

## National Day of Prayer events slated

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Utah evangelicals will join other religious conservatives nationwide on Thursday in gathering to pray for America, and for its next president, as part of a campaign to get voters to pray in specific and continuing ways. Local events are organized under the auspices of a nationwide umbrella of conservative religious leaders comprising the National Day of Prayer Task Force, which is asking Americans to pray for the nation.

Shirley Dobson, wife of Focus on the Family's James Dobson, is head of the task force and says that "at no other time in the last 80 years has a sitting president and/or vice president not been a candidate for re-election. We pray God will raise righteous leaders for our country."

The year's theme, "Prayer! America's Strength and Shield," was chosen by organizers at a time when many observers say the presidential race has seen more talk about candidates' religious views than at any time in the past several decades.

Congress established the National Day of Prayer in 1952, but left its observance to individuals.

Ravi Zacharias, an evangelical leader who spoke at the Salt Lake Tabernacle a few years ago, is the honorary chairman for this year's events. The group's Web site, [www.ndptf.org](http://www.ndptf.org), includes an audio clip of his prayer, which pastors and ministers are being encouraged to repeat on Thursday:

"Holy Father, in a world where so many are hungry you have given us food in abundance. In a world where so many are hurting, you offer to bind up our wounds. In a world where so many are lonely, you offer friendship to every heart. In a world longing for peace, you offer that hope.

"Yet we're so stubborn and resistant, have mercy upon us. We as a nation are at the crossroads this year Lord. Please give us the guidance to elect one who will honor you and respond to the wisdom from above

so that our hope may be renewed and our blessings be treasured. In your holy name, amen."

The task force Web site hosts a video that encourages visitors to "pray for election 2008," asking, "Do you believe in Red? Red is freedom, red is integrity, red is family, red is faith, red is the values we cherish most. Let red remind you to pray and vote."

The site also includes a specific request from task force vice chairman Brian Toon for "groups of two or more meet(ing) in their homes and businesses from noon to 12:30 p.m. (each Thursday until election day) to pray for the Nov. 4 presidential and general election. Please join your friends, your family, your co-workers and join me in uplifting our nation's future leaders in prayer."