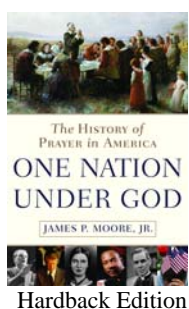


# THE AMERICAN PRAYER PROJECT

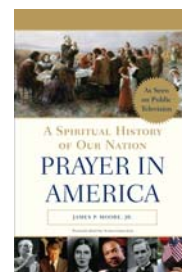
*The American Prayer project, committed to highlighting the impact of prayer in the life of America, began almost a decade ago. The unusual circumstances under which it was launched and the exceptional team of individuals and organizations who have come together to bring the project to life have been rather extraordinary. James P. Moore, Jr., its creator, offers some perspective into the unfolding story of **Prayer in America**. A slideshow of photos from the project tour can be found at <http://www.flickr.com/photos/9801660@N03/>.*



Hardback Edition



James P. Moore, Jr. speaking from the Canterbury Pulpit at Washington National Cathedral at the launch of the American Prayer Project



Softbound Edition

***Long before Moses parted the Red Sea, Buddha described the path toward nirvana, Christ died on the cross, and Muhammad revealed the message of the Koran, there was prayer.***

- From *One Nation Under God: The History of Prayer in America*

## **At the Beginning ....**

Life seems to throw curve balls at us when we least expect it. It's what we do with them that often defines who and what we are.

It was a major curve ball came my way on October 13, 1997.

Having had a fulfilling background as U.S. Assistant Secretary, among other government positions, I had begun my own investment banking firm with operations in such far flung capitals as Moscow, Doha, Caracas, and Guatemala City. While I enjoyed the work, I was confronting corruption it seemed at every turn while I also was working around the clock. One of my responsibilities in government had been to work with U.S. businesses

to avoid running afoul of the U.S. Foreign Corrupt Practices Act. Now that I was in the private sector, I couldn't imagine a more untenable position.

Confronting my dilemma, I decide to do what I had always done since I was a boy – turn to God for guidance. And so, in the tradition of my Catholic faith, I decided to pray a novena. On the ninth and final day of the novena, Columbus Day, I went to Mass early in the morning. When I returned home, I could hear the telephone ringing as I was turning the key. On the other end of the line was my brother, Terry, who practiced family medicine with my father in Ford City, not far from Pittsburgh, the town where I had grown up. He called to let me know that very quietly and very unexpectedly our father had died in the middle of the night.

I got off the phone and sat there thinking, “God, how could this happen? I came to you over the past nine days to ask for your help, and on the last day you take my father away from me? How does that work?”

In the coming months I drove back and forth between Washington and Ford City to be with my mother and brothers, driving over the majestic Appalachian Mountains. I could not help but think of my father as I looked out at that spectacular American landscape. And then I began to think again about prayer, and it dawned on me, “If prayer represents the most private, innermost thoughts of an individual as it did for me, then it must say something about us as a people throughout our history.”

## **An Idea Takes Shape ...**

The idea totally mesmerized me. I was convinced that there had to be some terrific books and article written on the subject, and I wanted to devour every one of them. And so, after working at my investment banking firm during the day, I would spend evenings and weekends searching for material, mainly at the library of the Virginia Theological Seminary, the oldest and largest Episcopal seminary in the United States. In the end I would learn from the eminent historian James Hutson, the Chief of Manuscripts at the Library of Congress, that after a thorough search, the Library couldn't even find a thesis or a dissertation, let alone a book, written on the subject. While I was disappointed that nothing seemed to exist, I kept coming across the prayers and prayer life of people like Mary Pickford, Marian Anderson, Conrad Hilton, Benjamin Franklin, and Babe Ruth. What an extraordinary thing it would be, I thought, to weave the story of American prayer throughout our history from early Native America to the modern day and beyond.

