.0161 Direct | 608.788.7700 Main | 608.788.8413 Fax  
[cruff@diolc.org](mailto:cruff@diolc.org) | <http://www.diolc.org>

**Craig, Sondra**

---

**From:** Rosanna Harter <rosannaharter@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, January 7, 2026 8:34 PM  
**To:** ZZ Council Members  
**Cc:** Email Rosanna's  
**Subject:** Please keep prayer at beginning of meetings

[Some people who received this message don't often get email from rosannaharter@gmail.com. Learn why this is important at <https://aka.ms/LearnAboutSenderIdentification> ]

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Dear council members,

Thank you for your hard work for our beloved City! The thing is no one knows everything. Everyone needs help. We need God's help. Prayer is simply asking for it.

If you don't believe in God, it's not going to harm you to hear the prayer. If you do believe in God and your city is rejecting His help, that's when you feel concerned.

I pray you make wise decisions in the coming years!

Rosanna

## Craig, Sondra

---

**From:** Marlene <winona.3927@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, January 7, 2026 7:18 PM  
**To:** ZZ Council Members  
**Subject:** Invocation

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We need to continue with the clergy with prayer before the city council meetings. . We all need prayer... Especially taking care of City business...Thank you, Marlene

## Craig, Sondra

---

**From:** Robert Freedland <robertjfreedland@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, January 7, 2026 2:21 PM  
**To:** ZZ Council Members  
**Subject:** Invocation at City Council meetings.

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Dear City Council Members,

Yesterday I had the opportunity to share my opinion regarding the meeting invocations at City Council meetings and the resolution to end them at the J&A meeting. The following is essentially what I had to say yesterday.

For those of you who do not know me, I am a retired Ophthalmologist who practiced at Mayo Clinic Health System in La Crosse for 26 years and fully retired in 2024.

Thank you in advance for considering my thoughts as you decide the future of invocations.

"I would like to speak in support of the resolution to end the practice of prayer in conjunction with meetings of the City Council.

Personally I fully embrace prayer but that is a personal matter between me and my creator. I do not believe that it is the role of any governmental body to offer a 'rotating clergy' that does not represent faiths that either choose not to participate nor does it represent faiths too small to operate 'congregations' nor does it represent those without faith of any organized religion.

A recent Pew research poll (January, 2024) reported that 28% of Americans are religiously unaffiliated describing themselves as "atheists, agnostics or 'nothing in particular' when asked about their religion. And this is a growing portion of Americans.

Perhaps you think that these Americans are 'wrong'. That a little prayer would be good for them. But that is their business and it is not the role of government to determine which religious faith is 'right' or whether religion is correct at all. This is a private matter in our country.

Furthermore, this avoidance of prayer protects the religious faiths in our community as well.

Do you realize that "religious leaders" must agree, as it says in the third paragraph of the invitation,

"This opportunity is voluntary, and you are free to offer the invocation according to the dictates of your own conscience. To maintain a spirit of respect and ecumenism, the Council requests only that the prayer opportunity not be exploited as an effort to convert others to the particular

faith of the invocation speaker, nor to disparage any faith or belief different than that of the invocation speaker.”

Personally I agree with this sensibility.

But if you are honest about it, you also will see that this requires a ‘watering down’ perhaps of a clergy member’s own beliefs.

This is the effect of government interference with religious practice just in that paragraph.

Religious freedom demands that each individual in America be respected on an equal basis to their own beliefs and practices. That is a good thing.

Mixing the two as this practice allows, fails to equally represent all beliefs or lack thereof and dictates to clergy HOW and WHAT they should say.

I reject this.

In this time of great division, let us not continue a practice that makes some individuals feel better or respected and others to feel left out or disrespected.

Thank you for this time."

I understand that this might be a difficult decision for all of you to make. While it might appear that the Council by removing these clergy-led invocations is taking a stand against religion and thus religious freedom, it is actually quite the opposite. By removing religious invocations, you are respecting every single member of our community at every meeting regardless of their religious faith or lack thereof. By not dictating to clergy members the content and form of their prayers you are also protecting the right of religious faiths to pray without governmental regulation.

Thank you for addressing this matter.

Sincerely,

Robert J. Freedland MD

2641 Schubert Place

La Crosse, Wisconsin

**Craig, Sondra**

---

**From:** Kimberly Krejchik <kimberly8231@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, January 7, 2026 6:30 AM  
**To:** ZZ Council Members  
**Subject:** Keep the invocation

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To all Council Members:

I am writing to share my support of keeping the invocation before each city council meeting.

Thank you,  
Kimberly Krejchik

**Craig, Sondra**

---

**From:** Mary Keefe Barrett <mkb195152@icloud.com>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, January 6, 2026 1:03 PM  
**To:** ZZ Council Members  
**Subject:** Please don't stop the invocation at the beginning of council meetings. Sometimes we need help in making good decisions. The invocation hurts no one, but it certainly may help. Thank you.

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Mary Barrett  
Sent from my iPad

## Craig, Sondra

---

**From:** Jeremy Durtschi <huckf22@hotmail.com>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, January 6, 2026 8:47 AM  
**To:** ZZ Council Members  
**Subject:** Keep the Invocation

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Dear City Council Members,

We were made aware that there is to be a vote regarding whether the invocation prior to meetings should be eliminated. We are emailing to state our support of keeping the invocation. Prayer has been a part of our nation from its founding and was fundamental in the creation and development of our constitution and its laws. We believe one must always seek God's wisdom in the peaceful and righteous ways to run every facet of our government: city; county; state; federal. Polls show the majority of Americans agree, at 80-85% choosing to connect with a higher authority in seeking counsel and guidance when making decisions. Removing this opportunity to humble ourselves and ask for discernment and wisdom prior to making decisions for our people and city would be opening a window to pride, which we all easily fall prey to as humans.

We greatly appreciate your time. Thank you for hearing our voices.

Holly Durtschi (and family)

**Craig, Sondra**

---

**From:** John Flanagan <1226roberta@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Thursday, January 8, 2026 12:18 PM  
**To:** ZZ Council Members

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Please continue the practice of invocation before meetings

**Craig, Sondra**

---

**From:** Mike Keifer <mkeiferii@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Thursday, January 8, 2026 12:15 PM  
**To:** ZZ Council Members  
**Subject:** invocation/prayer in council meetings

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Hello,

I am contacting you to provide my input on prayer and other invocations in council meetings. It is my thought that all conversations can be had without a need for religious context. Removing such invocations will encourage members to voice their opinion without religious pretext and being subject to religious scrutiny. I am in full support of the removal of invocations/prayer during council meetings and gatherings.

Thanks  
Mike

## Craig, Sondra

---

**From:** Pastor Hatlevig <phconnectchurch@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Thursday, January 8, 2026 11:47 AM  
**To:** ZZ Council Members  
**Subject:** Keep the Invocation Prayer, please!

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Dear Council members,

We have learned more about the effort to remove prayer from the opening of your meetings. We stand firm that it is in everyone's best interest to continue with this standard since LaCrosse is a wonderful place and with God's help we will continue to experience blessing and success in our endeavors. God is the Living God and all power is ultimately in His hands, so it would be wise to affirm His authority and ask His involvement in the days ahead.

Thank you for your serious consideration of this decision.

Sincerely,

Prs. Jerry & Nancy Hatlevig  
Connect Church (Cathedral of Praise LaCrosse Inc.)

## Craig, Sondra

---

**From:** Leann Wrobel <leannwrobel52@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Thursday, January 8, 2026 11:47 AM  
**To:** ZZ Council Members  
**Subject:** Prayer before council meetings

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Prayer for guidance in the governance of our city, county, state, and nation is critical in order to get direction for fairness for the people and wisdom for fiscal planning as well as to expose the truth among so many opinions that are heard and presented at the meetings. As you seek to do your very best in a challenging role, let God come in and guide you by opening in prayer.

**Craig, Sondra**

---

**From:** Quin Bohan <qibrog@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Thursday, January 8, 2026 11:22 AM  
**To:** ZZ Council Members

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Please allow prayer at the start of your sessions! Thank you!

