

# Faith and Prayer

The bedrock of our nation's character

FROM THE PLANTING of a cross and the prayers that were offered at Jamestown, site of the first permanent English settlement in 1607, people in this country have placed their fervent trust in God. This simple act of humble faith has given America strength in war-time, dignity and compassion toward those less fortunate, and hope in the face of unprecedented challenges. President Ronald Reagan understood, "Freedom is never more than one generation away from extinction" and that, "...without God, democracy will not and cannot long endure... If we ever forget that we are One Nation Under God, then we will be a Nation gone under."

Throughout U.S. history, our leaders have offered prayers as petition and thanksgiving, to embrace our grief and sorrow, for our troops in harm's way and first responders, in times of uncertainty and crisis, during war and in peace, for protection, provision, guidance and the acknowledgement that in and of ourselves, we are wholly insufficient. This spirit is derived from principles woven into the very fabric of our founding documents and through the legacy of the men and women who helped shape this country.

Yet there has been a steady undercurrent of targeted efforts to remove God from every vestige of American life and culture. These battles confirm a tangible reality — the things we hold sacred are eroding all around us. Thankfully, a new generation of leaders is now emerging to stand in the gap. The Congressional Prayer Caucus (CPC) — an official caucus of the United States Congress — was created in 2005 for this purpose. With nearly 100 members, led by Co-chairs Congressman Randy Forbes and Senator James Lankford, many of whom gather to pray before each legislative session in Room 219 in our nation's Capitol, CPC members fight to protect our religious freedoms and help restore Judeo-Christian values to their rightful place in the marketplace of ideas.

The Congressional Prayer Caucus Foundation (CPCF), a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization, was established to work alongside the Congressional Prayer Caucus by building and supporting a nationwide network of lawmakers and citizens who are committed to prayer and action. The American Prayer Caucus Network (APCN) now has more than 650 members of likeminded national and state government leaders who are the frontline defenders advancing religious freedom and America's Judeo-Christian heritage.

At the recent LIFFT America Religious Liberty Summit, hosted by the Congressional Prayer Caucus Foundation, members of the APCN gathered for a strategic meeting focused on proactively challenging the

anti-God, anti-faith agenda. With widespread agreement that people of faith can no longer remain silent, the government leaders launched PrayUSA: Government Leaders Calling the Nation to Prayer (PrayUSA.com). It began with government leaders signing the Call to Prayer for America Proclamation. Today churches nationwide are scheduling PrayUSA Sunday Spotlights, where pastors and government leaders are standing side-by-side in a show of unity and humble petition before God, inviting congregations to sign the Call to America Proclamation and commit to unceasing prayer for our nation.

This initiative is now exploding throughout the United States, and the numbers continue to grow. To date, more than 1,000 government leaders, 50 leading organizations and more than 140,000 citizens have said, "Yes" to this historic movement, engaging churches across the country and in the spirit of 2 Chronicles 7:14: *"If my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and I will forgive their sin and will heal their land"*.

**Thankfully, a new generation of leaders is now emerging to stand in the gap.**

Many citizens are battle weary and discouraged, some have given up and others are writing our challenges off as God's judgment on a country that is walking away from him. However, nowhere do the Scriptures tell us to shrink back. The truth is that those who oppose religious liberty are counting on people of faith to be intimidated, passive, unorganized, underfunded and to lack the resolve and determination to engage in the public arena. We cannot and must not allow that to happen! With each passing week, we are edging precariously closer to the unthinkable, a tangible and serious loss of our long-held religious liberties.

America can still be a city on a hill and a light to the world, but it is imperative that we pray for our national and state leaders and for our country — their voices are needed now more than ever. ●

**LEA CARAWAN** is president and executive director of the Congressional Prayer Caucus Foundation, a nonpartisan, nonprofit organization established to unite and mobilize government leaders nationwide who are committed to advancing religious freedom, prayer and America's Judeo-Christian heritage. Learn more at (CPCFoundation.com) or (facebook.com/CPCFoundation). Lea earned a master's degree in Christian theology at Regent University. She is also an executive coach, speaker and consultant.

