

American Minute with Bill Federer U.S. Senate Chaplains & U.S. House Chaplains

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U.S. Senate Chaplain Barry C. Black was elected in 2003.

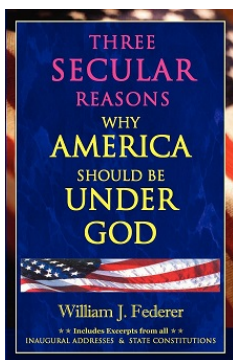
Posted on the **Office of the Senate Chaplain** website (2020), **Chaplain Black** wrote:

"Throughout the years, the **United States Senate** has honored the **historic separation of Church and State**, but not the **separation of God and State**" ...

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Chaplain Barry Black continued:

"The **first Senate**, meeting in New York City on **APRIL 25, 1789**, elected the **Right Reverend Samuel Provost**,

the Episcopal Bishop of New York, as its **first Chaplain**

...

... Since then, **all sessions of the Senate have been opened with prayer**, strongly affirming the **Senate's faith in God as Sovereign Lord of our Nation.**"

This was a continuation of the practice of the **Continental Congress** during the Revolution, as **Ben Franklin** remarked in 1787:

"In the beginning of the Contest with **Great Britain**, when we were sensible of danger, **we had daily prayer** in this room for **Divine protection.**"

On April 9, 1789, only nine days after the **first Congress** under the **U.S. Constitution** convened, both the **House of Representatives** and the **Senate** approved **chaplains to open every session with prayer**, paying them a salary of \$500 each.

On April 15, 1789, the **Committee of Congress** was composed of:

- **Richard Henry Lee,**
- **Oliver Ellsworth,**
- **Caleb Strong,**
- **William Maclay, and**
- **Richard Bassett.**

They recommended:

"That **two chaplains, of different denominations**, be appointed ... the **Senate** to appoint one, and ... the **House of Representatives** ... shall ... appoint the other

...

Chaplains shall commence their **services** in the Houses that appoint them."

On April 25, 1789, the **Congressional Committee** of **Richard Henry Lee** submitted the following resolution, **passed in the Senate**, and two days later **passed in the House**, giving instructions with regards the **Inauguration** of the **George Washington** as the **first President of the United States**:

"Resolved.

That after the **oath** shall have been administered to the **President**, he, attended by the **Vice-President**, and members of the **Senate**, and **House of Representatives**, proceed to **St. Paul's Chapel**, to hear **divine service**, to be performed by the **Chaplain of Congress** already appointed."

The **Annals of Congress** give a record of the events on April 30, 1789, following **President George Washington's Inauguration**:

"The **President**, the **Vice-President**, the **Senate**, and **House of Representatives**, &c., then proceeded to **St. Paul's Chapel**, where **divine service** was performed by the **Chaplains of Congress**."

At the time of the **Revolutionary War**, many of the **founders** were members of the **Church of England**, or **Anglican Church**, which had the **King** as its **head**.

After the Revolution, the **Anglican Church** in **America** went through the **unprecedented process** of becoming the **Episcopal Church**, which **did not acknowledge the King**,

This process first began in **1784** with **Rev. Samuel Seabury** being ordained in Scotland,

Then in **1785**, the **Archbishop of Canterbury** ordained Episcopal Bishops **Rev. Samuel Provoost** and **Rev. William White**.

Provoost had served as **Chaplain** of the **Continental Congress**, then the **first Episcopal bishop of New York**, and in 1789, he was chosen as the **first Chaplain** of the **U.S. Senate**.

William White was the **first Episcopal bishop of Pennsylvania**, and the **second Chaplain** of the **U.S. Senate**.

Bishop Samuel Provoost conducted **George Washington's Inaugural Service** at New York's **St. Paul's Chapel** -- the oldest public building in continuous use in New York City.

Bishop Provoost had preached the **first Episcopal ordination sermon**, St. George's Chapel, New York City, July 15, 1787:

"We are occupied in the ... most important business that can possibly engage the human mind ... that ... **in the Hands of God**, we shall be made the happy instruments of turning many **from Darkness to Light**, and from the **Power of Satan to the Knowledge and Love of the Truth** ...

Lay **no other foundation** than that which is already laid ... upon the **Doctrine of Jesus Christ, and him crucified** ...

Let us all unite our most strenuous endeavors, that the **Gospel of Jesus Christ** may run and be glorified, **till the earth be filled with the Knowledge of the Lord**, as the waters cover the sea."

From 1789 to 2020, there have been **62 Senate Chaplains**, all of whom were some denomination of **Christian**:

- **Episcopalian 19**
- **Methodist 17**

- **Presbyterian 14**
- **Baptist 6**
- **Unitarian 2**
- **Congregational 1**
- **Lutheran 1**
- **Catholic 1**
- **Seventh-day Adventist 1.**

Occasionally, members of other faiths have been invited to offer a prayer.

The **U.S. Senate Chaplain** after World War II was **Peter Marshall**, who prayed:

"Our liberty is under God and can be found nowhere else.

May **our faith** be not merely stamped upon our coins, but expressed in **our lives.**"

Peter Marshall's son, **Peter Marshall, Jr.**, together with **David Manuel**, wrote the best-selling book, ***The Light and the Glory***, which traced the Hand of Providence in the founding of America.

The **Senate Chaplain** and the **House Chaplain** together oversee the **Capitol Prayer Room**, located near the U.S. Capitol Rotunda.