**Craig, Sondra**

---

**From:** Scott Elvin <elvins44@outlook.com>  
**Sent:** Thursday, January 8, 2026 11:33 AM  
**To:** ZZ Council Members  
**Subject:** Invocation

[Some people who received this message don't often get email from elvins44@outlook.com. Learn why this is important at <https://aka.ms/LearnAboutSenderIdentification> ]

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I am in favor of offering a prayer for guidance before any meeting. Please consider continuing to offer an invocation at committee meetings. It is never a good time to turn our backs on God. Scott Elvin

Sent from my iPhone

**Craig, Sondra**

---

**From:** Scott Tree Man <scotttreeman@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Thursday, January 8, 2026 11:30 AM  
**To:** ZZ Council Members  
**Subject:** Invocation

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I do not want prayer removed from the council chambers.

Thank you.

**Craig, Sondra**

---

**From:** Tom Bice <tbice@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Thursday, January 8, 2026 11:21 AM  
**To:** ZZ Council Members  
**Subject:** Please keep the Prayer

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There are always some who will be inconvenienced in some way, but this is a right that is not offensive; those annoyed can be patient, as it is very short.

**Craig, Sondra**

---

**From:** Tim Walls <twalls4525@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Thursday, January 8, 2026 11:20 AM  
**To:** ZZ Council Members  
**Subject:** Invocation

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Please vote no regarding discontinuation of the invocation opening the meetings. These are important.  
Sent from my iPhone

**Craig, Sondra**

---

**From:** Soren Adams <sorenrodneyadams@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Thursday, January 8, 2026 10:55 AM  
**To:** ZZ Council Members  
**Subject:** Removing prayer before meetings

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Hello La Crosse city council! My name is Søren Adams, and I have lived in La Crosse my whole life. I am in favor of keeping invocation/prayer at the start of meetings, in order to honor God and set our hearts on Him before our meetings. Thank you!

## Craig, Sondra

---

**From:** Alexander Fisher <alexfisher2006@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Thursday, January 8, 2026 10:46 AM  
**To:** ZZ Council Members  
**Subject:** Invocation Removal Concern

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Good Morning,

I am a student and resident of Lacrosse and I would like to express that I appreciate the invocation before meetings. I think that it is an acknowledgment of the higher power above us and the government can often forget that God is above it.

I would really like it if the city council kept the invocation as a reminder to the leaders of our city that they do not have ultimate authority and they will answer to God for their actions.

I also have a hard time believing that the city will become a better place (which is the point of a city council) if we were to remove the invocation.

Thank you for reading my concerns.

**Alexander Fisher**  
[alexfisher2006@gmail.com](mailto:alexfisher2006@gmail.com)  
(C) (608)-780-8998  
Lacrosse WI, Student.

**Craig, Sondra**

---

**From:** Samuel Schneider <samuel.soblessed@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Thursday, January 8, 2026 10:39 AM  
**To:** ZZ Council Members  
**Subject:** Re: In favor of Keeping invocation!

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Dear council members,

I am in favor of keeping the invocation of various churches before council meetings!

## Craig, Sondra

---

**From:** Cody Sweeney <ctsv.sweeney@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Thursday, January 8, 2026 10:20 AM  
**To:** ZZ Council Members  
**Subject:** Prayer vote

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Dear honored members of the City Council,

As a born-and-raised citizen of the City of La Crosse, I ask that as your constituent you keep my principles in mind and vote to keep the invocation for City Council meetings tonight.

Thank you for your attention in this matter,

Cody Sweeney

## Craig, Sondra

---

**From:** Natalie Heneghan <natalie.heneghan@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Thursday, January 8, 2026 9:59 AM  
**To:** ZZ Council Members  
**Subject:** Support removing prayer during council meetings

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Hi council members,

I support removing the invocation from government meetings. I am so happy Councilmember Mindel has brought this resolution forward. When I attended my first Common Council meeting as a new La Crosse resident several years ago, I was shocked by the invocation. I felt isolated and looked around wondering if anyone else thought the same.

There is a lot of creativity, passion, and brilliance in our community, and we can come together to create a more inclusive and thoughtful message to kick off public meetings. We can do this without invoking God or aligning ourselves with a single faith tradition.

Let's protect religious freedom and honor the diversity of experiences and identities of all La Crosse citizens, not just the ones who believe their Christian heritage is the only one worth protecting.

Thank you for your consideration,  
Natalie Heneghan  
La Crosse - District 7

**Craig, Sondra**

**From:** Elaine Yager <elaine@threesixty.bz>  
**Sent:** Thursday, January 8, 2026 9:48 AM  
**To:** ZZ Council Members  
**Subject:** Invocation at Council Meetings

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Good Morning,  
I thought about this for a while. My apologies for this late email. The more I thought about it, in this time when we continue to have great divides across the country. I can't help but think seeking grace and kindness at the beginning of your meetings is a bad thing. You have allowed diversity in who delivers this message, again to me, bringing more unity than it does division. I hope your decision will be made with the intention of bringing more grace and kindness to our community as a whole. Regardless of who you are or how you worship. (\*This is a personal opinion from a constituent. )  
Just a few thoughts.  
Best Regards, Elaine

**Elaine Yager**

*Commercial Property Manager*

1243 Badger St. La Crosse, WI 54601  
Office: (608) 782-6345 | M: (608) 799-1637  
[elaine@threesixty.bz](mailto:elaine@threesixty.bz)



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**Craig, Sondra**

---

**From:** Callie <callieprzywojski@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Thursday, January 8, 2026 9:48 AM  
**To:** ZZ Council Members  
**Subject:** Invocation removal

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Good morning,  
I am a resident of La Crosse and support the removal of the invocation.  
Callie Przywojski

## Craig, Sondra

---

**From:** Thomas Reichenbacher <treichenbacher1970@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Thursday, January 8, 2026 9:45 AM  
**To:** ZZ Council Members  
**Subject:** Resolution 25-1370

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Good Morning City of La Crosse City Council,

I hope you are enjoying your morning.

I live at 1508 Adams Street.

I write today because of Resolution 25-1370.

To end the invocation, the prayer, before the City Council meetings is a massive mistake. Our leaders need the wisdom and strength of the Holy Spirit to make just and ethical decisions. Prayer grounds and centers the human person; prayer invokes a power greater than the human world gives, and prayer is a mediation necessary to settle us - putting us in a proper frame of mind.

I respectfully request that you do NOT pass Resolution 25-1370.

Thank you.

Jesus is Our Hope!

Thomas Reichenbacher

## Craig, Sondra

---

**From:** Kayleigh Day <kayleighjday@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Thursday, January 8, 2026 9:39 AM  
**To:** ZZ Council Members  
**Subject:** Support for the removal of the invocation

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Dear City Council members,

I am writing to show my support for the removal of the invocation at the beginning of city council meetings.

I deeply believe in the separation of church and state and that our governments should not be favoring one religion over another. If the council wants to do some sort of invocation, please do one that is secular and respects all values and beliefs in the city, not just one.

By choosing to use one religion before a meeting for a city that is made up of many different religions, traditions and cultural backgrounds, we are prioritizing the beliefs of some community members over others and I want all people to feel welcome in our city and like their local government represents them.

I love this community and the love we have for our neighbors. Let's show love for all of our different neighbors and not just those that follow one specific religion.

Respectfully,

Kayleigh Day

2241 14th St S, La Crosse

**Kayleigh Day**  
[kayleighjday@gmail.com](mailto:kayleighjday@gmail.com)/(608)317-9989

## Craig, Sondra

---

**From:** schmitzgp <schmitzgp@aol.com>  
**Sent:** Thursday, January 8, 2026 9:18 AM  
**To:** ZZ Council Members  
**Subject:** The Uncomfort of the Un-churched

Some people who received this message don't often get email from schmitzgp@aol.com. [Learn why this is important](#)

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Issue:

Un-churched people feel uncomfortable when they are present prior to the business of a La Crosse City Council meeting.

Solution:

People who are uncomfortable hearing prayer should be encouraged to stay in the lobby until after the Pledge of Allegiance and the opening Prayer!

Post Signs at the Council Chambers entrance warning a person will experience those who believe in a higher power more than themselves may express that humility if entering the Chambers too early.

