

Believers Pray for President Bush

A variety of ministries hosted pre-inauguration events aimed at praying for the president and the nation's future

Thousands of Christians from across the nation came to Washington, D.C., in January to celebrate the re-election of George W. Bush and to participate in several inaugural events sponsored by area Christian organizations.

The Fourth Inaugural Prayer Breakfast, held Jan. 20 at the Omni Shoreham Hotel, drew more than 1,000 participants, who came to pray for the president and the nation before the swearing-in ceremony at noon.

The event's organizers, Stephen and Carol Poulos of Ask for America, called on guests to renew their commitment to pray for the United States and its leaders, not just on Inauguration Day, but every day. "God has given us a mandate to pray," Carol Poulos said. "We want our voices to be heard not only in this room, but across this nation."

Government and military officials joined prominent Christian leaders in prayer during the four-hour, bipartisan and nondenominational gathering. Participants interceded for the president, the three branches of government, the nation's capital, the armed forces, the media and a national revival. Prayer leaders included Col. Ralph Benson, chaplain of the Pentagon; Ohio Secretary of State Kenneth Blackwell; Ohio pastor Rod Parsley of World Harvest Church in Columbus; Matt Crouch, president of Gener8Xion Entertainment; Lou Engle, founder of The Cause and former leader of The Call prayer

events; and Stephen Strang, publisher of Charisma magazine.

Strang was featured in the Feb. 7 issue of Time magazine as one of the nation's 25 most influential evangelical leaders alongside author Rick Warren, evangelist Joyce Meyer, Dallas pastor T.D. Jakes and National Association of Evangelicals President Ted Haggard.

Vicki Yohe and Lindell Cooley, former worship leader at Brownsville Assembly of God in Pensacola, Fla., and now senior pastor of Grace Church in Nashville, Tenn., led worship during the event.

Attendee Martha Fisher of Oneness in Christ Ministries said the prayer breakfast gave her an expectation that "God is establishing His presence globally in a way not seen before."

"God wants to bless America so that we in turn can bless others," Stephen Poulos told participants. "At this very moment, the [United States] is coming alongside the many nations surrounding the Indian Ocean that were ravaged by the tsunami. Without the blessing of God, the kind of compassion that our Lord and Savior Jesus wants to bestow would be impossible."

A second inaugural day prayer initiative, sponsored by Faith and Action Ministries, was held at the Honorable William J. Ostrowski House in Washington. Approximately 100 people, many of whom were pastors representing more than 30 denominations, gathered to pray for President Bush and the future of the United States.

"The focus of our prayers [was] to thank God for Bush's re-

election and for the principles he espouses,” said the Rev. Rob Schenck, who heads up the Capitol Hill ministry.

Schenck said he believes Bush’s moral legacy will have a lasting impact on the United States through his appointments to the federal bench. “We must pray that he will make the right choices,” Schenck said. “The inauguration is about the next four years; Bush’s federal court appointments are about the next 40.”

The Christian Inaugural Eve Gala, a black-tie reception and dinner held at The Ritz-Carlton Hotel in downtown Washington, drew 850 guests, including such leaders as outgoing Attorney General John Ashcroft, senior Bush adviser Karl Rove, Republican Sen. Dan Thune of South Dakota, and newly elected Republican National Committee Chairman Ken Mehlman.

The event was sponsored by the Traditional Values Coalition (TVC) in cooperation with Strang Communications and other Christian ministries. TVC founder Lou Sheldon said the “thrust of the evening was to celebrate the providential hand of God upon America.”

In his keynote address, Ashcroft encouraged attendees to keep interceding for the president, noting that Bush’s faith and the nation’s prayers had helped him make strong decisions.

Sandra K. Chambers in Washington, D.C.