

# Idiosyncratic Prophets: Personal Style in the Prayers of Congressional Chaplains, 1990–2010

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Congressional staffers assembled on the steps of the U.S. Capitol in December 2014 to protest the deaths of Michael Brown and Eric Garner at the hands of police. Rather than chanting or raising signs, they bowed their heads in prayer. “We’re gathered here today so that we can be the voice for the voiceless,” U.S. Senate chaplain Barry Black began. “Today as people throughout the nation protest for justice in our land, forgive us when we have failed to lift our voices for those who couldn’t speak or breathe for themselves,” he continued. “Forgive, O God, our culpability in contributing to our national pathology . . . comfort those who mourn . . . protect and guide your people who gather here today.”<sup>1</sup> Reported across a range

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1. See [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2014/12/12/chaplain-prayer-congressional-staff-walkout\\_n\\_6311856.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2014/12/12/chaplain-prayer-congressional-staff-walkout_n_6311856.html).

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of social and print media, this prayer drew attention to the activities of the chaplains who serve in the U.S. Congress. While Chaplain Black's prayer of protest was offered on the Capitol steps, many more prayers are offered inside—on the floor of the U.S. Senate and House of Representatives—at the start of each day of congressional business.

Scholars across disciplines have paid almost no attention to congressional chaplains.<sup>2</sup> To address this lacuna in the literature, we provide historical background about the congressional chaplaincy before presenting a content analysis of prayers that chaplains offered before the Senate and the House in 1990, 2000, and 2010. We ask how congressional chaplains pray, what they pray for, and how they manage issues of religious diversity in their prayers. These research questions are guided by an underlying inquiry about how chaplains, as both religious and public figures (serving in federally supported congressional chaplaincy offices), relate through prayer to members of Congress—and more broadly to a country that is, at least on paper, committed to separation of church and state.

We focus primarily on prayers offered by the five chaplains who served the U.S. Congress between 1990 and 2010. During this period, Senate chaplains included Richard C. Halverson (1981–1994), L. John Ogilvie (1995–2003), and Barry C. Black (2003–present). Chaplains to the House of Representatives were James D. Ford (1979–2000) and Daniel P. Coughlin (2000–2011).

Although all five chaplains unsurprisingly invoked the name of God, we found few other commonalities across either the style or content of their prayers. Most petitioned and thanked God while mixing pastoral and prophetic messages in ways not clearly connected to current events, election cycles, or levels of congressional polarization. Whereas Senate chaplains shifted from largely Christian to more religiously neutral prayer language between 1990 and 2010, House chaplains did not. Much as scholars have sought to analyze differences in the personal styles of presidents and other elected officials, we argue that each congressional chaplain develops a distinctive prayer style; this distinctiveness likely reflects both personal preference and a relative lack of clear rules and guidelines in place for the conduct of congressional chaplains.<sup>3</sup> Rather than

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2. Jay Wexler, *Holy Hullabaloo: A Road Trip to the Battlefields of the Church/State Wars* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2009). See also Collin Mueller, "Civil Religion in the Congressional Chaplaincy: Prayer Rhetoric and Signaling Behavior in the United States Legislature," Working paper, Duke University.

3. Richard F. Fenno, *Home Style: House Members in Their Districts* (Boston: Little Brown, 1978); Fred I. Greenstein, *The Presidential Difference: Leadership Style from FDR to Barack Obama* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2009);

following the examples of predecessors, each chaplain seems to craft his own unique style of prayer (and presumably overall approach to the chaplaincy). Based on the texts of their prayers and historical materials about congressional chaplains, we argue that the role of the chaplain is institutionally loose and flexible in Congress, molded idiosyncratically by its occupant more than by any set guidelines or evolving professional standards.

## Background

In her book, *A Ministry of Presence: Chaplaincy, Spiritual Care and the Law*, Winnifred Fallers Sullivan argues that chaplains are strangely necessary figures in the negotiation of certain aspects of public religion in American life. Both religiously and legally, they are ministers without set congregations who “serve the spiritual needs of a large, mobile and restless population”<sup>4</sup> in settings that include the military, health care, prisons, and law enforcement.<sup>5</sup> Sullivan argues that across sectors, the work of chaplains is shaped by the law and informed by it in dialectical relation. Secular logics, the rationalism of modern science, and such present-day realities as the privatization of government services, the decline of top-down religious authorities, and the increasing appeal of spirituality all influence the work of chaplains. How exactly these factors shape chaplains’ work and how that work varies across sector and institution are vastly undertheorized.