Respectfully,

Glen P Schmitz  
Onalaska, WI

**Craig, Sondra**

---

**From:** Barbara Stetzer <shayteamdotnet@yahoo.com>  
**Sent:** Thursday, January 8, 2026 8:53 AM  
**To:** ZZ Council Members  
**Subject:** Invocation at Council Meetings

[Some people who received this message don't often get email from shayteamdotnet@yahoo.com. Learn why this is important at <https://aka.ms/LearnAboutSenderIdentification> ]

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PLEASE continue invocations at Council Meetings.

There should always be a few minutes available for the council yo turn their thoughts to peace and goodness before diving into debate.

I am surprised that the council has found this topic deserving of its consideration.

May your lives be blessed with goodness beyond prestige and material things.

/Barbara Stetzer

Sent from my iPhone

## Craig, Sondra

---

**From:** Mario <mariohristov@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Thursday, January 8, 2026 8:49 AM  
**To:** ZZ Council Members  
**Subject:** proposal to remove invocation

Some people who received this message don't often get email from mariohristov@gmail.com. [Learn why this is important](#)

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Greetings dear council members,  
my name is Mario Hristov. I am on the Pastoral team at Adoration Church in La Crosse. I have had the privilege to serve food and minister to the homeless in La Crosse, alongside with "New Beginnings Christian Fellowship", First Free Church and others. In Addition, I was invited to be part of the Neighbor to Neighbor as well. I am emailing you very concerned that there is a consideration to remove prayer before the council meetings. I want to voice mine and the concerns and disapproval of our church that such a proposal may be voted in favor of removing prayer from the council meetings. Prayer is a long standing tradition in our town, as well as a practice in the 250 history of our Nation. I heard the concerns of those opposed to prayer and I felt that there was a growing incorrect idea that somehow prayer in the public sphere is an establishment of a religion. As you yourselves know, dear council members, that is not the case. Clergy of faiths have always been invited to lead prayer before the meetings, thus making the arguments of establishing a religion a mute point! I do understand that a very few, and yes it is a very few, may feel uncomfortable with prayer. However no one is forced or compelled to pray during this time. It seems to me that the council members are willing to accomodate an extremely small minority of a few and neglect the desires and beliefs of a huge majority by removing prayer! We all, as adults, are often offended by something or someone wouldn't you agree? If we try to accommodate every offence, every feeling of discomfort, where will that lead us? Wouldn't you dear council members offend or hurt the feelings of many more people by removing prayer before the meetings? I would like to encourage you and to humbly ask that the council member rethink this decision and vote for prayer to remain as the proper and much needed practice before meetings. We desperately need God's wisdom and help! In prayer we ask the Lord to bless our city ... don't you desire God's abundant blessings upon the city of La Crosse?

I would also end with this. The local churches have been invited and asked to join with our resources, people and with our precious time to help with the homeless crisis. How are we going to be able to help when it seems like our God is no longer welcome in our city? I would like to ask, would you still feel comfortable to ask the local churches to help if you kick God out of town hall? I am not trying to be rude or hurtful but this question must be asked! Jesus says in John 15:5 "...apart from Me you can do NOTHING" so I am asking you dear council members how are you expecting us to help with the homeless crisis when it seems to me God is no longer welcome? Again ... without God we cannot do anything! You ask us to link hands with you to address the homeless crisis and yet it seems to us that you want to unlink our hands from prayer!?!

I hope and pray that you vote to keep prayer before council meetings and thus communicate to our Lord and God that He is still welcome!

Blessings - Pastor Mario Hristov

**Craig, Sondra**

---

**From:** Ariana Weaver <arianaweaver17@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Thursday, January 8, 2026 2:03 PM  
**To:** ZZ Council Members  
**Subject:** Prayer before City Council meetings

Some people who received this message don't often get email from arianaweaver17@gmail.com. [Learn why this is important](#)

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Dear members of the City Council,

My name is Ariana Weaver and I am resident of La Crosse and a recent graduate from Western Technical College. I implore you to vote to keep praying before city council meetings. The nations pledge of allegiance states that we are one nation under God, and to no longer pray before meetings would be to say that we do not care what God says or that he has more power than us. Romans 1:18-32 clearly lays out what happens when we choose to deny God, which I can see happening in our nation, La crosse does not have to follow this path. We always have the option to turn back to God and humble ourselves before Him, please choose to continue doing in a small way by praying before council meetings.

Thank you for assisting in leading our City,  
Ariana Weaver

## Craig, Sondra

---

**From:** Tisha King Heiden <tishaking@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Thursday, January 8, 2026 2:01 PM  
**To:** ZZ Council Members  
**Subject:** invocation/prayer

Some people who received this message don't often get email from tishaking@gmail.com. [Learn why this is important](#)

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I am in favor of removing the invocation at the beginning of council meetings.

Thank you for your time,  
Tisha  
La Crosse, WI 65603

--  
Tisha King Heiden

**Craig, Sondra**

---

**From:** Gary Harter <gharter@harters.net>  
**Sent:** Thursday, January 8, 2026 1:51 PM  
**To:** ZZ Council Members

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I support keeping the invocation before Council Meetings

I am against bike lanes in down town La Crosse it will really hurt all business and force some to close

**Craig, Sondra**

---

**From:** Levi Miller <levimiller328@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Thursday, January 8, 2026 1:27 PM  
**To:** ZZ Council Members  
**Subject:** Invocation at start of meetings

[Some people who received this message don't often get email from levimiller328@gmail.com. Learn why this is important at <https://aka.ms/LearnAboutSenderIdentification> ]

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Hello,

This is Levi Miller, a citizen of La Crosse. Upon hearing that Invocation was going to be taken out from meeting I was saddened. I hope this email helps in the vote to not take invocation out of meetings. I am in favor of keeping invocation at the start of meetings.

Thank you,  
Levi Miller  
Sent from my iPhone

**Craig, Sondra**

---

**From:** Rae Ann Elvin <raelusz@hotmail.com>  
**Sent:** Thursday, January 8, 2026 1:25 PM  
**To:** ZZ Council Members  
**Subject:** Vote on Prayer before meetings

[Some people who received this message don't often get email from raelusz@hotmail.com. Learn why this is important at <https://aka.ms/LearnAboutSenderIdentification> ]

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Hello,

I'm emailing you with a concern I have about you wanting to get rid of praying before the city council meetings. I believe that we as a nation, have the right and privilege to ask God's guidance on all we do as a city, state and nation. I'm wondering why you would even think of doing away with praying. This is deeply disturbing to me and I'm asking that you please keep praying before each and every meeting the city has.

Thanks so much!  
Respectfully,  
Rae Ellen

**Craig, Sondra**

---

**From:** Laura Graybar <lgraybar@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Thursday, January 8, 2026 1:23 PM  
**To:** ZZ Council Members  
**Subject:** Keep invocation at council meeting

[Some people who received this message don't often get email from lgraybar@gmail.com. Learn why this is important at <https://aka.ms/LearnAboutSenderIdentification> ]

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To whom it may concern

La Crosse is the county seat and the invocation is for the county courthouse, the inmates in jail, and the commerce. Please, let them continue.

It is easy for some to write it off or to let it become a part of a background noise, but for many the impact and meaning is deep. Please keep the invocation.

Laura Graybar  
Sent from my iPhone

**Craig, Sondra**

---

**From:** Dayne Stevens <dsantrat@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Thursday, January 8, 2026 1:16 PM  
**To:** ZZ Council Members  
**Subject:** Innvocation

[Some people who received this message don't often get email from dsantrat@gmail.com. Learn why this is important at <https://aka.ms/LearnAboutSenderIdentification> ]

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Can we stick with the separation of church and state please? I know this was optional anyway, the invocation but the separation of church and state part isn't. I'm not against religion but it just doesn't have a place even in our local politics beyond giving people the freedom to practice as they wish while not harming others.

Having it be framed as a way to guide politics as I've seen the email sent by another in the community has done, is damaging and frankly insulting to the intelligence of the population.

We need factual information to drive our decisions even on a local level. In these trying times especially.

Regards,  
Dayne Stevens

**Craig, Sondra**

---

**From:** Victoria Helming <victoriahelming@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Thursday, January 8, 2026 1:11 PM  
**To:** ZZ Council Members  
**Subject:** Prayer Invocation

Some people who received this message don't often get email from victoriahelming@gmail.com. [Learn why this is important](#)

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Hi,

I am emailing in favor of letting prayer remain at city hall/board meetings.

