

Leaders Call for Ongoing Prayer for Nation at Inaugural Prayer Breakfast

A Washington, D.C., group has organized nationwide prayer against spiritual powers that oppose government officials

The launch of a new prayer initiative that will target spiritual forces opposing U.S. governmental leaders was announced during the Third Annual Inaugural Prayer Breakfast on Jan. 20 at the Omni Shoreham Hotel in Washington, D.C.

The organization behind the initiative—Ask for America—plans to “spearhead strategic prayer initiatives from the capital” and “target principalities coming against our leaders in government,” said Carol Poulos, national chair of the Inaugural Prayer Breakfast, who with her husband, Stephen, announced the launch.

The first task of the new ministry, which is based in the nation’s capital, she said, will be to call people across the country to join together on the third Saturday of each month to fellowship over a meal—a prayer breakfast, lunch or dinner—and to pray for national leaders. State-level prayer initiatives also are planned, and a Web site will link these groups with testimonies, prayer requests and upcoming events.

The announcement was made just a few hours before George W. Bush was to be sworn in as the 43rd president of the United States, as some 1,400 people were gathered in the hotel’s

Regency Ballroom to seek God's intervention into the nation's affairs.

Participants in the prayer breakfast came from across the United States to pray for the president-elect, the country, and elected and appointed officials in government.

The ballroom took on the feel of a revival service instead of a typical Washington event when Lindell Cooley of Brownsville Assembly of God in Pensacola, Fla., and singers led attendees in an extended period of praise and worship. Participants clapped hands, waved napkins and danced between the tables.

Behind the speaker's platform, a 25-foot-wide banner displayed the theme that inspired the prayer organization's name—"Ask for America." Carol Poulos told those who had come: "The battle has just begun—it's time to ask God for America."

Many well-known Christian leaders participated, offering prayers for the nation; for the president-elect; and for the executive, legislative and judicial branches of government.

Participants included Dutch Sheets, pastor of Springs Harvest Fellowship in Colorado Springs, Colo.; The Rev. Larry Mauriello of Benny Hinn Ministries in Irving, Texas; John Kilpatrick, pastor of Brownsville Assembly of God in Pensacola, Fla.; Rodney Howard-Browne, pastor of The River at Tampa Bay in Tampa, Fla.; The Rev. Gary Greenwald and Jan Painter of Eagles Nest Ministries in Santa Ana, Calif.; Mahesh and Bonnie Chavada, pastors of All Nation's Church in Charlotte, N.C.; and Bart Pierce, pastor of Rock Church in Baltimore, Md.

James Dobson, founder of the national family-values organization Focus on the Family, reminded participants that America was birthed in prayer.

“Our hearts are quickened today with the possibilities of a new beginning,” he said. “But the responsibilities that have been laid on George W. Bush and his team are too great for one group of people to carry.”

Mauriello of Hinn’s ministry urged Christians to release prayers and prophetic words over the capital and the nation.

Sheets challenged participants, saying, “The level of prayer in our nation must rise.”

Tributes, spoken and sung, were made to the late Ruth Ward Heflin, whose vision launched the First Inaugural Prayer Breakfast in 1993. The Rev. Harold McDougal, president of McDougal Publishing Co. and author of Heflin’s biography, told the audience that Heflin grew up in a family that was very patriotic.

“She loved Washington, D.C., and although she became a missionary to the nations, she always planned to be in our nation’s capital for inaugurations,” he said.

The Rev. Gwen Shaw, who worked with Heflin in China for many years, said Heflin’s life displayed a reckless kind of faith and an abandonment to God’s will.

“She would get on a plane and go anywhere God told her to go, even if it was just to meet one person God wanted her to

meet,” Shaw said. “And if we’re going to do the work that’s being demanded of the church in these last days, we’re going to have to have that same kind of reckless faith.”

Senators, congressmen and ambassadors were among the invited guests. But the majority of attendees were people who simply came to pray for their leaders.

Anita and Tom Ermish of Irving, Texas, were among the many who traveled cross-country to attend. Sporting a gray cowboy hat, Anita Ermish told Charisma that she and her husband came because they were “great Bush fans and great Jesus fans.”

Carol Poulos encouraged participants not to stop praying, though the election was over.

“Today is just the completion of part one of what our prayers have been all about,” she said. “I believe God now wants to focus on reconciliation—not only for the nation, but among believers.”

More information on Ask for America is available online at .