

THE  
AFRICAN AMERICAN  
FAMILY'S BOOK  
OF PRAYERS

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*Say  
Amen!*

EDITED BY  
REVEREND  
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A DUTTON BOOK

PRAYERS FOR A KWANZAA CELEBRATION  
*(December 26–January 1)*

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Kwanzaa is a secular African American holiday celebrated from December 26 through January 1. Created by Dr. Maulana Karenga in 1966, Kwanzaa transcends ideological, regional, and class boundaries. Kwanzaa, or “first fruits,” commemorates African celebrations of the first harvest wherein the Creator is thanked for the blessing of food and sustenance. Intended to reaffirm and restore our African heritage, Kwanzaa also seeks to reinforce the bond among African Americans through commitment to values and community. Each day represents the celebration of a different principle of the Nguzu Saba (“seven values” in Kiswahili). Formal celebration of Kwanzaa includes candle lighting, feasts, and the exchange of gifts and libations from a unity cup. The essence of Kwanzaa involves an individual and communal commitment to the edification of the African American community. As a spiritual people, we celebrate Kwanzaa with the fervor and sanctity of prayer.



A GENERAL PRAYER FOR KWANZAA

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May we set aside this time of year to commit and recommit ourselves and our resources to the up-building of the African American community. May our prayers speak equally to our God, our families, and our own hearts as commitments to serve and to act. Let us pray.



## DAY ONE: UMOJA (UNITY)

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Unity—we must strive for and maintain unity in the family, community, nation, and race. *Behold how good it is for brothers and sisters to dwell together in unity. Psalms 133:1*

Lord, we come before You committing our hearts in unity to each other through You. May You grant us loving hearts, forgiving spirits, and open minds to accept and treasure those You have placed around us. May we find beauty in all Your creation as we strive toward togetherness in every aspect of the community—from the deepest corners of the African Diaspora to our own neighbors and siblings. May Your peace bring us together.



## DAY TWO: KUJICHAGULIA (SELF-DETERMINATION)

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Self-determination—to define ourselves, name ourselves, create for ourselves, and speak for ourselves instead of being defined, named, created, and spoken for by others. *A good name is rather to be chosen than great riches, and loving favor rather than silver and gold. Proverbs 22:1*

Lord, we stand strong in the knowledge of ourselves in You, in You, we know that we are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, and people who are more than conquerors over those who deny us voice and agency. May we find within ourselves the devotion to remain dedicated to our development and growth. May Your love give us power to define.



## DAY THREE: UJIMA (COLLECTIVE WORK AND RESPONSIBILITY)

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The purpose of this day is to build and maintain our community together and make our sister's and brother's problems our problems and solve them together. *Look not every person on his or her own things, but every one on the things of others. Philippians 2:4*

Lord, we are determined to be our brother's and sister's keeper for You. We pledge to feed the hungry, give drink to the thirsty, clothe the naked, and take in strangers we find around us. May we be conscious of the joys and the struggles of those in our community, and celebrate and weep as though they are our own. May Your model of hospitality become our communal responsibility.



## DAY FOUR: UJAMAA (COOPERATIVE ECONOMICS)

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A day centered on the planning, building, and maintaining of our own stores, shops, and other businesses, and to profit from them together. *Two are better than one; because they have a good reward for their labor. Ecclesiastes 4:9*

Lord, we acknowledge that we all need support in order to grow. We need Your strength, Your encouragement, and Your people. May we, therefore, patronize each other in order to grow and prosper—even if it means forsaking individual convenience and popularity. May Your wisdom teach us to nurture each other.



## DAY FIVE: NIA (PURPOSE)

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Purpose—to make our collective vocation building and developing our community to restore our people to their traditional greatness. *I told them that the hand of God had been gracious upon me, and also the words that the king has spoken to me. Then they said, "Let's start building!" So they committed themselves to the common good. Nehemiah 2:18*

Lord, we find the strength to build and rebuild in Your promises of restoration. We vow to center our lives in a purpose that treasures the common good, and works towards its fulfillment. May we be ever mindful of the glories and tragedies of our past; and may they inspire us to construct our collective even further. May Your faithfulness encourage us.



## DAY SIX: KUUMBA (CREATIVITY)

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This day focuses on always doing as much as we can in order to leave our community more beautiful and beneficial than when we inherited it. *God has given each of you special gifts and abilities; be sure to use them to help each other, passing on to others God's many kind blessings. I Peter 4:10*

Lord, we treasure the unique gifts that You have given to each of us. Today we covenant to utilize our talents to help each other and beautify our surroundings. May we share our own discoveries and abilities with our brothers and sisters that we may give birth, rather than destroy, and plant rather than tear down. May Your Spirit inspire us.



## DAY SEVEN: IMANI (FAITH)

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The final day of Kwanzaa concentrates on faith and the desire to believe with all our hearts, in our people, our teachers, our leaders, and the righteousness and victory of our struggle. *For faith is substance of things hoped for, and evidence of things not seen. Hebrews 11:1*

Lord, we know all things are possible in the tenacity of faith. When we can not hear Your voice or see Your face, live out our dreams or envision the future, we press forward in our belief in You, ourselves, and each other. No matter the obstacle or discouragement, may we always have the faith to believe in the soldiers who fight, and the righteousness of the struggle. May Your assurance give us energy.

—REVEREND MONICA A. COLEMAN



Graduating magna cum laude from Harvard-Radcliffe College, Reverend Coleman is cofounder and former editor-in-chief of *Revival Journal*. She is presently matriculating at Vanderbilt Divinity School in Nashville, Tennessee, serving as the minister of history of the National Alliance of Pan-African Seminarians.