In most sectors, including public ones such as legislatures and the military, chaplains are called upon at least occasionally to pray. When they do so, many chaplains struggle with the challenges of doing so in religiously diverse or public environments.<sup>6</sup> Few contexts are more

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Dean K. Simonton, “Presidential Style: Personality, Biography and Performance,” *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 55 (1988): 928–36.

4. Winnifred Fallers Sullivan, *A Ministry of Presence: Chaplaincy, Spiritual Care and the Law* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2014), 6.

5. Kate Braestrup, *Here if You Need Me: A True Story* (New York: Little Brown and Co, 2007); Wendy Cadge, *Paging God: Religion in the Halls of Medicine* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012); Joshua Dubler, *Down in the Chapel: Religious Life in an American Prison* (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 2013); Kim Philip Hansen, *Military Chaplains and Religious Diversity* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012).

6. Steven P. Brown, “Leaving the Spiritual Sphere: Religious Expression in the Public Workplace,” *Journal of Church and State* 49 (Autumn 2007): 665–82; Ida A. Brudnick, “House and Senate Chaplains: An Overview,” *Congressional Research Service* (2011), available at <http://chaplain.house.gov/chaplaincy/ChaplainHistoryCRS.pdf>; Wendy Cadge and Mary Ellen Koniczny, “‘Hidden in Plain Sight’: The Significance of Religion and Spirituality in Secular Organizations,” *Sociology of Religion* 75 (2014): 551–63; Mary Jean Dolan, “Government-Sponsored Chaplains and Crisis: Walking the Fine Line in Disaster Response

religiously diverse or more public than Congress, “the people’s branch” of the federal government. Studies show how healthcare chaplains “code switch,” or move across a range of religious languages, as they pray with patients and staff members from different religious traditions.<sup>7</sup> Perhaps congressional chaplains undergo similar negotiation in their own minds. Should they mention God or other religious figures like Jesus? How should they close the prayer? Should they use religious language or not? Should they raise their hands or bow their heads in other ways that indicate their own religious backgrounds?

The U.S. Congress has almost always had formal chaplains, although almost no historical or social scientific research describes either how they pray or how they do their work more generally.<sup>8</sup> The American tradition of legislative prayer dates to 1774, when Jacob Duché, rector of Christ Episcopal Church in Philadelphia, was recruited to offer prayers before the First Continental Congress.<sup>9</sup> After the U.S. Constitution was ratified, the U.S. Senate selected Samuel Proovost, an Episcopal bishop from New York, chaplain in April 1789.<sup>10</sup> The House elected William Linn, a Philadelphia Presbyterian minister, as its first chaplain in May 1789. Proovost and Linn each received an annual salary of \$500. After Congress moved to Washington, D.C., local clergy took turns leading prayer before the permanent chaplaincies were institutionalized.

The congressional chaplaincies have long been controversial. During the 1850s, Congress received a number of petitions calling for the elimination of the positions. Writers expressed concerns about church–state separation and the way in which chaplains were appointed. Chaplains remained, however, and a formal selection process was initiated.<sup>11</sup> Controversy and high-profile litigation

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and Daily Life,” *Hastings Constitutional Law Quarterly* 35 (2008): 505–46; T. Jeremy Gunn, “Religious Symbols and Religious Expression in the Public Square,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Church and State in the United States*, ed. Derek Davis (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010); Allison Marie Hicks, “Prison Chaplains: Hearts in the Darkness,” Ph.D. diss., University of Colorado, 2010; Chad E. Seales, “Corporate Chaplaincy and the American Workplace,” *Religion Compass* 6 (2012): 195–203.

7. Wendy Cadge and Emily Sigalow, “Negotiating Religious Differences: The Strategies of Interfaith Chaplains in Healthcare,” *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 52 (2013): 146–58.

8. See Mueller, “Civil Religion”; Wexler, *Holy Hullabaloo*s.

9. Brudnick, “House and Senate Chaplains.”

10. United States Senate, “Senate Chaplain,” available at [http://www.senate.gov/artandhistory/history/common/briefing/Senate\\_Chaplain.htm](http://www.senate.gov/artandhistory/history/common/briefing/Senate_Chaplain.htm).

11. Brudnick, “House and Senate Chaplains”; Robert C. Byrd, *The Senate, 1789–1989*, vol. 2 (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1982).

continued, and in 1983 *Marsh v. Chambers* (463 U.S. 783) reached the U.S. Supreme Court. This lawsuit to end the practice of legislative prayer failed when the court decided to defer to historical custom. Writing for the majority, Chief Justice Warren Burger argued:

There can be no doubt that the practice of opening legislative sessions with prayer has become part of the fabric of our society. To invoke divine guidance on a public body entrusted with making the laws . . . is simply a tolerable acknowledgment of beliefs widely held among the people of this country” (463 U.S. 792).

