

Coping Strategies: In this Season of Bad News

1. Remember: the future is known to God

As Bishop Patrick reminds us, God's people have lived through rough moments of history before. But again and again Scripture says that history does not belong to empires: "*The Lord brings the counsel of the nations to nothing; he frustrates the plans of the peoples*" (Ps 33:10). This doesn't mean trouble won't come; it does mean that no political activity is outside of God's care or beyond God's power to redeem. Christians believe that God is present even when alliances shift and fear spreads. Our hope rests not in the trustworthiness of nations, but on the faithfulness of God, whose kingdom will endure.

2. Turn off the news for a season

Yes, as Christians we must love our neighbours, and often that means being informed citizens who engage with the news and public life. When our fear or anxiety about the news becomes the loudest voice in our head, however, it may be time to give our souls rest. If that's you, consider slowing your consumption of social media or the news. We can trust God is still at work, even when we are not watching.

3. Put Hope in Action

Whenever you feel the rise of anxiety over situations beyond your control, come up with one, loving thing you can do that is within your control - something in line with the kingdom of God. For example, you could visit a sick friend. You could give a donation to the Food Bank, or send an encouraging email to someone you respect or who you know is struggling. We may not have power to change the world, but we do have power to act as peacemakers within our sphere of influence.

4. Pray

I'm suggesting two different ways of praying. One is short, breath prayers that help calm our troubled hearts by resting in God's promises. The other is intercessory prayers, where we bring our concerns to God's heavenly throne and leave them there. Here are some intercessions you can pray, if you need help finding words:

A prayer for our cities (can be used for country too) (Book of Alternative services, p. 680)

"O Lord our creator, by your holy prophet you taught your ancient people to seek the welfare of the cities in which they lived. We commend our neighbourhood (and Canada) to your care, that it might be kept free from social strife and decay. Give us strength of purpose and concern for others, that we may create here a community of justice and peace where your will may be done; through your Son Jesus Christ our Lord."

A prayer for our Prime Minister:

Loving God, your holy scriptures invite us to pray for authorities over us. We lift up Mark Carney to you as he seeks a way forward for our country in uncertain and difficult times. Grant him and his advisers wisdom, humility of spirit, and courage to pursue the common good. Amen.

A prayer for the people of the United States

God of mercy, we pray for the people of the United States in this time of deep division. Open the eyes of all citizens to evil, wherever evil is found, soften anger, and turn leaders away from threats that harm neighbours and allies. Grant wisdom, restraint, and a renewed desire for peace amongst all her citizens and leaders. Amen

A prayer for ourselves as Canadian citizens:

Lord of all peoples and all nations, we give you thanks for our home in Canada. Shape us, as Christian citizens, to seek your kingdom first—to act with courage and compassion, to speak truth with grace, and to live as peacemakers for the good of all. Amen.

For peace (Book of Alternative services, p. 677)

“O God, it is your will to hold both heaven and earth in a single peace. Let the design of your great love shine on the waste of our wraths and sorrows, and give peace to your Church, peace among nations, peace in our homes, and peace in our hearts; through your Son Jesus Christ our Lord.”

Using breath prayers

What is a breath prayer? Breath prayers are short prayers prayed slowly in rhythm with your breathing. They help in several ways - by calming our parasympathetic nervous system, and by helping us attend to God when distressed, by matching our prayers to our breathing. Breathe in through your nose while praying the first line silently or aloud, then breathe out slowly while praying the second line. Repeat the prayer 3–5 times, allowing your body and spirit to settle in God’s presence.¹

Day	Scripture Focus	Inhale	Exhale
Monday	<i>“Be still, and know that I am God.”</i> (Psalm 46:10)	Be still, O Lord	I trust you
Tuesday	<i>“The Lord is my shepherd.”</i> (Psalm 23:1)	Shepherd of my life	Lead me in peace
Wednesday	<i>“Do not be afraid.”</i> (Isaiah 41:10)	God, you are with me	I will not fear
Thursday	<i>“Blessed are the peacemakers.”</i> (Matthew 5:9)	Prince of Peace	Make me your instrument
Friday	<i>“Cast all your anxiety on him.”</i> (1 Peter 5:7)	I give you my worry	Hold me in care
Saturday	<i>“My peace I give to you.”</i> (John 14:27)	Jesus, your peace	Remains with me
Sunday	<i>“Nothing can separate us from God’s love.”</i> (Romans 8:39)	God, you love us	We rest in you

¹ Chart created with the help of Chatgpt