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Members of the religious community are asked to set aside some time Thursday to pray.

The first Thursday in May is recognized throughout the country as the National Day of Prayer.

Eight events throughout Utah will include prayer services for all denominations. Two of these events will be held in the Top of Utah.

"We try to make it an event where everybody is welcome," said the Rev. Tom Koehler of Christ Community Church, who is organizing Davis County's observance. "Come one. Come all. Even though we are from Christ Community Church, it's not just for Christ Community people."

The Davis County event will take place from 7 p.m. to 8 p.m. in front of the Layton City Building in Layton Park, at 437 N. Wasatch Drive. Participants will meet between the Layton City Building and the amphitheater near the bowery.

"I guess the main thing that comes out of it is greater unity amongst Christians," Koehler said. "There is a greater sense of awareness of the oneness of the body of Christ for people who walk away from it."

Pastor Steve Peterson of Victory Christian Church is coordinator of the Ogden observance, which will take place from 12:15 p.m. to 12:45 p.m. Thursday on the steps of the Ogden Municipal Building, 2549 Washington Boulevard, in downtown Ogden.

Should the weather be bad, the event will move inside, Peterson said.

"Lots of area pastors from many different churches, and lots of people from these churches, and anyone who wants to come may come," Peterson said.

Peterson said he's personally been involved in Ogden's annual observance for 20 years, and he believes the city has acknowledged the day even longer.

"We are the only city in Utah that has any representation from the local government," he said, explaining that Ogden Mayor Matthew Godfrey will make an effort to change a prior engagement so he can be there.

"That is really good to have some of the local government," he said, adding that Ogden representatives have attended every year. "We are praying for protection for our military, wisdom for children in our schools, wisdom for our police and people in our cities."

Peterson said George Washington was the first to call for the first national day of prayer. Greg Johnson, president of Standing Together Ministries, an evangelical network of churches along the Wasatch Front, said the legal history of the National Day of Prayer dates back to 1952, when President Harry Truman signed the observance into law.

He said President Ronald Reagan amended the law in 1988 to name the first Thursday in May as the permanent day to pray as a nation.

"It's for all people of all faiths to pray in the way that they see fit," Johnson said.

Included in this year's observance is a book of proclamations from every governor in the nation that will be presented to President Bush on Thursday. The proclamations lend support to the National Day of Prayer.

"We have observed the National Day of Prayer because we think that it's so important for people of all faiths to come together," Johnson said.

The National Day of Prayer Task Force has outlined seven seats of influence that members urge participants to pray for during the observance. They are government leaders, family, military, business leaders, national media, churches and pastors and educators.

"God is our shield and our protector, we are just asking him to protect us," Johnson said. "We are praying for our election this year, we are praying that good choices are made and we elect good leadership."

"This is a critical time to be in prayer for America. The biblical principles upon which our country was founded are under attack in every segment of society," said Shirley Dobson, chairwoman of the National Day of Prayer Task Force.

"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."

This year's theme, "Prayer! America's Strength and Shield" is based on Psalm 28:7 "The Lord is my strength and shield; my heart trusts in him, and I am helped."

Other observances throughout Utah include a prayer vigil from 6:30 p.m. to 8 p.m. at the Utah State Capital Rotunda, 350 N. Main St., in Salt Lake City. Church leaders from throughout the state will be offering prayers for the nation, state and city. Special musical offerings also are planned.

Tickets for this Community Leadership Breakfast that day are sold out.

The breakfast will feature a testimonial on the power of prayer from Derek Parra, a 2002 Winter Olympic speed skating gold medalist.

In Park City, a vigil will take place from 7:30 p.m. to 9 p.m. at Mountain Life Church.

In American Fork, a similar event will take place during the same time frame at Robinson's Park.

Vernal Christian Church will host a 24-hour prayer vigil starting at 6 p.m. Wednesday for "anyone who has a passion for seeking God for answers," states the church's promotional materials.

More information about the observance, including various events throughout the country, may be obtained on the Web site Nationaldayofprayer.org.

For questions about Ogden's observance, call 393-3427.