Litigation challenging legislative prayer continues, even though the precedent set in *Marsh v. Chambers* still stands.

Today, chaplains to the U.S. Senate and House of Representatives pray at the beginning of each day of congressional business. Before 1939, chaplains delivered prayers at the start of each legislative day, which sometimes ran across several calendar days. In addition to offering formal prayers, some chaplains provide pastoral care for members of Congress and others associated with the House and Senate, including staff, police, and family members. Some meet for lunch with large bipartisan groups, while others do this sort of pastoral work more quietly and in smaller settings.<sup>12</sup>

The Senate and House chaplains hold full-time, strictly nonpartisan, and nonsectarian jobs. Each chaplain has a staff and is paid as a level IV executive federal employee: \$158,700 in 2015. Congressional chaplains are formal officers of the chamber in which they serve; in the Senate, the chaplain is one of six Senate-elected officers, and in the House s/he is one of four such officers. A bipartisan committee nominates candidates for the chaplaincies, after which the Senate and House vote on separate resolutions to accept or reject each one. The process generally has not been subject to partisan considerations.<sup>13</sup> House chaplains are elected to two-year terms at the beginning of each new Congress, whereas Senate chaplains do not have to be reelected once they have been appointed.<sup>14</sup>

12. Brudnick, “House and Senate Chaplains”; Byrd, *The Senate*; Karen M. Feaver, “The Soul of the Senate,” *Christianity Today* (January 9, 1995), available at <http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/1995/january9/5t1026.html>.

13. See Mildred Amer, “House and Senate Chaplains,” in *Senate of the United States: Committees, Rules and Procedures*, ed. Jason B. Cattler and Charles M. Rice (New York: Nova Science, 2008); Brudnick, “House and Senate Chaplains.” The history of congressional chaplains dates to the eighteenth century, but it is interesting to note that the Prayer Room in the U.S. Capitol dates to only 1953, when it was introduced through a resolution from Representative Brooke Hays. See *The Prayer Room in the United States Capitol* (Washington DC: Government Printing Office, 1956).

14. Brudnick, “House and Senate Chaplains.”

**Table 1** Religious demographics of the U.S. Congress, 1990, 2000, 2010

| Religious tradition           | 1990      | 2000      | 2010      | Total      |
|-------------------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|------------|
| Protestant                    | 325 (61%) | 315 (59%) | 295 (55%) | 935 (58%)  |
| <i>Baptist</i>                | 55 (10)   | 70 (13)   | 66 (12)   | 191 (12)   |
| <i>Methodist</i>              | 78 (15)   | 64 (12)   | 57 (11)   | 199 (12)   |
| <i>Presbyterian</i>           | 51 (10)   | 48 (9)    | 43 (8)    | 142 (9)    |
| <i>Episcopal</i>              | 63 (12)   | 43 (8)    | 38 (7)    | 144 (9)    |
| <i>Lutheran</i>               | 24 (5)    | 22 (4)    | 24 (5)    | 70 (4)     |
| <i>Other Protestant</i>       | 28 (5)    | 26 (5)    | 28 (5)    | 82 (5)     |
| <i>Unspecified Protestant</i> | 26 (5)    | 42 (8)    | 39 (7)    | 107 (7)    |
| Catholic                      | 139 (26)  | 151 (28)  | 161 (30)  | 451 (28)   |
| Mormon                        | 11 (2)    | 17 (3)    | 14 (3)    | 42 (3)     |
| Eastern Orthodox              | 7 (1)     | 6 (1)     | 7 (1)     | 20 (1)     |
| Jewish                        | 39 (7)    | 34 (6)    | 45 (8)    | 118 (7)    |
| Other faith <sup>a</sup>      | 10 (2)    | 3 (1)     | 7 (1)     | 20 (1)     |
| Unaffiliated                  | 0 (0)     | 0 (0)     | 0 (0)     | 0 (0)      |
| Don't know/refused            | 4 (1)     | 8 (2)     | 5 (1)     | 17 (1)     |
| No.                           | 535 (100) | 534 (100) | 534 (100) | 1603 (100) |

Source: Pew Research Center (2013).

<sup>a</sup>Other faiths include Buddhism, Hinduism, Islam, and the Unitarian Universalist Association.

