

‘She Gave Me Back My Faith’: Jill Biden’s Prayer Partner, Faith Leaders Highlight Inaugural Prayer Service

Broadcast live throughout the world from Washington National Cathedral, the 59th Inaugural Prayer Service included a diverse group of faith leaders who came together to help pray for America and the new presidential administration. President Joe Biden and Vice President Kamala Harris attended the virtual service at the White House Thursday morning, Jan. 21, along with their spouses as well as Biden’s children and grandchildren, per .

But one of the participants, Robin Jackson, first lady of Brookland Baptist Church in West Columbia, South Carolina, found herself included for a special reason. Jill Biden told PBS in a 2020 interview that she lost her faith after the devastating loss of her stepson, Beau, from brain cancer. But through a unique prayer partnership with Jackson, Jill Biden said, “after five years, she gave me back my faith. It was so remarkable.”

The two met, Jackson tells WIS News 10, in May 2019 when the Bidens attended their church during a visit to South Carolina. As they listened to the choir, both Bidens became emotional, she says. “President Biden reached over to me and said, ‘Oh my! This sounds so beautiful. It reminds me of my son’s funeral.’”

What followed was a clear move of the Holy Spirit. Jackson sensed a strong leading to ask Jill Biden a question. “Jill, it’s OK,” she told her. “Would you mind me just praying with you? I would like to be your prayer partner.”

Jackson also says she made it clear that she had no expectations beyond God's leading. "Jill, I don't need anything ... But if you need a shoulder to lean on, literally, my shoulder is here," she told the future first lady.

But Jill Biden wasn't sure at first. "I thought, *prayer partner*? I had never heard of 'prayer partner,'" she told PBS.

After using the church bulletin to exchange phone numbers, Jackson began praying for her new prayer partner daily and texting her every Wednesday. Despite Jill Biden's busy schedule, she says, "She would always text me back, and say, 'Thank you, my friend. I needed that.'"

That God-ordained relationship gave the new first lady of the United States back her faith. And that relationship also led to last week's invitation to be a part of today's prayer service, which Jackson says left her shocked and humbled.

Enjoy some highlights of today's prayer service, including Jackson's prayer, below, and watch the video for the entire worship experience.

First Lady Robin Jackson, Brookland Baptist Church, West Columbia, South Carolina

"Fill our hearts with Your self-giving love, that our voices may speak Your praise. Lead us to be present with all Your people that we may faithfully minister in Your name and witness Your love and grace to all the world."

The Right Rev. Mariann Edgar Budde, Diocesan Bishop, Episcopal Diocese of Washington, D.C.

"We pray for President Biden and his family, and Vice President Harris and her family, and all who seek the common good for the United States and the world as we mark once again the transition of political leadership and look toward the future with resolve and hope. Let these sacred texts, songs

and petitions inspire us all to seek divine guidance always, care for one another and live to the highest inspirations to which God calls us as individuals and as a nation ... Oh God, be merciful to us and bless us ... Show us the light of Your countenance and come to us; let Your ways be known upon earth, Your saving health among all nations. Let the peoples praise You, O God, let the nations be glad and sing with joy, for You judge the peoples with equity and guide all the nations upon earth."

The Very Rev. Randolph Marshall Hollerath, Dean, Washington National Cathedral

"Oh God, You made us in Your own image and redeemed us through Your whole human Son. Look with compassion upon the whole human family. Take away the arrogance and hatred which infect our hearts, break down the walls that separate us, unite us in bonds of love and work through our struggle and confusion to accomplish Your purposes on earth, that in Your good time, all nations and races may serve You in harmony around Your heavenly throne."

His Eminence Archbishop Elpidophoros, Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America

"By Your mercy and love You have brought us once again to our national moment of passing the torch of freedom. We give You thanks for your lovingkindness and compassion. In this hour, we call upon You to shower Your blessings upon our president, Joseph Biden, and our vice president, Kamala Harris. Grant unto them grace and wisdom and the fortitude to bring our nation to a brighter, safer and more healthy future for all Americans. Strengthen them in their mission to help bring reconciliation and peace to our land. Endow them with virtue, righteousness and a keen sense for justice so that all Americans can have confidence that their rights as citizens will always be defended and protected. Safeguard and preserve our republic, our congress and courts, our military and civil

servants so that in peace and prosperity we may live out our days.”

Jonathan Nez, President, Navajo Nation, Window Rock, Arizona

“Give to the people a zeal for justice and the strength of forbearance, that we may use our liberty in accordance with Your gracious will. Keep this nation under Your care in the name of Jesus Christ.”

Rev. Dr. Jeffrey Kuan, President, Claremont School of Theology, Claremont, California

“We pray for an end to the injustices of racism and the hatred. Help us to build a just society where all people are recognized and treated as sacred. Bless those whose lives are closely linked with ours.”

Bishop Leah Daughtry, Presiding Prelate of the House of the Lord Church in Washington, D.C.

“For all children and young people, growing up in an unsteady and confusing world, show them that Yours is the way of life and should they fall short of their own expectations, help them to see it not as a measure of their worth but as a chance for a new beginning. Give them strength for them to hold their faith in You and to keep alive their joy in Your creation.”