While I had no intentions of writing a book, I nonetheless decided to go on a virtual treasure hunt. Soon I was collecting the prayers and relevant anecdotes of Americans – the famous and not so famous, the immigrant and the native born. Each individual discovery was a gem in itself. There were the accounts of how America's first poet, Anne Bradstreet, composed prayers to deal with the wilderness and the trials of the New World and raising a family. I was amazed to learn how Elvis Presley never performed on stage without first saying a short prayer to give him confidence. I stumbled upon the endearing love story of President Andrew Jackson and how he would retire each evening from the Oval Office and pray with bittersweet emotion from the devotional of his recently departed wife.

And it did not stop with historical figures. Thanks to a book co-written by television host Larry King, I began to realize that Starbucks's Howard Schulze, Blockbuster's Wayne Huizenga, and Marriott's own J. Willard Marriott believed that their success derived in large part from their ability to pray. And so I decided to probe the current and future climate of American prayer as well.

It then came to me. Prayer has been a vital component in the life of America. Without it, the political, cultural, religious, social, and even military and economic history of the United States would have been far different than what it is today. Furthermore, given the influence of the United States, particularly over the past century, global history would have changed as well.

It was not so much a matter of trying to determine whether God intervened at pivotal moments. No, it was just the fact that Americans believed in the efficacy of prayer so much that they endured because of it. The Founding Fathers believed that opening their daily sessions with prayer allowed them to come together to forge a united front against the British. Enslaved African Americans found prayer to be their inspirational lifeline to endure the greatest of physical and mental hardships. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. turned to prayer when he was ready to relinquish leadership of the civil rights movement, later calling that moment his "kitchen epiphany." And so, I realized how different our history would have been without the force of prayer.

A book had to be written.

## **Publishing a Book ... (Doubleday)**

Soon I was collecting material from libraries and rare archive collections and rummaging through attics and rare book stores. I visited historic landmarks from Boston to Williamsburg to recreate in my mind how certain historic moments involving prayer played out. I learned that a scarce manuscript of a chaplain's account of a secret Sunday prayer service held between Franklin Roosevelt and Winston Churchill before the United States entered World War II could be found in a remote book collection in Australia. Resolutely, I found a way to have it shipped to me. I even sat down with the last surviving daughter of J.C. Penney to learn in detail how the famous retailer was about to commit suicide and how prayer pulled him back from the brink.

Now, the question was – How do I get all of this off the ground?

Well, I decided that I needed a literary agent, a Sherpa to take me through the process. I knew what I didn't know, and I didn't know much about publishing. So I drove to the closest Border's bookstore, and picked up as many books as I could about the business. Within a couple of weeks, I sent out book proposals to twenty agents I had targeted from New York to San Francisco, asking them if they would represent me. Seven of them said "yes" or "maybe," a promising number for an unpublished author. In the end, I decided to retain the Peter Rubie Agency in New York and within a few months, we had our answer. Doubleday, one of the great names in publishing, was extremely interested.

Soon I was on the telephone with Eric Major, a legend in the industry who had made his name in publishing in his native Great Britain. Eric had been pulled out of retirement to relocate to New York City and head up the religious division of Doubleday and a new imprint with the company that had been launched.

Stephen Rubin, President and CEO of Doubleday would later refer to Eric as “the beloved elder statesman of the industry.” He had brought to market such writers as Stephen King, John Le Carre, and Thomas Keneally (*Schindler’s List*). From the moment we laid eyes on one another, we had an instant rapport. Soon I was writing and doing more research seven days a week. After much discussion, we decided to call the book *One Nation Under God: The History of Prayer in America*. When I was asked about the dedication of the book, I knew what it should be: “This book is dedicated to my mother and father, Dr. and Mrs. James P. Moore, who first taught my brothers and me how to pray.”

I also realized that I needed a sounding board, someone who was a friend who could read individual chapters and give me unvarnished input along the way. I found that person in spades with one of my dearest and perhaps funniest friends, Jim Bayless. Jim, a lawyer by profession who I had known since my earliest days in the government, was thrilled to be involved, taking out his red pen at a moment’s notice. Going well beyond editing, Jim would become an integral part of the book’s success.

The other individual who would become invaluable to success was my right hand, Carlos Rosales. Not only did he make sure that the trains would run on time but he also had the uncanny ability to repair broken down trains in the process.