Thank you

**Craig, Sondra**

---

**From:** Marvin Van Every <marvvanevery@icloud.com>  
**Sent:** Thursday, January 8, 2026 1:08 PM  
**To:** ZZ Council Members  
**Subject:** Invocation

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Please vote to keep an invocation part of the council meetings. Thank you!  
Sent from my iPhone

## Craig, Sondra

---

**From:** Monica Gorski <mhofmann5@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Thursday, January 8, 2026 1:03 PM  
**To:** ZZ Council Members  
**Subject:** Please remove invocation

[Some people who received this message don't often get email from mhofmann5@gmail.com. Learn why this is important at <https://aka.ms/LearnAboutSenderIdentification> ]

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Hello!

I am a resident, mother, healthcare practitioner, and small business owner in La Crosse writing in support of removing the invocation at the beginning of our city's council meetings. This is a clear violation of church vs state as defined in the Bill of Rights. I sincerely support all faiths, religions, and spiritual paths. We should celebrate and promote religious freedom in our city government by letting people practice freely as they choose, not having it written in our municipal code to do so inappropriately at our government meetings. That is the opposite of freedom! I look forward to the council removing this to focus on your important work and hope you all have a lovely day.

Thank you!  
Monica Gorski

**Craig, Sondra**

---

**From:** Heidi Worminghaus <hworminghaus@yahoo.com>  
**Sent:** Thursday, January 8, 2026 12:56 PM  
**To:** ZZ Council Members  
**Subject:** Please keep Invocation b4 monthly meetings

Some people who received this message don't often get email from hworminghaus@yahoo.com. [Learn why this is important](#)

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Greetings Council Members,

I urge you to keep the invocation b4 monthly meetings.

Buddha was not a Buddhist. Jesus was not a Christian. They were teachers who taught love, wisdom, and harmony with all of life.. Love was their true religion: beyond labels, borders or beliefs. In the end, the greatest gift of faith is not a book or a temple, but in how deeply we choose to love while we are here. Freedom of religion in is guaranteed in our Constitution, it's what people fought and died for to create this country. Is our country perfect, nope. Did our government break every treaty ever signed with the Native Peoples here, yup. But to not acknowledge or give space for the Creator before making decisions seems wrong on so many levels.

The other very concerning aspect is most people believe in a faith or Higher Power. Do most people even know you are about to do this???? Most ppl don't know and I think would truly find this very upsetting. Most people do not watch the news or get the LaX Tribune, so again, please be very aware that you are representing ALL the ppl of La Crosse. Given that fact alone I think you must acknowledge most people want to keep this invocation and I think it would be best to vote accordingly.

All the best in the New Year,  
Heidi Worminghaus

## Craig, Sondra

---

**From:** Kennaniah Rouse <kennaniahrouse@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Thursday, January 8, 2026 12:53 PM  
**To:** ZZ Council Members  
**Subject:** Keep the Invocation

[Some people who received this message don't often get email from kennaniahrouse@gmail.com. Learn why this is important at <https://aka.ms/LearnAboutSenderIdentification> ]

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Good Morning,

I'm a LaCrosse county resident and I believe the institution of prayer is important for our nation. This nation was founded on Christian principles, no matter your background Americas founding fathers kept God at the forefront of their endeavors, I think honoring that keeps our nation on the right track. This may seem small in the grand scheme of things but many small changes add up to a big falling away down the road. I don't think we should abandon our history just because some people may be uncomfortable. You can not agree with something but still respect it, I ask that we respect our nations history that God reigns Supreme and we need his presence in our nation now more than ever. Jesus is coming back and I want LaCrosse to have remained faithful.

**Craig, Sondra**

---

**From:** Patricia Carlson <pattylcarlson8@icloud.com>  
**Sent:** Thursday, January 8, 2026 12:51 PM  
**To:** ZZ Council Members  
**Subject:** Invocation

[Some people who received this message don't often get email from pattylcarlson8@icloud.com. Learn why this is important at <https://aka.ms/LearnAboutSenderIdentification> ]

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I am in favor of keeping invocation at council meetings and other times and places associated with La Crosse County !!

Sent from my iPhone

**Craig, Sondra**

---

**From:** pmpallardy@yahoo.com  
**Sent:** Thursday, January 8, 2026 12:46 PM  
**To:** ZZ Council Members  
**Subject:** Invocation please keep it!

[Some people who received this message don't often get email from pmpallardy@yahoo.com. Learn why this is important at <https://aka.ms/LearnAboutSenderIdentification> ]

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Please keep the invocation, it is good.  
And part of our country heritage.  
Sincerely  
Pat Pallardy  
Sent from my iPhone

**Craig, Sondra**

---

**From:** Aften Myhre <aftenmyhre@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Thursday, January 8, 2026 12:45 PM  
**To:** ZZ Council Members  
**Subject:** Keep Prayer!!

[Some people who received this message don't often get email from aftenmyhre@gmail.com. Learn why this is important at <https://aka.ms/LearnAboutSenderIdentification> ]

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I want to keep prayer before the start of meetings!! Jesus paid it all all to Him we owe!  
Sent from my iPhone

**Craig, Sondra**

---

**From:** Carter Wiedenhoeft <c.thomasvideo@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Thursday, January 8, 2026 12:45 PM  
**To:** ZZ Council Members  
**Subject:** Removal of Prayer Invocation for City Council Meetings

Some people who received this message don't often get email from c.thomasvideo@gmail.com. [Learn why this is important](#)

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Hello, I have been a resident of La Crosse for almost a decade and I fully support the removal of a prayer invocation for any and all city council activities. Religion has no place in government. People can pray however they want to in their own home or place of worship, or even meet in public places to practice their faith. Religion should not be endorsed in any way shape or form in any official capacity by this city council or any government organization. State and Church should be completely separate. I and many other community members feel very strongly about this.

The prayer invocation should be removed completely.

Respectfully,

Carter Wiedenhoeft

## Craig, Sondra

---

**From:** Margery <pearlbrightone@yahoo.com>  
**Sent:** Thursday, January 8, 2026 12:41 PM  
**To:** ZZ Council Members  
**Subject:** Keep invocations for council meetings.

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Please keep the invocations at council meetings!

As a lifelong resident of La Crosse, I am sending this e-mail to express strong support for keeping the current practice of having invocations at council meetings. It reminds members that government is accountable to a higher authority. It also shows respect for the values and traditions of the people they were elected to serve.

Voting resident of the city,  
M. Graybar

[Yahoo Mail: Search, Organize, Conquer](#)

**Craig, Sondra**

---

**From:** Ty Cooper <tylacrosse1@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Thursday, January 8, 2026 12:29 PM  
**To:** ZZ Council Members  
**Subject:** Prayer

[Some people who received this message don't often get email from tylacrosse1@gmail.com. Learn why this is important at <https://aka.ms/LearnAboutSenderIdentification> ]

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Dear Council Members,

I would like to encourage you to keep the prayer time for meetings in place. Please do not remove this most important, voluntary aspect of the council meetings.

We all need God's help and direction for our city. Prayer reminds us of this reality. This impacts every aspect of life!

Let us not make the mistake of taking steps which would diminish our own moral and spiritual well being.

Thank you for serving this city.

Pastor Ty  
Crossway Church

## Craig, Sondra

---

**From:** Tamara Heram <heramtamara21@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Thursday, January 8, 2026 10:17 AM  
**To:** ZZ Council Members  
**Subject:** Keep our invocation and prayer at the start of the city council meeting

Some people who received this message don't often get email from heramtamara21@gmail.com. [Learn why this is important](#)

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What the city does influences with the county does. Our opinions as La Cross county residence matters too!

Kevin & Tamara Heram  
La Crosse county residents.

**Craig, Sondra**

---

**From:** Michelle Schneider <michelle.annabelle19@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Thursday, January 8, 2026 3:58 PM  
**To:** ZZ Council Members  
**Subject:** ATTN.

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SAVE THE PRAYERS AT CITY COUNCIL MEETINGS!!!