We consider one aspect of congressional chaplains' work in this article: the prayers offered at the start of each day of congressional business. Although we acknowledge that this is just one aspect of their work, it is a highly significant and symbolic one. The lack of previous research in this area—not to mention the great cultural significance of public employees offering official prayers before elected officials—justifies our choice. What, after all, does one say in a prayer before a chamber of the U.S. Congress? We focus on prayers offered by official chaplains, not guest chaplains, who are individuals nominated by individual senators and Representatives to offer the opening prayer on one day only.<sup>15</sup>

We conduct this analysis aware both of the religious demographics of Congress and of the chaplains historically and in the present. Like today, Congress was more Protestant than the country as a whole between 1990 and 2010, as described in table 1. The fraction of main-line Protestants in Congress has declined while the fraction of evangelical Protestants has increased, and the fractions of Catholics, Jews, and members of other religious traditions have stayed relatively constant between 1990 and 2010.

The congressional overrepresentation of Christians, and particularly of Protestants, is reflected in the religious backgrounds of

15. We also exclude from analyses prayers offered on the floor of Congress outside of the opening prayer.

**Table 2** Religious demographics of congressional chaplains, 1789–2015

| Religious tradition     | House    | Senate   | Total     |
|-------------------------|----------|----------|-----------|
| Protestant              | 49 (94%) | 61 (98%) | 110 (96%) |
| <i>Baptist</i>          | 7 (13)   | 6 (10)   | 13 (11)   |
| <i>Methodist</i>        | 16 (31)  | 17 (27)  | 33 (29)   |
| <i>Presbyterian</i>     | 14 (27)  | 14 (23)  | 28 (25)   |
| <i>Episcopalian</i>     | 4 (8)    | 19 (31)  | 23 (20)   |
| <i>Lutheran</i>         | 2 (4)    | 1 (2)    | 3 (3)     |
| <i>Other Protestant</i> | 6 (12)   | 4 (6)    | 10 (9)    |
| Catholic                | 2 (4)    | 1 (2)    | 3 (3)     |
| Christian <sup>a</sup>  | 1 (2)    | 0 (0)    | 1 (1)     |
| No.                     | 52 (100) | 62 (100) | 114 (100) |

Source: “Senate Chaplain” and “History of the Chaplaincy, United States House of Representatives.”

<sup>a</sup>The Reverend Edward Bagby, who became House chaplain in 1893, is listed as “Christian,” with no other denominational affiliation.

those chosen to serve as congressional chaplains. As table 2 shows, congressional chaplains to date have been exclusively Christian. Sixty-two men have been chaplains to the Senate and fifty-two men to the House. All but the current Senate chaplain, Barry Black, have been white. All but four—three Catholic and one who identified simply as Christian—were Protestant. A large majority of chaplains have been mainline Protestant: Methodist (29 percent), Presbyterian (25 percent), or Episcopalian (20 percent).<sup>16</sup> Guest chaplains in the Senate have been a bit more diverse. The first woman to pray before the Senate did so in 1965, the first Muslim in 1992, and—despite a small protest—the first Hindu in 2007.<sup>17</sup> The House has also welcomed guest chaplains who represent a wider variety of religious traditions than the official chaplains.<sup>18</sup>

## Data and Methods

We approached studying the opening prayers in the U.S. Senate and House of Representatives inductively and decided to focus on three years: 1990, 2000, and 2010. We aimed to refine a methodology that would allow us to examine prayers in legislative contexts over a

16. See U.S. Senate, “Senate Chaplain”; and U.S. House of Representatives, “History of the Chaplaincy,” available at <http://chaplain.house.gov/chaplaincy/history.html>.

17. Michelle Boorstein, “Hindu Groups Ask ‘08 Hopefuls to Criticize Protest,” *Washington Post* (July 27, 2007), available at <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2007/07/27/AR2007072700206.html>; Byrd, *The Senate*; C. Eric Lincoln, *The Black Muslims in America* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1994).

18. See U.S. House, “History of the Chaplaincy.”

longer and more inclusive historical period. We first read all that has been written about the offices of the congressional chaplains and about the men who occupied them between 1990 and 2010. We also contacted the offices of the U.S. Senate and U.S. House chaplain directly for information about guidelines given to guest speakers.<sup>19</sup>

We obtained full-text versions of all prayers through the U.S. Government Printing Office and marked every third prayer for analysis. Each author coded two-thirds of the sampled prayers using a standard coding sheet. Two authors coded each prayer, and all three authors discussed and resolved all coding differences to ensure a consistent process and strong intercoder reliability. Following recent scholarship, we conceived of prayer as a form of communication and aimed to analyze it as such.<sup>20</sup> We paid attention both to the components of prayer and to its apparent purpose.<sup>21</sup> We also recorded information about the speaker and his/her religious background as well as whether each prayer included petition, thanks, bearing witness, and praise, four categories that we identified on the basis of a study by Jansen and colleagues.<sup>22</sup> We classified prayers as *petitions* if the speaker requested something from God and *thanks* if the speaker

19. These guidelines are not public. They generally stipulate the length of prayers and say they should be free from sectarian controversies, not mention foreign or domestic policy, not mention holidays of other nations, and be offered in English.