Soon I was into a writer’s rhythm, ultimately turning to more than 30,000 sources to build on the story of American prayer. For several days at a time on almost two dozen occasions I would go off to religious retreats to get away from distractions to just think and write. Throughout this period, Eric would pick up the telephone periodically to check on how I was doing, more as a friend than a publisher. And then it hit – September 11, 2001.

Within days of the attack, Eric and I spoke by phone, and somehow the message of the book seemed more important than ever. We decided that I should take more time to take stock of the impact and implications of the attack and its aftermath when it came to American prayer. In moving forward, I asked for Eric’s help in one other way, and that was to put me in touch with Random House Audio.

## **Giving Voice to the Prayers of America ... (Random House Audio)**

The more I wrote, the more I realized there was a need to have the book come to life through an audio recording. Random House Audio (RHA), the largest company of its kind in the world, was part of the Random House publishing family with Doubleday, and so it was only natural for me to turn to its team to become part of the project.

RHA could not have been more enthusiastic, and I agreed to be the general narrator. Then they made the project even more enticing. What did I think of having some of their star readers coming into the studio over the next few months spend a few moments covering excerpts of my book? I loved the idea, and off we went.

Less than six months before the book and audio were to be released, I called my executive producer, Jacob Bronstein, to find out who they had tapped to read parts of the book. Jacob told me that no one had been found to fit the bill. If I wanted others to narrate excerpts, I would have to find them. Jacob then explained that I would have to do it within the next 30 days. I was stunned.

As soon as I got off the phone, I went to work. How I secured each person was a story by itself. Then there were people like Mia Farrow, Sir Ben Kingsley, and Leonard Nimoy, who wanted to participate but could not rearrange their schedules. At the end of the day the following individuals gave voice to a variety of Americans highlighted in the book.

Narrator	Excerpts
Chief Hawk Pope Chief of the Shawnee Nation	Native Americans, Black Elk
Melissa Pope Voice in Disney's <i>Pocahontas</i>	Native Americans
Rabbi David Wolpe Author and Rabbi, Sinai Temple, Los Angeles	Henry David Thoreau, Thomas Merton, Elie Wiesel, Rudy Giuliani
His Excellency Jean-David-Levitte French Ambassador to the United States	Alexis de Tocqueville
Roscoe Lee Browne Actor; Film Director	William Penn, Benjamin Franklin, Herman Melville, Khalil Gibran, Conrad Hilton
U.S. Senator John McCain R-Arizona	Reflections on prayer as POW in Vietnam, Stonewall Jackson, Harry Truman
Frank Borman Former astronaut; CEO of Eastern Airlines	Prayer he transmitted from space to earth, the first ever
Hugh Sidey TIME journalist; Presidential chronicler	Abraham Lincoln, P.T. Barnum, Walt Disney, Jimmy Carter, Ronald Reagan
Ben Vereen Actor	Spirituals, George Washington Carver
David Conrad Actor, co-star of CBS's <i>Ghost Whisperer</i>	Christopher Columbus, Walt Whitman, Joyce Kilmer. Kennedy, Bill Clinton

Katherine Hauser Businesswoman	Babe Didrikson
Gail Buckley Author; Historian	Harriet Tubman, Susan B. Anthony, Eleanor Roosevelt, Hillary Clinton
Breck and Lily Morton 7 and 9 year old brother and sister	Prayers of Children, Pledge of Allegiance
Reza Aslan Author; Islamic Scholar	Thomas Paine, Patrick Henry
Reverend Daniel Coughlin Chaplain, U.S. House of Representatives	Prayer he delivered after 9/11 before the U.S. House, Edgar Allen Poe
Reverend Lloyd Ogilvie Former Chaplain of the U.S. Senate	Prayer he delivered after 9/11 before the U.S. Senate, Franklin Roosevelt
Marine Private Sam Crist Severely wounded in Iraq	Prayers of U.S. soldiers throughout history
Alicia Valdez-Rodriguez	Anne Bradstreet. Elizabeth Ann Seton, Emily Dickinson, Prayer of Cesar Chavez

## **Connecting American Prayer to Music ... (PBA Music Publishing)**

Throughout my research, I came to appreciate more and more how prayer was at the heart of most American music. The spirituals of the slaves led to jazz, rhythm and blues, and gospel. The hymns of Appalachia became the precursor to folk and country music. I knew instinctively that adding a series of music CDs, conveying how prayer was intertwined with the roots of American music, needed to be done.