**Craig, Sondra**

---

**From:** Mary LaMothe <maryj.lamothe@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Thursday, January 8, 2026 4:02 PM  
**To:** ZZ Council Members  
**Subject:** Prayer at Meetings  
**Attachments:** Prayer in meetings 2026.docx

\*\*\* **CAUTION:** This email originated from an external sender. **DO NOT** click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe. \*\*\*

Good Afternoon Council Members:

I have attached a letter I want presented and read at tonight's meeting regarding prayer at City Council meetings. Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Mary LaMothe  
La Crosse

January 08, 2026  
La Crosse City Council

Dear Council Members:

La Crosse and area communities have a long standing tradition of saying prayers before many meetings. I strongly disapprove of your wanting to stop the practice of prayer before the City or County meetings. Let's take a look at why I see this attempt as a non-starter:

In La Crosse there are between 100-150 churches. That indicates the community is largely religious.

Again, pointing to the conclusion that the community is largely religious, there are around 13 private schools in the city, with a significant portion (62%) being religiously affiliated.

In La Crosse, church membership, using 2020 data, reflects over 20,000 Catholics, over 10,000 ELCA Lutherans, almost 8,000 WI Synod Lutherans and smaller members for other Protestant groups.

These numbers reflect a clear majority (62%) of people in La Crosse who belong to organized religions and who most likely pray. 38% do not affiliate with any specific religion, although they may well indeed, pray.

The La Crosse City Council is composed of roughly 8 people, that are supposedly representing roughly 52,680 community members. As I stated above, 62% of the people are church affiliated, which means they most likely pray or believe in prayer, yet the City Council is indicating that the larger group doesn't want to support prayer before a meeting where their interests are being represented. The Council's logic/decision does not fit the people's narrative. From my viewpoint, the people are not being represented and they are not being heard or are being ignored.

The Council needs to leave the tradition of prayer in place and instead, focus on the real issues the City/County have in front of them. This is clearly a majority rule...the Community knows what it takes to represent them. The Community has spoken...now REPRESENT the Community, and set your personal biases aside.

**Craig, Sondra**

---

**From:** Anne Weibel <info@cefofwesternwisconsin.org>  
**Sent:** Thursday, January 8, 2026 3:49 PM  
**To:** ZZ Council Members  
**Subject:** Request for invocation

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Dear Members of the Council,

I am writing to request that you please keep the invocation as part of the proceedings before our council meetings. Many of your constituents believe that prayer is important and changes things. For those who don't believe it, it causes no harm. It has been a part of the proceedings for a long time. Not all change is progress.

Thank you for your time and for considering this request.

Best regards,

Anne Weibel

**Craig, Sondra**

---

**From:** Bethany <bethany@bakalarssausage.com>  
**Sent:** Thursday, January 8, 2026 3:40 PM  
**To:** ZZ Council Members  
**Subject:** Invocation

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Please vote to keep the invocation before meetings. You need to fix our broken city, not voting on these matters!  
It's important for many of us VOTERS keep the invocation!

Get [Outlook for iOS](#)

**Craig, Sondra**

---

**From:** Michelle <powerflower.doterra@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Thursday, January 8, 2026 3:28 PM  
**To:** ZZ Council Members  
**Subject:** The Invocation

\*\*\* **CAUTION:** This email originated from an external sender. **DO NOT** click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe. \*\*\*

Dear La Crosse City Council,

If you are going to remove our traditional invocation before meetings, you must give citizens reasonable time to respond and have a proper discussion. You did not give reasonable time.

This is not a safety issue and any few people who are uncomfortable does not in any way become a reason to stop a tradition that is very important to most of us.

These individuals can be uncomfortable without changing important things for the rest of society.

You are acting as a government-parent-nanny for children. Adults must learn to tolerate some discomforts. And if someone is that uncomfortable perhaps it is an issue between them and a good therapist: not a responsibility placed on society.

In fact you have made other decisions that harm psychologically vulnerable people in the name of 'protecting them or their feelings'.

This is not sane. It is not in your purview to radically protect people's emotions.

Thank you,  
Michelle Revel  
La Crosse District 12

**Craig, Sondra**

---

**From:** Larry Schneider <huskrz1@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Thursday, January 8, 2026 2:23 PM  
**To:** ZZ Council Members

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Because the elected council members serve and should consider the consent of the governed, I am opposed to removing prayer at the start of the council meetings.

The desire of the Lord, the longstanding tradition of prayer, and the desire of our forefathers to beseech the Lord in prayer, should be at the forefront of consideration of this invocation by the council members.

I love La Crosse and because of that I am opposed and believe that the majority of people would oppose the removal of prayer at the beginning of the most important assembly of our city.

Regards,

Lawrence F. Schneider II

**Craig, Sondra**

---

**From:** Adam Manka <historicmanka@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Thursday, January 8, 2026 2:19 PM  
**To:** ZZ Council Members  
**Subject:** In Support of Invocation

\*\*\* **CAUTION:** This email originated from an external sender. **DO NOT** click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe. \*\*\*

Dear La Crosse City Council,

I wish to advocate in favor of keeping invocation during city council meetings. This tradition has been continued for over a century, and has introduced a wide variety of diverse faiths together to support the city. During the Tuesday steering committee meeting I was very disheartened by the rationale behind removing the invocation. In the name of inclusivity, are we not being exclusive to Christianity which has brought the diverse faith together since the beginning of our founding? In excluding the invocation, we are also excluding the history and tradition ranging from George Washington to Martin Luther King Jr.

I am an elected member of the La Crosse School Board, and like you, I took an oath of office to begin my term on the board. At the end of the oath of office, we end by saying so help me God. It is this humility that has helped others such as myself serve in our capacity as elected members of the community.

Keep our community connected. Please keep the invocation.

Respectfully,  
Adam Manka

**Craig, Sondra**

---

**From:** warren thomas <zachs1dad@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Thursday, January 8, 2026 5:12 PM  
**To:** ZZ Council Members  
**Subject:** Upcoming Invocation vote

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Dear Council Members,

It has been brought to my attention that a vote to remove the invocation/ prayer service from the beginning of your monthly meetings. As a 30+ year retired firefighter for the city, I kept the good lord close whenever the call came. It's a dangerous profession that I was lucky to come home to family after every shift. You may think a prayer is insignificant and others might find it offensive for a myriad of reasons, but to vote to stop it entirely seems short sighted and biased to one group of people. As with any reasonable debate and negotiation a good compromise can be achieved with dialogue. There's 12 months in a year. How about a compromise where a prayer is performed 6 months by various clergy of any religion and 6 months of no prayer for the residents that feel it is not needed. It seems that would appease a vast majority of the city residents and also show there can be compromise and empathy in a time where we see and hear of very little on any governmental level. Thank you for this consideration.

Warren Thomas  
LCFD- retired  
1986- 2017

Sent from my iPhone

**Craig, Sondra**

---

**From:** Antelma Nicolai <antelmanicolai@icloud.com>  
**Sent:** Thursday, January 8, 2026 5:05 PM  
**To:** ZZ Council Members  
**Subject:** Invocation

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Please keep the Invocation.  
Sent from my iPhone

Thank you!,

ANTELMA. 🌻

**Craig, Sondra**

---

**From:** Dianna Parkes <grace137.dp@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Thursday, January 8, 2026 5:02 PM  
**To:** ZZ Council Members  
**Subject:** I vote to keep our invocation at all the appreciate meetings

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**Craig, Sondra**

---

**From:** Sharon Harter <sharonjharter@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Thursday, January 8, 2026 4:51 PM  
**To:** ZZ Council Members  
**Subject:** Invocation

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Hi City Council Members,

My name is Sharon Harter. I have been a City of La Crosse resident for over 43 years. An invocation is vital to the strength of our city as we call upon the greatest authority in the universe. It should bring comfort, strength and peace to our city. I am strongly in favor of keeping the invocation and ask that you would vote to retain it. Thank you for everything that you do.

