

# Inauguration of St. Paul Mayor Melvin Carter

January 3, 2022 / I Shevat 5782

“Remembrance of the past two years” - Rabbi Adam Stock Spilker

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Four years ago, Mayor Carter, you were sworn in as Mayor of St. Paul in a time we thought was as tumultuous and challenging as they came. The truth is we have greeted many Januarys with similar trepidation and thank God, at times with promise. Your election gave us hope.

Yet nothing could have prepared you or us for what has been required since March 2020.

This pandemic has tested every person on this globe and all leaders of every institution, house of worship, and business, of every village and every hamlet, every state and every city.

Daily decisions affected life and death.

In Jewish tradition, one of the many names for God is HaMakom, “the Place.” We invoke this name when we feel unmoored. We call God, “the Place” when we seek to be grounded, especially in times of loss and death.

And we have lost. We are bereft of loved ones and friends, neighbors, and co-workers. Across our interconnected globe, nearly five and a half million souls have died from Covid-19; in the United States over 826,000. Here in Ramsey County, 1,129 people, young and old, have died since March 2020 from this pandemic. Each person from a different walk of life. Each of them reflecting the image of God. Each of them an entire universe. May their memories be for a blessing.

*We pause in silent remembrance.*

*Hamakom yinachem etchem.* May God, the Place, help all their families and friends and all of us find comfort and footing in our days ahead.

A place does connect us. It gives us a sense of identity and purpose. It helps us not feel alone. This pandemic has affected all of us, our anxiety levels, the functioning of storefronts and schools, and how we go about our daily lives. We seek a place to unify even things are pulling us apart. And since George Floyd’s murder in front of our eyes, our Twin Cities have been the place the world has watched, an epicenter that reminds us of our short fallings as a nation and the groundswell of what we can yet do and must do. Floyd’s unnecessary death and Daunte Wright’s and every death of a Black or Brown person, each a unique individual, reveals the ways racism and fear affect our past, present, and future. The world has been shaken and once again leaders of every place had to act.

Decisions by leaders, by Mayor Carter, that affected justice and dignity, and life and death.

And we are in a time when principled leadership and democracy are values to applaud and defend and we must honor and support leaders who will help all people for we are in the place of St. Paul even though we know there are many St. Pauls. We do not greet this brisk day

equally. There are neighborhoods which suffer more. There are communities in our city more deeply impacted. There are people who are subjected to daily injustices.

And so I pray: God all places, help us feel Your Place and find our place, and resolve that we will not yield to despair, cynicism, or fatigue; that we will partner in alliance with peoples of all faiths and of none and of all backgrounds, to comfort the desperate, to goad the conscience of the comfortable, so that our demand for justice, safety, health, and life be realized, as immortalized in the words for the New Year by poet-laureate Amanda Gorman:

Come, look up with kindness yet,  
For even solace can be sourced from sorrow.  
We remember, not just for the sake of yesterday, But to take on tomorrow.