

History of the National Day of Prayer:

Because of the faith of many of our founding fathers, public prayer and national days of prayer have a long-standing and significant history in American tradition. The Supreme Court affirmed the right of state legislatures to open their sessions with prayer in *Marsh vs. Chambers* (1983).

The National Day of Prayer is a vital part of our heritage. Since the first call to prayer in 1775, when the Continental Congress asked the colonies to pray for wisdom in forming a nation, the call to prayer has continued through our history, including President Lincoln's proclamation of a day of "humiliation, fasting, and prayer" in 1863. In 1952, a joint resolution by Congress, signed by President Truman, declared an annual, national day of prayer. In 1988, the law was amended and signed by President Reagan, permanently setting the day as the first Thursday of every May.

Each year, the president signs a proclamation, encouraging all Americans to pray on this day. Last year, all 50 state governors plus the governors of several U.S. territories signed similar proclamations.

The National Day of Prayer is Significant

The National Day of Prayer has great significance for us as a nation. It enables us to recall and to teach the way in which our founding fathers sought the wisdom of God when faced with critical decisions.

It stands as a call to us to humbly come before God, seeking His guidance for our leaders and His grace upon us as a people. The unanimous passage of the bill establishing the National Day of Prayer as an annual event, signifies that prayer is as important to our nation today as it was in the beginning.

Like Thanksgiving or Christmas, this day has become a national observance placed on all Hallmark calendars and observed annually across the nation and in Washington, D.C. Last year, local, state and federal observances were held from sunrise in Maine to sunset in Hawaii, uniting Americans from all socio-economic, political and ethnic backgrounds in prayer for our nation. It is estimated that more than two million people attended more than 40,000 observances organized by approximately 14,000 + volunteers. At state capitols, county court houses, on the steps of city halls, and in schools, businesses, churches and homes, people stopped their activities and gathered for prayer.

The National Day of Prayer is Ours:

The National Day of Prayer belongs to all Americans. It is a day that transcends differences, bringing together citizens from all backgrounds. Mrs. Shirley Dobson, NDP chairman, reminds us:

"We have lost many of our freedoms in America because we have been asleep. I feel if we do not become involved and support the annual National Day of Prayer, we could end up forfeiting this freedom, too."

History Summary