**Craig, Sondra**

---

**From:** Linda Fox <lindafoxrealtor@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Thursday, January 8, 2026 4:50 PM  
**To:** ZZ Council Members  
**Subject:** Keep the Invocation

**\*\*\* CAUTION:** This email originated from an external sender. **DO NOT** click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe. **\*\*\***

Linda Fox  
South La Crosse Resident

**Craig, Sondra**

---

**From:** Nancy Briski <nbriski@hotmail.com>  
**Sent:** Thursday, January 8, 2026 4:47 PM  
**To:** ZZ Council Members  
**Subject:** Prayer invocation

\*\*\* CAUTION: This email originated from an external sender. DO NOT click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe. \*\*\*

Good afternoon,

It has come to my attention that there has been discussion about no longer having the prayer invocation before meetings. This is very sad to me, as we as a Christian nation are founded on Christian values. It is in the best interest of those in LaCrosse to know that our leadership is staying true to what our country was built on. Secondly, it is honor and respect for God, who we should all rely on to guide us with our decisions and the well-being of our community. Third, it gives us wisdom, and can fill us with peace to hopefully draw people closer together rather than to divide us. There is so much division these days, we need the common morality to draw us together. Nations without God will soon come to ruin. We need God's blessings on our community to draw us closer in unity and to have God at the start of our meetings for decision making and guidance.

Thank you for your consideration,  
Nancy Briski

Sent from my iPhone

**Craig, Sondra**

---

**From:** Ashley Peterson <apeterson917@hotmail.com>  
**Sent:** Thursday, January 8, 2026 4:40 PM  
**To:** ZZ Council Members  
**Subject:** Support for Removal of Invocation Prayer

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Dear Members of the La Crosse City Council,

I am writing to express my support for the removal of the invocation prayer from City Council meetings.

City Council meetings are a place where all residents should feel equally welcome and represented, regardless of their personal religious beliefs—or lack thereof. Removing the invocation helps ensure that our local government remains inclusive, neutral, and respectful of the diverse community it serves.

I believe this change aligns with the principle of separation of church and state and reinforces the idea that civic participation should never feel tied to a specific faith tradition. Creating a welcoming environment for everyone strengthens public trust and engagement in our local government.

Thank you for your time, consideration, and service to the City of La Crosse.

Sincerely,  
Ashley

**Craig, Sondra**

---

**From:** Israel McKinney <israelmckinney@icloud.com>  
**Sent:** Thursday, January 8, 2026 4:36 PM  
**To:** ZZ Council Members  
**Subject:** Re keeping invocation

\*\*\* CAUTION: This email originated from an external sender. DO NOT click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe. \*\*\*

Good afternoon,

I'd like to express my desire as a citizen to keep the invocation.

Thank you  
Israel McKinney

Sent from my iPhone

**Craig, Sondra**

---

**From:** Asa Harter <asaharter@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Thursday, January 8, 2026 4:34 PM  
**To:** ZZ Council Members  
**Subject:** Invocation

\*\*\* **CAUTION:** This email originated from an external sender. **DO NOT** click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe. \*\*\*

Hi City Council Members,

My name is Asa Harter. I am a lifelong city of lacrosse resident. I am in favor of keeping the invocation at city meetings. Our country was built on these principles and I hope you will take this email and my opinion into consideration. As well as all the other emails that you get. I hope that this decision is strongly based on what residents are saying. Thanks for all you guys do. I know that often we do not appreciate you guys enough. Have a great day. God Bless.

**Craig, Sondra**

---

**From:** Sarah Grosz <srgrosz7585@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Thursday, January 8, 2026 4:25 PM  
**To:** ZZ Council Members  
**Subject:** Invocation Vote

\*\*\* CAUTION: This email originated from an external sender. DO NOT click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe. \*\*\*

City Council Members,

Regarding the vote tonight, please keep our invocation so as to continue to rotate our prayer for wisdom among our diverse range of community faith leaders.

Please consider!

- Sarah Grosz  
West Salem, WI

Sent from my iPhone

**Craig, Sondra**

---

**From:** Patty Nuttall <pattynuttall@hotmail.com>  
**Sent:** Thursday, January 8, 2026 4:21 PM  
**To:** ZZ Council Members  
**Subject:** INVOCATION

\*\*\* CAUTION: This email originated from an external sender. DO NOT click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe. \*\*\*

Good afternoon.

I often think of the phrase "there is no atheist in a fox hole". This is so true whether we are in war situation, or plane trouble or fighting cancer, family problems or any other emergency or uncertainty.

Why remove this invocation?  
What are we afraid of?

I need to remind you we are not a democracy. We are a Republic. Democracy and Republic are different. Please do not remove the invocation because it disturbs a few.

There is something very wrong when a person finds prayer too disturbing. Whats will the offended find offensive next time? My height? My dark skin? My accent? My taste for clothing? My believe in God? Where does this over sensitivity stop?

Be very careful to cater to the few. Once you start, you will find it impossible to stop this nonsense.

Sent from my iPhone  
P.E. Nuttall  
Pattynuttall@hotmail.com

**Craig, Sondra**

---

**From:** Jeffrey Fimreite <jeffatlorc@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Thursday, January 8, 2026 4:20 PM  
**To:** ZZ Council Members  
**Subject:** Support for Continuing the Invocation at Common Council Meetings

\*\*\* **CAUTION:** This email originated from an external sender. **DO NOT** click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe. \*\*\*

Dear Members of the La Crosse Common Council,

I am writing to express my strong support for continuing the invocation prior to Common Council meetings and to respectfully oppose the resolution to discontinue this long-standing practice.

The invocation has been part of Council meetings for many years and serves as a moment of reflection, humility, and grounding before engaging in the serious and often difficult work of governing. For many residents, it is not about endorsing a particular faith, but about acknowledging shared values, service, wisdom, compassion, and responsibility to the community.

Importantly, participation in the invocation is entirely voluntary. No one is compelled to pray, and those who choose not to participate are free to remain silent or step aside. This voluntary nature respects individual beliefs while preserving a tradition that many find meaningful and unifying.

The Common Council addressed this issue previously, including in 2009, and determined that the invocation could continue in a way that is constitutional and respectful. Legislative prayer has been upheld repeatedly at the federal level as long as it does not coerce participation or promote one faith over others. Ending the practice altogether is not required to honor the separation of church and state.

I am concerned that eliminating the invocation risks excluding the voices and values of many residents who view this practice as an important expression of community and reflection. Inclusivity should mean making space for differences, not removing long-standing traditions simply because they may cause discomfort for some, especially when participation is optional.

I urge you to consider the many residents who support keeping the invocation and to vote against the resolution to discontinue it. Preserving this practice respects tradition, honors personal freedom, and reflects the diverse beliefs of our community.

Thank you for your service and for considering my perspective.

Sincerely,  
Jeff

**Craig, Sondra**

---

**From:** Mik <cheesybiscuits1@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Thursday, January 8, 2026 11:40 AM  
**To:** ZZ Council Members  
**Subject:** Invocation

[Some people who received this message don't often get email from cheesybiscuits1@gmail.com. Learn why this is important at <https://aka.ms/LearnAboutSenderIdentification> ]

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I am in favor of keeping the invocation thru prayer. Involving our creator's favor, wisdom and guidance is critical for his blessings to stay upon our region and nation. Creator being the God of Jacob, Issac and Abraham. Thank you.

Michael McKinney

**Craig, Sondra**

---

**From:** bbreunig28@gmail.com  
**Sent:** Thursday, January 8, 2026 10:50 AM  
**To:** ZZ Council Members  
**Subject:** In Favor of Invocation

[Some people who received this message don't often get email from bbreunig28@gmail.com. Learn why this is important at <https://aka.ms/LearnAboutSenderIdentification> ]

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Hello,

I am in favor of keeping the in invocation at the start of the meetings.

Thanks,

Brett Breunig

## Craig, Sondra

---

**From:** shannon McKinney <mckinney.shannon@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Friday, January 9, 2026 10:11 AM  
**To:** Craig, Sondra  
**Subject:** Re: Test Email

\*\*\* **CAUTION:** This email originated from an external sender. **DO NOT** click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe. \*\*\*

Dear members of the La Crosse City Council:

I respectfully present some things to consider about this resolution.

MacKenzie,

You said you appreciated the invocation (it sounds like) most of the time, but that you received comments from people who were uncomfortable with it. But, also, everyone agrees, the council included, that the invocation is legal and constitutionally appropriate.

When this invocation was created it was designed to include prayers for guidance from many different faiths. It was meant to be inclusive and to involve the people in our community who minister to the needs of many people: the homeless, the sick, the needy, and the incarcerated. When you invite our faith leaders into city hall to pray for our leaders, you are participating in a time-honored tradition that is part of how the United States government historically holds its civic meetings and part of what makes America...America.