Quite by accident, I was looking on the Internet for incidental music that might fit well for the project's new website when I came across the music being produced by PBA Music Publishing, a company based on San Francisco. Listening online to some of the music that the company had produced, I was transfixed. I called the CEO and an extraordinary composer in his own right, Peter Allen. After talking to him about my idea, he too became excited about the project and within a matter of days was on a plane to Washington with his marketing vice president, Suzette Perkins, and within 24 hours we had agreed to move forward together. The first step was to put together a diverse collection of American music and then over time release a series of genre specific CDs from classical to country to rock. It was agreed that I would write the liner notes.

Thanks to Peter and his staff we soon found poignant works from the music of Loretta Lynn, Leonard Bernstein, Tupac Shakur, Duke Ellington, and others. Each piece conveyed the heart of American prayer through the music of the country. Peter even included his own arrangements, particularly his orchestral interpretation of "Amazing

Grace.” Once the album was put together, Peter called me, asking, “This album is such an incredibly eclectic mix of composers and artists. What can we possibly call it?” It came to me on the spot, and I suggested we call it *The Many Voices of One Nation Under God*. Peter loved the idea, and we had our first music CD album.

## **Bringing Prayer to Film ... (The Duncan Group)**

It also became clear that there was a need to bring the story of prayer in America to visual life. Just as I had never written a book, narrated an audio tape, or put together a music CD, I did not know the first thing about film production. While I began to consider potential partners in the venture, I was introduced to Chip Duncan, President of The Duncan Group in Milwaukee.

The Duncan Group had produced a number of Emmy-award winning films. I found its vivid, rich exploration of spiritual places around the world in *Mystic Lands* to be stunning. I also was captivated by the team’s portrayal of British novelist and religious writer C.S. Lewis in *The Magic Never Ends* and Chip’s companion book to the film.

In a memorable breakfast at the historic Willard Hotel in Washington, Chip Duncan and I talked of the infinite possibilities in putting together a film of this kind. Based on my upcoming book, how could we do justice to the phenomenal story of American prayer on film? It became clear almost from the outset that we were destined to put this film together.

We soon envisioned a documentary format that would blend history, music, interviewing subjects, and much more on screen. In time, Chip realized that the film should be divided into two one-hour programs. He also explained how we would need to work with a PBS affiliate as an anchor in disseminating the film across the country and that we would need to find a firm that could conceive and execute an effective outreach program across the United States. I also was delighted that Chip came up with the idea of producing a five-part program that could be video streamed into virtually every public, private, and parochial school in the country.

## **Connecting with our Public Television Anchor ... (Iowa Public Television - IPTV)**

Given our desire to see that the film be shown on PBS stations across the United States, it was necessary for us to have an anchor within the public television network. Chip had worked with several such stations, and although he first considered our working with another station, he realized that Duane Huey and his team at Iowa Public Television (IPTV) were the perfect match. When I told Stephen Ruben, the publisher of Doubleday, of the choice, he was ecstatic. What better way to launch a film on American prayer than through the heartland of the country.

And so we now had the initial team in place, but there was one little catch. How would the film be financed?

## **Looking for an Angel ... (The Templeton Foundation)**

Under the best of circumstances, the production of a film is a difficult task. Many films based on great ideas have gone by the boards because of the lack of funding. In this case, we would need at least \$2 million to do the subject justice. While Chip and I had turned to others to find the necessary financial support, months passed with little progress. Frustrated, I decided to go out and find the resources myself. Prime on my list was the Templeton Foundation.

I had long known about Sir John Templeton, the legendary pioneer in structuring globally diversified mutual funds in the years just before World War II. His launching of the Templeton Prize for Religion in 1973, whose recipients included Mother Teresa, Reverend Billy Graham, and Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, had made its own dramatic impact. In addition, the Templeton Foundation, which had been founded in 1987, had become one of the wealthiest and most prominent philanthropies in the world, probing some of life's biggest questions, particularly in spirituality and in the advance of human knowledge through science.