20. Jacques A. P. J. Janssen, Joep De Hart, and Christine Den Draak, "A Content Analysis of the Prayer Practices of Dutch Youth," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 29 (1990): 99–107; Bernard Spilka and Kevin L. Ladd, *The Psychology of Prayer: A Scientific Approach* (New York: Guilford Press, 2013). Our approach is heavily informed by Molly Farneth, Rachel Gross, and Allison Youatt Schnable, "New Directions in the Study of Prayer: Scientific, Social Scientific, Ethnographic and Theoretical Perspectives," Working paper, Princeton University Center for the Study of Religion.

21. Richard J. Foster, *Prayer: Finding the Heart's True Home* (New York: Harper Collins, 1992); Friedrich Heiler, *Das Gebet: Eine Religionsgeschichtliche und Religionspsychologische Untersuchung [Prayer: An Investigation in the History of Religion and the Psychology of Religion]* (Munich: Ernst Reinhardt, 1921); Ralph W. Hood Jr. et al., *The Psychology of Religion: An Empirical Approach*, 2nd ed. (New York: Guilford Press, 1996); Janssen, De Hart, and Den Draak, "Content Analysis"; M. Margaret Poloma and George H. Gallup Jr., *Varieties of Prayer: A Survey Report* (Philadelphia: Trinity Press International, 1991); Spilka and Ladd, *Psychology of Prayer*.

22. Janssen and colleagues argue that the petitionary and religious forms of prayer are not empirically distinct. See Jacques A. P. J. Janssen, Maerten H. Prins, Jan M. van der Lans, and Cor Baerveldt, "The Structure and Variety of Prayer: An Empirical Study of Dutch Youth," *Journal of Empirical Theology* 13 (2000): 29–54. We use the categories separately here because of their descriptive clarity and relevance to our project's focus on public prayer. We focused our analytic attention on prayers of petition (i.e., the petitionary form of public prayer ritual) and thanks (i.e., the religious form of public prayer ritual) as well as bearing witness and praise because we encountered them so frequently in the prayers we analyzed.



**Table 3** Total number of prayers offered in the U.S. Congress, 1990, 2000, 2010

| Chaplain          | 1990      | 2000      | 2010      | Total     |
|-------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| <b>Senate</b>     |           |           |           |           |
| Richard Halverson | 100 (83%) | n/a       | n/a       | 100 (25%) |
| John Ogilvie      | n/a       | 113 (81)  | n/a       | 113 (28)  |
| Barry Black       | n/a       | n/a       | 124 (90)  | 124 (32)  |
| Guest chaplain    | 21 (17)   | 26 (19)   | 14 (10)   | 61 (15)   |
| No.               | 121 (100) | 139 (100) | 138 (100) | 398 (100) |
| <b>House</b>      |           |           |           |           |
| James Ford        | 98 (74)   | 19 (14)   | n/a       | 117 (30)  |
| Daniel Coughlin   | n/a       | 73 (54)   | 74 (58)   | 147 (37)  |
| Guest chaplain    | 34 (26)   | 43 (32)   | 53 (42)   | 130 (33)  |
| No.               | 132 (100) | 135 (100) | 127 (100) | 394 (100) |

thanked God or anyone else. *Bearing witness* described speakers making statements disconnected from requests or offers of thanks. Finally, prayers of *praise* included words of praise directed toward God. Many prayers combined these four components. Also included on our coding sheet was information about the content of prayer, including direct mentions of Congress, biblical verses, public policy issues, the nation, and the constitutional framers.

Table 3 shows the total number of prayers offered in 1990, 2000, and 2010: 398 in the Senate and 394 in the House. The official chaplains offered 85 percent of the total prayers in the Senate and 67 percent of prayers in the House. Of these prayers, we coded a sample of 133 Senate prayers and 129 House prayers. We focus on this subset of prayers here because our emphasis is on the ways in which the official chaplains variously interpret the role, while noting that individual chaplains do vary in how often they invited guests to pray.<sup>23</sup>

We looked for patterns over time, across legislative body, and by speaker in prayer content and style based on our codes, and we found few. As described in table 4, all five chaplains regularly included some combination of petition, thanks, bearing witness, and praise in their prayers. All five petitioned God for something (in 96 percent of all prayers) or bore witness to something (71 percent), although this varied considerably by individual. Variation was most evident with regard to thanks, which were offered by Senate chaplain Richard Halverson in 34 percent of his prayers but by House chaplain Daniel Coughlin in only 6 percent of his prayers.

