

A prayer in defense of books

"The right to write, the right to read, and the right to share your story is being threatened," write Andee Zetterbaum and Tammy Wiens. Let us pray.

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This prayer was originally published by The National Council of Churches as a part of their [Impact Week](#). The authors write:

In speaking out to legislators and church leaders to resist the banning of books, let us also call upon the Name of the Lord whose own Word animates all of life. The urgency of the call grows out of a report from EveryLibrary, a national organization to build voter support for libraries, that 133 book ban bills have been introduced in the first four months of 2023.

PEN America's April newsletter reports there are at least 37 states, 182 school districts, and millions of students (and their families) who are impacted by the 2022–2023 school-year library book bans. There are more books being banned statewide than at any previous time in our nation's history, with Florida and Texas being the two states reporting the most drastic record of banned books.

The right to write, the right to read, and the right to share your story is being threatened. Academic freedom is on the line. The ability to learn the whole of life, not just part of life you like, is being denied to young generations. These laws stunt the intellectual growth of school children.

Let us therefore join our voices together and pray:

For the joy of words – spoken, written, danced, observed
For the pleasure of seeing the world through another's eyes
Let us give thanks to God.

For books that proclaim the splendid sweep of history,
and for those authors that strive to fill in the gaps of a shame-filled past
Let us give thanks to God.

For those who enjoy familiar stories
and for those who transport us to unknown universes
Let us give thanks to God.

For those who can't find themselves in books
Because there are none that contain people like themselves
Let us invoke recognition.

For those who fear that as books about them – for them –
are removed, they too will be forced to disappear
Let us cry out for safety.

For the endlessly curious, the smugly certain,
and those whose questions were never allowed
Let us pray the delight of discovery.

For those who want to ban books they themselves often haven't read
For those who try to abolish the different, the unknown, the challenging
Let us beseech open hearts.

For writers, poets, teachers, librarians

For all custodians of the wisdom of ages and the voices of the new

Let us instill courage.

Hear our prayers, O God of life!

Move in our hearts and open us to fresh expressions of your Spirit in our world today.

Receive our anger at injustice and stir us to stand against those who stomp on our freedom.

Do not let our minds be overtaken by distorted views of history or by hateful rhetoric on race and gender. Embolden us to agitate for a free exchange of ideas and access to myriad points of view.

Awaken us to confront the hatred that motivates the unjust banning of books.

Bring healing to those who bear the scars of excessive propaganda and imposed silences.

Through the transformative power of your Holy Spirit, give us ears to hear the stories of those whose race, gender, theology, or worship styles are different from our own.

Let us see the fullness of Christ when we enlarge our hearts to embrace the full spectrum of human experience. Amen.