Working with the Duncan Group, I put together a funding proposal for the film and sent it off to the Foundation. Having read its guidelines in awarding grants, I knew that they rarely funded film projects and certainly not of this magnitude. At the same time, I realized that the subject matter would be a compelling subject for them. After all, during his days on Wall Street, Sir John always began his board meetings in prayer. He believed that if people turned to God before addressing their fiduciary responsibilities on behalf of shareholders, they were more likely to do the "right thing." I already had included Sir John's corporate prayer in my manuscript. Still, I was not sure.

Within 48 hours of submitting the application, I received my answer. The Foundation's Executive Vice President Arthur Schwartz called me from the foundation's headquarters just outside of Philadelphia and told me how intrigued he was with the idea. He invited me to submit a more formal application, and in the coming months we exchanged dozens of letters and emails. On one occasion, I was able to have Chip Duncan join me for a meeting with Arthur and his team at their headquarters. Within weeks, I received the call that I had been waiting for, "Jim, congratulations, the Templeton Foundation is awarding you with the money for the film." Our prayers were answered.

## **Connecting with the Public ... (Outreach Extensions)**

While the finest film could be produced for the public to view, it would have limited exposure if we could not find a way to raise its visibility across the country. Chip and Alison Rostenkowski, who would come to oversee the film project at the Duncan Group, discovered a stellar firm based in Malibu, California. The company had worked on outreach campaigns on more than a dozen PBS productions from the *American Family* series to *This Far By Faith*. Most importantly, the firm had a sterling reputation. Judy and Ken Ravitz, CEO and COO respectively, along with a talented and dedicated project director, Denise Blake, put together a dazzling blueprint that they intended to execute.

From targeting and working with individual public television stations to launching and maintaining an engaging, interactive website, we knew we had struck gold in finding a first rate outreach team.

## **The Days Before the Launch ...**

In the days leading to the launch of the project, several people who had been so supportive of me and my efforts were not able to enjoy what was to come. Historian Stephen Ambrose and Kitty Bradley, the widow of five-star General Omar Bradley, who wrote wonderful endorsements for the book after serving as sounding boards for me in the early days of writing, died.

Hugh Sidey, that great journalist who had covered and known every president since Harry Truman, passed away in Paris. Narrating my book would be his last project, and one that he would tell me, as his wife Ann would later confirm, was one of the most rewarding of his life. Eighty-two year old Roscoe Lee Browne, the unforgettable actor of stage and screen with his indelible baritone voice, would also die some months later. On more than one occasion he would tell me how “charmed and honored” he had been to be a part of the production.

A close personal friend, Deputy Undersecretary of Commerce Timothy Hauser, also died, and just as the Random House Audio production was being put to bed and the day after he was buried, I was able to have his wife, Kathryn, record the voice of Babe Didrikson Zaharias, arguably the finest female athlete of the Twentieth Century. The experience was a particularly poignant one on how the prayers of others can bolster a person during the most difficult days.

There were two other deaths, however, even more central to the project. The first was that of Eric Major, my editor at Doubleday. Eric, who had been in remission, found that his cancer had returned. Returning to his native England, he asked Doubleday if he could continue to edit my work, which he did, to my delight. Within months, however, he would die.

Finally, one of my greatest inspirations in writing the book died of a very fast moving cancer as well, Diane Sherwood. Diane, a Fulbright Scholar and PhD, served as the Associate Director of the Interfaith Conference of Metropolitan Washington (IFC), an

organization that represents eleven faith traditions in the United States. In numerous talks with her, she broadened my sensibilities on prayer in untold ways. The prayer she delivered at the Pentagon on the first anniversary of the terrorist attack was all encompassing, forgiving, and very American. It was a prayer that had to be included in my book.

In the end all of these people left their mark on this project for which I am eternally grateful.