23. In the Senate, Barry Black was least likely to cede his role in 2010 and L. John Ogilvie most likely in 2000. In the House, both James Ford and Daniel Coughlin regularly made space for guest chaplains. Chaplains also varied in who they invited to pray before Congress as a guest.

**Table 4** Components of prayers in the U.S. Congress, 1990, 2000, 2010

| Type of prayer  | Halverson (S) | Ogilvie (S) | Black (S) | Ford (H) | Coughlin (H) | Total     |
|-----------------|---------------|-------------|-----------|----------|--------------|-----------|
| Petition        | 30 (94%)      | 34 (90%)    | 45 (100%) | 35 (95%) | 47 (98%)     | 191 (96%) |
| Thanks          | 11 (34)       | 11 (29)     | 10 (22)   | 9 (24)   | 3 (6)        | 44 (22)   |
| Bearing witness | 16 (49)       | 32 (84)     | 26 (58)   | 26 (68)  | 41 (87)      | 141 (71)  |
| Praise          | 5 (16)        | 8 (21)      | 10 (22)   | 2 (16)   | 8 (9)        | 33 (17)   |
| No.             | 32            | 38          | 45        | 37       | 48           | 200       |

**Table 5** Substance of prayers in the U.S. Congress, 1990, 2000, 2010

| Substance of prayer | Halverson (S) | Ogilvie (S) | Black (S) | Ford (H) | Coughlin (H) | Total     |
|---------------------|---------------|-------------|-----------|----------|--------------|-----------|
| Mentions Congress   | 15 (47%)      | 26 (68%)    | 45 (100%) | 2 (5%)   | 29 (60%)     | 114 (59%) |
| Policy issue        | 8 (25)        | 6 (16)      | 2 (4)     | 3 (8)    | 12 (25)      | 31 (16)   |
| Nation              | 14 (41)       | 28 (74)     | 18 (40)   | 5 (14)   | 29 (60)      | 94 (47)   |
| Founding fathers    | 4 (12)        | 3 (8)       | 1 (2)     | 0 (0)    | 3 (6)        | 11 (6)    |
| Biblical quote      | 31 (97)       | 7 (18)      | 0 (0)     | 0 (0)    | 6 (13)       | 44 (22)   |
| Jesus               | 19 (56)       | 3 (8)       | 1 (2)     | 0 (0)    | 1 (1)        | 24 (12)   |
| No.                 | 32            | 38          | 45        | 37       | 48           | 200       |

Similar content-based variation is evident, for example, with Senate chaplain Barry Black mentioning Congress in every prayer and House chaplain James Ford mentioning Congress in just 5 percent of his prayers. To try to make sense of these data, we considered independent factors that might shape how each man prayed but found no significant patterns in quantitative analyses. We ultimately concluded that each chaplain develops his own distinctive prayer style in office. We believe this is the case because of the institutional looseness and flexibility of the office generally and the ability of individual chaplains to mold the position to their own vision and style.

## Senate Chaplains

### *Tending the (Christian) Flock: Richard C. Halverson*

A Presbyterian originally from North Dakota, Richard C. Halverson was chaplain of the U.S. Senate from 1981 to 1994. He quoted a Bible verse in almost every prayer (97 percent), spoke regularly of

Congress (47 percent), and often mentioned senators and staff by name as he tended his flock. Some of these patterns likely carried over from his tenure as the pastor of Fourth Presbyterian Church, a large congregation he led in Bethesda, Maryland, for twenty-three years before becoming the Senate chaplain. Colleagues described Halverson as a strong pastoral presence who knew everyone from Senate leaders to cleaning staff by name.<sup>24</sup>

In keeping with this perception, Halverson seems to have conceived of himself as the chaplain to the whole Senate community; he regularly thanked God for them and mentioned them in prayers of petition. On July 10, 1990, for example, Halverson thanked “Gracious Father in Heaven” for “Thy faithfulness” and for “all who serve in this place and their families.” He thanked God for keeping all of them safe during the last congressional recess and giving them “time with constituents and exposure to the people for rest, recreation, and renewal.” He then asked God to enable the senators and their staffs to “accomplish everything necessary and desirable” in the next four weeks of legislative work and to “[d]eliver them from trivial and futile activity and guide them in the way of truth and justice.” Many of Halverson’s prayers named those who made the institution run. On January 23, 1990, for example, Halverson opened the second day of the 101st Congress. “In a moment of silence,” he began, “let us remember one of our doormen who is in a coma now, very ill, Bill Dietrich.”<sup>25</sup>