At its dedication in 1955, **Speaker Sam Rayburn** stated that the **Capitol Prayer Room** was for members: **"who want to be alone with their God."**

On February 7, 1984, **President Reagan** addressed the National Association of Secondary School Principals:

"God ... should never have been expelled from America's schools.

As we struggle to teach our children ... we dare not forget

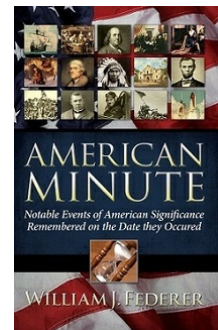
that our civilization was built by men and women who placed their **faith in a loving God.**

If **Congress** can begin each day with a moment of prayer ... so then can our sons and daughters."

In 1986, **Chaplain of the U.S. Senate Richard Halverson** stated:

"When **Billy Graham** comes to the Capitol, suddenly, the **Senate and Congress** are unimportant. To me, it's a miracle. Wherever **Billy** is, there is **the gospel of Christ.**"

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The **first chaplain of the U.S. House of Representatives** was **Rev. William Linn**, a Presbyterian minister from New York.

Unanimously elected on May 1, 1789, **Rev. Linn** was appropriated a salary of \$500 dollars from the Federal treasury.

House Chaplain William Linn stated May 1, 1789:

"Let my neighbor once persuade himself that there is no **God**, and he will soon pick my pocket, and break not only my leg but my neck.

If there be no **God**, there is no law, no future account; government then is the ordinance of man only, and we cannot be subject for conscience sake."

In addition to opening every **Congressional sessions**

with prayers, **House Chaplains** regularly held **Christian services** in the **Capitol House Chambers** every Sunday.

From 1789 to 2020, there have been **60 House Chaplains**, all of whom were some denomination of **Christian**:

- **Methodist 21**
- **Presbyterian 16**
- **Baptist 8**
- **Episcopal 4**
- **Lutheran 2**
- **Congregationalist 2**
- **Disciples of Christ 2**
- **Roman Catholic 2**
- **Unitarian 2**
- **Universalist 1.**

In 1860, **Rabbi Morris Jacob Raphall** was the **first Jewish clergyman** invited to open a House session with **prayer**.

In what may be considered a political stunt, an atheist, **Dan Barker**, sued **U.S. House Chaplain Patrick Conroy** to be permitted open **Congress** with a "**secular**" **prayer**.

U.S. Appeals Court Judge David S. Tatel denied the atheist's suit, explaining April 19, 2019:

"To resolve this case, however, we need not decide whether there is a constitutional difference between **excluding** a would-be prayer-giver from the **guest chaplain program** because he is **an atheist** and **excluding him** because he has expressed a desire to deliver a **nonreligious prayer ...**

The House's requirement that prayers must be religious nonetheless precludes Barker from doing the

very thing he asks us to order **Conroy** to allow him to do: deliver a **secular prayer**.”

In the **Supreme Court** case of *Town of Greece, NY, v. Galloway et al*, **Justice Anthony Kennedy** wrote in the decision, May 5, 2014:

"Respondents maintain that **prayer** must be nonsectarian ... and they fault the town for **permitting guest chaplains** to deliver **prayers** that 'use overtly **Christian terms**' or 'invoke specifics of **Christian theology**' ...

An insistence on nonsectarian or ecumenical **prayer** as a single, fixed standard is not consistent with the tradition of legislative **prayer** ...

... The **Congress** that drafted the **First Amendment** would have been accustomed to **invocations** containing **explicitly religious themes** of the sort respondents find objectionable.

One of the Senate's first chaplains, the Rev. William White, gave **prayers** in a series that included the **Lord's Prayer**, the **Collect for Ash Wednesday**, **prayers** for peace and grace, a **general thanksgiving**, **St. Chrysostom's Prayer**, and a **prayer** seeking '**the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, &c ...**'"

Justice Kennedy continued:

"The decidedly **Christian nature** of these **prayers** must not be dismissed as the relic of a time when our Nation was less pluralistic than it is today.

Congress continues to permit its **appointed and visiting chaplains** to express themselves in a religious idiom ...

To hold that **invocations** must be nonsectarian would force the legislatures ... and the courts ... to act as ... **censors of religious speech**...

Government may not mandate a civic religion that stifles any but the most generic reference to the sacred any more than it may prescribe a religious orthodoxy."

Reverend Daniel P. Coughlin, U.S. House Chaplain from 2000 to 2011, wrote:

"To serve as **Chaplain for the U.S. House of Representatives** is truly an honor and a privilege.

To be both a **minister of the Lord** and an officer serving the United States government responds to a twofold call to serve others and **offer prayer that unites Heaven and Earth ...**

The formal prayer before each legislative session of Congress ... casts a light on the day that awakens faith and calls forth a nation to stand with its leaders and affirm: 'In God We Trust.'"

In 2017, **U.S. Senate Chaplain Barry Black** gave his testimony, stating:

"My testimony is simply this -

My hope is built on nothing less than **Jesus' blood and righteousness.**

I dare not trust the sweetest frame, **but wholly lean on Jesus' name.**

On Christ the solid rock I stand."

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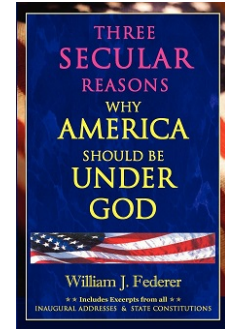
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