Taking away the invocation is akin to taking away the Pledge of Allegiance, the "In God We Trust" on the coins, or taking away the national anthem.

The American legislative culture involves invocations.

Your idea to take away the invocation because someone is uncomfortable, at first glance, may seem right. But consider this, you wouldn't take away the American flag would you? because someone was uncomfortable?

When all of you became American representatives for La Crosse in the United States of America, you signed up as American beacons of light for the people you serve. That means that your position requires you to look at the bigger picture through the lens of your American mandate. You are a council member in one of the free-est and most prosperous nations on earth.

Your constituents have certain expectations from you because you represent an American legislative body. You each treat each with proper decorum, show respect, you follow the Roberts' Rules of Order, you display symbols of our country, the US flag, you say the Pledge of Allegiance...and you include The Invocation.

American legislative leadership doesn't have the option of keeping all of its other historical symbols, enjoying all of its prosperity and freedoms that are maintained through sacrifices made by American soldiers...yet think they can cherry-pick which traditions they want to remove because it seems uncomfortable to some.

As American legislators, it's important for you to be able to pinpoint which concerns should take priority because those decisions don't just affect you on a personal level, but they affect thousands of people. Just like maintaining decorum during council meetings is a non-negotiable, so should the invocation be non-negotiable.

So, how does stripping away this invocation affect your community?

Well, as the community members have been trying to explain, they feel like you are messing with one of those traditions that culturally makes America...America.

There is a feeling of betrayal to our American values. That feeling is heightened because the invocation removal is being done by representatives who have sworn an oath to protect our constitution. The very people sworn to protect and provide stability for her American citizenry through use of our historical and time-honored traditions seem to be abdicating their duty.

And to add salt to the wound, you are replacing the invocation with new unAmerican foreign ideas. I am talking about the Ho-Chunk moment of silence which was introduced last year. This new addition only recognizes one religion or one race of people and actually excludes everyone except native Americans. The Invocation is inclusive.

This moment of silence and its accompanying statement have no business being a part of our American legislative sessions because they suggest that American land is not really American land but that a foreign nation owns it.

An invocation makes sense because it is part of our American tradition and leaders are being prayed for, but the moment of silence only makes sense if you are trying to destabilize Americans and make them feel like imposters on their own land. The city council is not the place to make statements that are political debate-starters like the Ho-Chunk moment of silence.

The argument can be made that the moment of silence is more divisive than the invocation because only one race and one faith of people is spoken about. It's spoken of constantly at every meeting as though everyone agrees that in the entire history of the world, the original inhabitants must always be the one who own the land. But that reasoning is flawed because societies change through evolution often known as "survival of the fittest". Nation replacement happens because the previous nation was not less important but because it was less fit. Political boundaries are what they are for that reason. There is nothing wrong with remembering Ho Chunk history, just not at the city council meeting.

Finally, the city council has fallen short in representing the wishes of its city. The entire city had only a few days to respond to and digest what the city was doing. Where was the dialogue when it came to taking away a 100-plus-year tradition? And replacing it with a nonsensical moment of silence? I believe this should not even be up for debate, but in such an important matter, why the rush? Why not put this question on a ballot?

You literally only gave the public three days. **THREE DAYS!!** Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday.

Ask yourself. Would you be ok with a three day notice to move out of your apartment, plan a trip, or change a job?

The answer is **NO!!**

And that should be everyone's answer to this resolution.

I hope this helps you better understand why you must keep this invocation. It is one of the pillars of our American society, part of the very fabric of how Americans identify themselves and your responsibility to maintain this integral part of American governance.

Thank you for your time,

Shannon McKinney

On Fri, Jan 9, 2026, 10:08 AM Craig, Sondra <[craigs@cityoflacrosse.org](mailto:craigs@cityoflacrosse.org)> wrote:

Shannon,

Please try to respond to this message.

Thank you,

**SONDRA CRAIG, WCMC**<sub>(she/her)</sub>  
**Deputy City Clerk**

City Clerk's Office

City of La Crosse

400 [La Crosse Street](#)

[La Crosse WI 54601](#)

[craigs@cityoflacrosse.org](mailto:craigs@cityoflacrosse.org)

Direct: 608.789.7549 | Office: 608.789.7510

## Craig, Sondra

---

**From:** shannon McKinney <mckinney.shannon@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Friday, January 9, 2026 3:27 PM  
**To:** Craig, Sondra  
**Subject:** Fwd: Re keeping invocation

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----- Forwarded message -----

**From:** Israel McKinney <[israelmckinney@icloud.com](mailto:israelmckinney@icloud.com)>  
**Date:** Fri, Jan 9, 2026, 3:16 PM  
**Subject:** Fwd: Re keeping invocation  
**To:** <[Mckinney.shannon@gmail.com](mailto:Mckinney.shannon@gmail.com)>

Sent from my iPhone

Begin forwarded message:

**From:** Israel McKinney <[israelmckinney@icloud.com](mailto:israelmckinney@icloud.com)>  
**Date:** January 8, 2026 at 4:36:09 PM CST  
**To:** [Zzcouncilmembers@cityoflacrosse.org](mailto:Zzcouncilmembers@cityoflacrosse.org)  
**Subject:** Re keeping invocation

Good afternoon,

I'd like to express my desire as a citizen to keep the invocation.

Thank you  
Israel McKinney

Sent from my iPhone

**Craig, Sondra**

---

**From:** shannon McKinney <mckinney.shannon@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Friday, January 9, 2026 3:40 PM  
**To:** Craig, Sondra  
**Subject:** Fwd: Keep the prayer!

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Another email that your spam blocked.

----- Forwarded message -----

**From:** **Madeleine McKinney** <[iamofficiallymad@gmail.com](mailto:iamofficiallymad@gmail.com)>  
**Date:** Fri, Jan 9, 2026, 3:30 PM  
**Subject:** Fwd: Keep the prayer!  
**To:** <[Mckinney.shannon@gmail.com](mailto:Mckinney.shannon@gmail.com)>

----- Forwarded message -----

**From:** **Madeleine McKinney** <[iamofficiallymad@gmail.com](mailto:iamofficiallymad@gmail.com)>  
**Date:** Thu, Jan 8, 2026, 3:22 PM  
**Subject:** Keep the prayer!  
**To:** <[Zzcouncilmembers@cityoflacrosse.org](mailto:Zzcouncilmembers@cityoflacrosse.org)>

Please keep the invocation in the city council meeting. We should have the right to represent the faiths of many people with the rotating invocation in council meetings. There is nothing wrong with saying a prayer, and it's discriminatory and impedes upon our right to free speech and religion to prevent us from praying before meetings.

**Craig, Sondra**

---

**From:** Deb Kaczorowski <1724deb@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Friday, January 9, 2026 7:13 PM  
**To:** ZZ Council Members

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Do not take away prayers. If anyone doesn't want to pray they don't have to but for those that do it's imperative that they can. Deb k

**Craig, Sondra**

---

**From:** Rose Raska <raraska2@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Thursday, January 8, 2026 11:04 AM  
**To:** ZZ Council Members  
**Subject:** Invocation before council meetings

\*\*\* **CAUTION:** This email originated from an external sender. **DO NOT** click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe. \*\*\*

Please keep the invocation before meetings. We are a nation that believes in God. No matter how we worship.

**Craig, Sondra**

---

**From:** Marlene <winona.3927@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Sunday, January 11, 2026 8:55 PM  
**To:** ZZ Council Members  
**Subject:** Clergy prayer before City Council meetings.