Halverson was aware of policy issues and mentioned them in about a quarter of the prayers we analyzed. Halverson did not take positions on these issues but instead raised them before the body, typically asking God to help the Senate resolve them. On October 10, 1990, for example, Halverson prayed, “Almighty God . . . may this prayer of the psalmist be in the hearts of each of us as the senators seek to resolve the budget crisis under the pressure of time and election.” In another instance, on March 27, 1990, Halverson asked God to “grant to all of us the awareness of Thy nearness and the relevance of seeking Thee in times of stress, when issues, conflicts, schedules, and an imminent election combine to slow progress in debate and make resolution evasive.” In both cases, Halverson adopted a prophetic stance through his convening power, the power to name and draw attention to issues such as a budget crisis and an upcoming election.

24. Feaver, “Soul of the Senate.”

25. The texts of all prayers offered before the Senate between 1994 and the present are available online, as they are included in the Congressional Record. See <http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/browse/collection.action?collectionCode=CREC>.

In these and other examples, Halverson reminded senators of God and of what he perceived to be God's presence in their lives and the ongoing life of the nation. On April 5, 1990, Halverson directly invited senators to rely on God in their day-to-day lives, praying: "We have grown in numbers, wealth, and power as no other nation has grown—but we have forgotten God. . . . Help us to realize that to profess faith in God and live as though He were nonexistent is worse, if anything, than belief in no god." Similarly pushing against perceived disbelief, Halverson prayed:

Sovereign Lord, in our secular culture it is assumed that God, if there be a God, is irrelevant to the practical affairs of life. . . . We thank Thee that our Founding Fathers did not believe this, as a result of which they gave us a political system that functions effectively after 200 years and has produced one of the greatest nations in history (March 27, 1990).

Halverson's prayers leave little doubt that he saw God as active in the lives of senators and the life and history of the country and saw his role, in part, as reminding the senators of this. Halverson regularly referred to God as the "Lord of History" or "Ruler of the Nations," and asked God repeatedly to "rule" in the United States.

Among the five chaplains we studied, Halverson evidenced the greatest degree of Judeo-Christian focus in prayer. He quoted a Bible verse in almost all (97 percent) of his prayers and explicitly mentioned Jesus in over half (56 percent). Most frequently, he quoted from the book of Psalms and the books of the Hebrew Prophets, although he also drew from the books of Matthew and Mark. He often closed prayers saying, "We pray in the name of Jesus in whom resides all power, in Heaven and on Earth" or "In the name of Jesus who is the living Word." While Halverson's prayers might suggest that his personal style was that of a strong pastoral leader, his language and reference points suggest an understanding of a flock that was largely Christian (Protestant, specifically) with no acknowledgement of listeners for whom those phrases would not resonate. His seems to have been a chaplaincy primarily geared toward Protestants, reflective of a less religiously diverse era during which greater religious specificity might have been more acceptable on the part of a congressional chaplain.

### *Serving a Providential Nation: L. John Ogilvie*

L. John Ogilvie, Senate chaplain from 1995 to 2003, petitioned God in prayer and reflected regularly on congressional issues in ways that seem intended to influence senators' work together. Ogilvie conceived of a God actively involved in the life of the Senate and reminded

senators of their responsibilities before God and the nation in providential terms. A Presbyterian like Halverson, he was born in Wisconsin and came to the chaplaincy after serving several high-profile congregations, including First Presbyterian Church in Hollywood, California.<sup>26</sup>

Like Halverson, Ogilvie regularly mentioned Congress in prayer but did so in more general ways (rarely naming names), focusing on the relationship between God, the senators, and the nation at large. On April 25, 2000, in a prayer typical of Ogilvie's providential style, he prayed: "This is Your Senate and the senators are here by Your divine appointment and are accountable to You for every word spoken and every piece of legislation passed." Such statements leave little doubt that Ogilvie saw the senators as being there to serve the nation and the nation—in turn—being designed to serve God. As in many of his prayers, he continued with a request that God help the senators to "live this day on the knees of our hearts, with renewed reverence for Your presence and profound gratitude for the grace and goodness of Your providential care for our beloved Nation."

Reflecting the kind of special relationship he perceived between God and the United States, Ogilvie regularly referred to God as "Sovereign of our Nation" and "Lord of this Senate." On October 13, 2000, for example, Ogilvie extended this relationship to members of the armed forces, praying, "Almighty God, Sovereign of our beloved Nation, we thank You for the women and men who serve in the United States navy." In another, Ogilvie named the "providential plan" he believed God had for the nation, placing himself and the Senate in the service of both. He offered this prayer on September 12, 2000:

Almighty God, Sovereign of this Nation, as You guided our Founding Fathers to establish the separation of church and state to protect the church from the intrusion of government, rather than the intrusion of the church into government, we praise You that in Your providential plan for this Nation there is to be no separation of God and state.