And so the question was, “How best can this project be launched?” Like so many other moments throughout this experience, it came to me. The organization that Diane Sherwood had helped lead, the IFC, was about to hold its 26<sup>th</sup> annual concert for interfaith understanding at Washington National Cathedral, known to many as “the Nation’s House of Prayer.” The event literally would be held one week after the book, audio, and music CD were made available in bookstores across the United States. Why not see if the project could be unveiled at the concert?

I soon was in touch with the Reverend Dr. Clark Lobenstine, the IFC’s director, who had I had come to know through Diane. He was intrigued by the idea, and with final permission from his board, we were off and running. It also was decided that I would be the narrator for the concert.

## **The Launch ... (Washington National Cathedral)**

On November 1, *One Nation Under God: The History of Prayer in America* was officially released. To kick off the event, Georgetown University President John DeGioia hosted a lecture, reception and an elegant dinner at the restaurant *1789*. I was enormously grateful and delighted to see so many of my current and former students attend. Over the next few days, I spoke to the senior staff of the White House, members of the U.S. House and Senate and their staffs, and began to be interviewed by some forty radio and television stations over the next ninety days.

The formal launch, however, exceeded all expectations. Early in the day, I learned that my hometown of Ford City in Western Pennsylvania had declared November 8 as “James P. Moore, Jr. Day,” and City Councilman John Rudosky would be at the concert to present me with the city’s official declaration. As we were preparing for the concert, I was interviewed at the cathedral by renowned film director Martin Doblmeier for his new film, *Cathedral Today*, a production celebrating the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Washington National Cathedral. I was particularly pleased that Peter Allen could perform throughout the evening as well.

Family and friends arrived from all corners of the country. Key individuals from Doubleday, Random House Audio, the Templeton Foundation, Greater Talent Network, the Duncan Group, Iowa Public Television, and PBA Music Publishing also flew to Washington. Prior to the concert, all of us congregated at a reception hosted by the IFC in the upper towers floor of the cathedral, where several of us spoke.

With everyone in their places, the concert began before an assembled crowd of almost 2,000 people. Three Islamic musicians began the evening by calling out to prayer in three different corners of the vast cathedral. They were followed in their call to prayer by a Jewish rabbi who blew a traditional shofar. With that, almost two hundred performers representing different faiths, processed into the front of the cathedral, singing from the same piece of music. The rich sounds and the colorful clothing dazzled the audience from the outset. And so throughout the concert, I served as the narrator, introducing the various groups and discussing the American Prayer Project and all its parts. It turned out to be a memorable event for everyone.

The next morning I hosted a breakfast at the Old Ebbitt Grill near the White House for all out-of-town guests. With the formal launch now under our belts, the project began to unfold in numerous directions.

## **Off We Go ...**

The book tour, soon-to-be book, and film tour too, continue to provide wonderful opportunities and extraordinary experiences. I have spoken at universities, churches and synagogues, the country's military academies, and public settings of all kinds. I spent a memorable month-long tour of the West Coast and, thanks to Louise Parsley, the sister of Jim Bayless, an extraordinary week in Houston. Addressing several hundred members of the medical staff at the Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minnesota with simulcasts to their facilities in Scottsdale, Arizona and Jacksonville, Florida was another highlight.

On a return visit to Texas, the Texas State House of Representatives passed a resolution honoring me and the project, and I was asked to offer the opening prayer before the Texas State Senate. From there I spent more than an hour with Governor Rick Perry whose wife has already read the book from cover to cover. The Austin trip also brought me together with members of both the House and Senate at a private breakfast that turned out to be a very emotional experience for everyone involved.

And now I am about to finish in the coming days my next book for Doubleday, entitled *The Treasury of American Prayers*. What a journey it has been, and we still are in the middle of it....



**The American Prayer Project Team at the Launch**

[l-r, Chip Duncan and Patty Osternick of the Duncan Group, Suzette Perkins of PBA Music Publishing, JPM, Lisa Bransdorf of Greater Talent Network, Amanda D'Acerno of Random House Audio, Duane Huey of Iowa Public Television, and Peter Allen of PBA Music Publishing. Missing is Arthur Schwartz of the John Templeton Foundation and Kendra Harpster of Doubleday]