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[zzcouncilmembers@cityoflacrosse.org](mailto:zzcouncilmembers@cityoflacrosse.org)

We need prayer before each City Council Meeting.... This should be a priority before each meeting to decide on City matters.. Thank you, Marlene Sargent

## Craig, Sondra

---

**From:** Steve Garnett <sjg70@yadtel.net>  
**Sent:** Thursday, January 8, 2026 2:15 PM  
**To:** ZZ Council Members  
**Subject:** Invocation

[Some people who received this message don't often get email from sjg70@yadtel.net. Learn why this is important at <https://aka.ms/LearnAboutSenderIdentification> ]

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I'm writing to ask that you keep the invocation that opens Council meetings. Thank you, Steve Garnett  
Sent from my iPad

**Craig, Sondra**

---

**From:** Rae Ann <raeann60@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Thursday, January 8, 2026 12:48 PM  
**To:** ZZ Council Members  
**Subject:** Vote on Invocation

[Some people who received this message don't often get email from raeann60@gmail.com. Learn why this is important at <https://aka.ms/LearnAboutSenderIdentification> ]

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Dear city council members,

I am writing to let you know that, I oppose that you want to vote to get rid of the prayer that starts the sessions of the council meetings!! Our country was founded on biblical principles and for you to want to take God out of our cities affairs is abhorrent. He is the one that has put you in your position!! Please stop this and let prayer start each and every meeting so our city has guidance from Him.

Thank you and God bless you.

R. A. E.

## Craig, Sondra

---

**From:** bbreunig28@gmail.com  
**Sent:** Thursday, January 8, 2026 10:50 AM  
**To:** ZZ Council Members  
**Subject:** In Favor of Invocation

[Some people who received this message don't often get email from bbreunig28@gmail.com. Learn why this is important at <https://aka.ms/LearnAboutSenderIdentification> ]

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Hello,

I am in favor of keeping the in invocation at the start of the meetings.

Thanks,

Brett Breunig

**Craig, Sondra**

---

**From:** Mik <cheesybiscuits1@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Thursday, January 8, 2026 11:40 AM  
**To:** ZZ Council Members  
**Subject:** Invocation

[Some people who received this message don't often get email from cheesybiscuits1@gmail.com. Learn why this is important at <https://aka.ms/LearnAboutSenderIdentification> ]

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I am in favor of keeping the invocation thru prayer. Involving our creator's favor, wisdom and guidance is critical for his blessings to stay upon our region and nation. Creator being the God of Jacob, Issac and Abraham. Thank you.

Michael McKinney

## Craig, Sondra

---

**From:** Sonja Meehan <sonjakmeehan@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Thursday, January 8, 2026 2:02 PM  
**To:** ZZ Council Members  
**Subject:** In support of removing the opening religious invocation

Some people who received this message don't often get email from sonjakmeehan@gmail.com. [Learn why this is important](#)

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I am writing to voice my support for ending the practice of opening city council meetings with a religious invocation.

Our city is home to people with a wide range of beliefs, faith traditions, and cultural backgrounds. While some view the invocation as a valued custom, a truly representative government space should reflect the full diversity of the community it serves. Beginning an official meeting with a prayer from a single religious tradition does not align with that goal.

This matter has already been decided through a council vote, and honoring that decision is an important part of respecting the democratic process.

If there is interest in including a moment of reflection at the start of meetings, there are many inclusive alternatives. Readings could rotate among different belief systems, secular texts, or artistic expressions, or focus on shared values such as mutual respect, service, and unity. Limiting that space to one religious perspective excludes more people than it brings together.

I care deeply about this city and the people who live here. Upholding inclusivity in our civic spaces is one way we can continue to show respect for all neighbors, regardless of their beliefs.

Sincerely,

Sonja Meehan

**Craig, Sondra**

---

**From:** PAUL BROWN <pbrown1005@aol.com>  
**Sent:** Friday, January 9, 2026 9:11 PM  
**To:** ZZ Council Members  
**Subject:** city council ends the practice of starting meetings with invocations

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City Council and Mayor,

I would like to encourage all of you to read the comments listed within this WIZM article. The WIZM website has become a very interesting forum for people to share their ideas and comments in regard to city council actions and this article is but one example.

I also wish to invite you to look at the website regularly and to read the comments about what residents are saying about members of city council and the decisions you make in regard to other topics.

Paul Brown, district 13

<https://gcc02.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.wizmnews.com%2F2026%2F01%2F09%2Fvote-against-invocations&data=05%7C02%7Ccraigs%40cityoflacrosse.org%7Cc031e8130518455ad4a908de4ff5e0bf%7Cb9bc47de972a4482ad22b9c21b74e467%7C0%7C0%7C639036114653936432%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJFbXB0eU1hcGkiOnRydWUsIlYiOiIwLjAuMDAwMCIsIlAiOiJXaW4zMtIsIkFOIjoiTWVpbCIsIldUIjoyfQ%3D%3D%7C0%7C%7C%7C&sdata=acj9VnUp2dYtOv2ZrDFQ4Dsd5xq5sDEOAJVCIU4rA%3D&reserved=0>

Sent from my iPhone

**Craig, Sondra**

---

**From:** Ellen <ellensmi@charter.net>  
**Sent:** Monday, January 12, 2026 7:31 AM  
**To:** ZZ Council Members  
**Subject:** Recent vote

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I'm very disappointed in the 9 council members who voted to remove the prayer/invocation before the meetings. This is wrong on so many levels. The separation of church and state argument does not hold water. Learn the intent and meaning of separation of church and state. Secondly, listen to all the people who voted for you, not just a few who may or may not even vote.

Thank you for the 4 who listened.

Ellen Smith  
820 Janice Ct  
City of La Crosse  
Sent from my iPhone

## Craig, Sondra

---

**From:** Goggin, Erin  
**Sent:** Monday, January 12, 2026 9:34 AM  
**To:** Craig, Sondra  
**Subject:** FW: Referendum

---

**From:** Lorraine Decker <lroord@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Friday, January 9, 2026 2:26 PM  
**To:** Goggin, Erin <goggine@cityoflacrosse.org>  
**Subject:** Referendum

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Thank you again, Councilmember Goggins for you vote last night!

I am a former City Councilmember who fought against the Freedom from Religion Foundation's challenge against our Invocations.

I've also provided Invocations before the City Council.

I was asked to open with prayer at the Prayer Rally outside of City Hall last night.

I believe we need a City-wide Referendum!

Thank you sincerely,

Chaplain Lorraine Rose Decker

**Craig, Sondra**

---

**From:** Adoration Church <info@adorationchurch.com>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, January 14, 2026 6:42 AM  
**To:** ZZ Council Members  
**Subject:** Invocation

\*\*\* CAUTION: This email originated from an external sender. DO NOT click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe. \*\*\*

Dear Council,

Thank you for serving our city. You probably think no one appreciates you and I think we don't often show it.

I am writing to say we want you to lead in the best way - to have wisdom and insight into all the situations. We want you to feel empowered to make right decisions that lead our city in righteousness. So we pray that over you. Wisdom and revelation. Grace (favor and empowerment) to do all the things you must do. To uphold justice and remember mercy.

To this end, we must have our God "shine His face on us and be gracious to us." He is wisdom. He has all power. All authority comes from him. Honoring Jesus in our city brings blessing from the Lord.

So I ask that you reconsider. We want God involved. Yesterday I was listening to Dutch Sheets (a man of prayer) remind us who God is seeking. One of those is the one who will stand in the gap. We do that in prayer. You do that in righteous decision making and planning. People who do this save a city from judgment.

Thank you.  
Karmen Furrow

Sent from my iPhone

## Craig, Sondra

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**From:** Goggin, Erin  
**Sent:** Thursday, January 15, 2026 3:45 PM  
**To:** Craig, Sondra  
**Subject:** FW: invocation

I would appreciate this being attached even though we've voted. For the record.

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**From:** randy kemp <kemps2112@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, January 6, 2026 2:49 PM  
**To:** Goggin, Erin <goggine@cityoflacrosse.org>  
**Subject:** invocation

You don't often get email from [kemps2112@gmail.com](mailto:kemps2112@gmail.com). [Learn why this is important](#)

**\*\*\* CAUTION:** This email originated from an external sender. **DO NOT** click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe. **\*\*\***

I believe the council should continue with the invocation. thank you.

## Craig, Sondra

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**From:** Goggin, Erin  
**Sent:** Monday, January 19, 2026 3:38 PM  
**To:** Craig, Sondra  
**Subject:** FW:

When you get back...can you make sure this gets attached to both?

E

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**From:** Gary Harter <gharter@harters.net>  
**Sent:** Thursday, January 8, 2026 1:51 PM  
**To:** ZZ Council Members <zzcouncilmembers@cityoflacrosse.org>  
**Subject:**

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I support keeping the invocation before Council Meetings

I am against bike lanes in down town La Crosse it will really hurt all business and force some to close