

Exclusive Behind-the-Scenes Look at Evangelical Influence in the White House

My invitation to the National Day of Prayer event in the Rose Garden at the White House came from Mr. Todd Lamphere, who works with Rev. Paula White and the faith and opportunity initiatives at the White House.

After I arrived in Washington, D.C., on Wednesday afternoon, I had dinner with directors for faith and opportunity initiatives in different government departments such as HUD, the Department of Homeland Security and the Department of Commerce. One of their roles is to create faith-based liaisons between their departments and the communities they serve.

Upon entering the White House, I met many evangelical leaders representing different denominations and faith-based ministries, among them Dr. James Dobson and Alveda King, niece of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. A large constituency of Jewish, Muslim and Hindu leaders was also present.

The prayer event included worship led by Mr. Jonathan Cain, former band member of Journey, along with a small choir from Prestonwood Baptist Church from Plano, Texas. Vice President Pence spoke of the role of prayer and faith in U.S. politics from the country's foundation, stating the different times in American history that U.S. presidents have called for national days of prayer.

He mentioned that Mr. Trump has called for more days of prayer than any prior president. His focus was primarily spiritual, talking about how faith and prayer play a role in the Trump administration in every department of government.

President Trump and his wife, Melania, came through the west

wing doors. The First Lady opened the event with the prayer of Moses from Numbers 6:24-26, speaking God's blessing over the people. After that, President Trump thanked the department heads and the spiritual leadership who were present for being the true heroes and the voices of moral conscience for our nation.

President Trump also noted that because of his administration's actions, people of faith can now boldly state what they believe.

The president also talked about the situation in Venezuela and how the United States was ready to step in and help with the aid for the people there. He also mentioned the opioid and drug crisis in America and how his administration's efforts to eradicate this have resulted in a decline in opioid use.

President Trump introduced a young woman who shared her story of faith, healing and sobriety, and asked her to come up and speak. In fact, he characteristically went off script several times and invited people to come up and share right on the spot.

Several of these speakers noted their gratefulness for being able to talk about their faith, thanking Mr. Trump for his willingness to encourage and celebrate people of faith in our nation.

Rabbi Yisroel Goldstein from the Chabad of Poway Synagogue in California spoke movingly on his experience during the shooting that took place last week on the final day of Passover. He quoted a famous rabbi who said that the way to overcome evil is with kindness. Goldstein told of his choice to either run from the shooter or to stand up and face evil.

He decided to stand up and fight for victory, and in the process, his finger was blown off, and Mrs. Lori Kaye died protecting him. His bandaged hand was clearly visible as he was talking.

President Trump then had many different faith leaders lead out in prayer, including Mr. Ralph Reed, who repented on behalf the church and the nation. Prayers of blessing and protection over our president and his family and our spiritual leaders were also made.

Rev. Paula White closed the prayer meeting with a powerful and bold prayer of faith, declaring victory and blessing over our president and our nation. It was well received by most in attendance.

Although the National Day of Prayer was inclusive of many different faiths, it was evident that the evangelical community had the majority representation. One of the striking things about this prayer event was how boldly and publicly many people prayed and thanked Jesus. I was struck by the common thread of thankfulness for a president who is so open to the spiritual and faith community.

I was told that every Cabinet meeting in the White House is opened in prayer, and that prayer is common all over Washington in different government offices and departments. One man acknowledged that God's hand was clearly responsible for how many active people of faith are involved in our government's leadership.

These people recognize that they have a short window of time to see the faith community and the evangelical cause become firmly rooted in the political arena. They are keenly aware that strong spiritual and political forces are working against people of faith and moral causes.

They have a strong sense that a large contingent of people is strongly opposed to what they are doing as they push back against the agenda of socialism and the extreme leftist agenda in the area of human sexuality.

I left with a heightened sense of my responsibility as a leader in the faith community to pray for our leaders and to

teach and communicate a biblical worldview from a Christ-centered perspective. According to one well-known Christian leader I spoke with, the role of faith has never been more prominent in Washington's history than it is today.

People of faith have a voice in the government in Washington now. Although it is easy to bemoan the darkness, I believe that the bright light of the gospel is shining in our nation's capital today.

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