He continued, "with gratitude we declare our motto: 'In God We Trust.'"

Ogilvie mentioned policy issues less frequently than Halverson (in 16 percent rather than 25 percent of prayers). Like Halverson, he did so usually in a prophetic way that seemed intended to draw attention to issues rather than suggest how senators should resolve them. On December 5, 2000, in the midst of the contentious 2000 presidential election, for example, Ogilvie prayed: "We cannot open the Senate today with a business as usual attitude. So much has happened in

26. See Ogilvie's personal website: <http://www.lloydjohnogilvie.com/>.

these past weeks in the contested presidential election and the close Senate races. As tension mounts, patience wears thin, and party spirit threatens to displace the spirit of patriotism in America, we ask for your healing spirit.” Ogilvie asks God for patience and God’s presence in a way that seems intended to help listeners get through difficulties rather than to resolve them in a particular way, thus remaining nonpartisan.

Ogilvie’s belief in the divine providence of the nation was evident across his prayers and in the Judeo-Christian frames through which he offered them. Although he quoted the Bible (in 18 percent of prayers) and mentioned Jesus (8 percent) less often than did Halverson, he frequently drew from Christian language and imagery.<sup>27</sup> On May 10, 2000, for example, Ogilvie concluded a prayer by saying, “In the name of Him who is the Way, Truth, and Life.” This prayer does not directly reference Jesus, but Ogilvie clearly was making reference to John 14:6 in which Jesus says, “I am the way, the truth, and the life.” While Ogilvie did not proactively make space in his prayers for non-Christians or nonreligious people, he did name the space from which he prayed on September 28, 2000, saying: “We offer our prayers from the different faith traditions in which we live, and as a Christian I pray in Jesus’ name. Amen.”

### *Supporting the Well-Being of Senators before God: Barry C. Black*

Barry C. Black began as Senate chaplain in 2003 and continues in that role today. Born in Baltimore, Black is the Senate’s first black chaplain and its first Seventh-day Adventist. He served in the U.S. Navy for twenty-seven years, including as the chief navy chaplain, before the Senate chaplaincy.<sup>28</sup>

Black’s personal style has emphasized praying for Congress and petitioning God—often for guidance and wisdom for the senators—in every prayer we analyzed. While Black’s prayers assumed that God could and would support senators, the strong providential themes evident in Ogilvie’s prayers were more muted. On June 18, 2010, for example, Black prayed to the “Eternal Spirit, creator and sustainer of humanity” with the words,

Today, use our senators to fulfill Your purposes. Quicken their hearts, purify their minds, and strengthen their commitments. Show them duties left undone and tasks unattended, as You lead them through challenging

27. He almost exclusively quoted the Old Testament, particularly Psalms and Proverbs.

28. See also Barry C. Black, *From the Hood to the Hill: A Story of Overcoming* (Nashville: Nelson Books, 2006); “Barry C. Black,” available at [http://www.senate.gov/reference/common/person/barry\\_black.htm](http://www.senate.gov/reference/common/person/barry_black.htm).

seasons to a deeper experience with You. Let faith, hope, and love abound in their lives, as they seek to heal the hurt in our Nation and world.

References to broken aspects of the world are common in Black's prayers, as is the idea that with wisdom, knowledge, and love, senators may sustain themselves and make decisions that would begin to heal that brokenness.

Black refers to policy issues less often than his predecessors and, as in his other prayers, frames them in terms of the well-being of senators. Black regularly asks God to guide lawmakers in the deeply bipartisan context of Congress in recent years.<sup>29</sup> On June 23, 2010, for example, Black prayed: "Lord, we ask that You would guide our lawmakers as they influence the future course of this Nation." And on May 4, 2010, "May [members of Congress] work out the issues that divide them, as they strive to serve the welfare of our Nation and our world." While Black clearly wants senators to work together for the good of the nation, he avoids explicitly Judeo-Christian themes that might situate either the senators or the nation in any particular place in relation to God. Even when Black specifically mentions the nation's founders on July 13, 2010, he mentions neither their religious beliefs nor providential themes: "Lord, thank You for our Nation's founders, for their ideals and principles. We are grateful also for the long line of patriots who have kept freedom's flame burning brightly."

In contrast to his predecessors, Black's prayers included fewer providential or Judeo-Christian themes. Black never quoted the Bible and mentioned Jesus only once, in reference to the Christmas story. These differences reveal a shift from the more explicitly Judeo-Christian approach of Halverson and Ogilvie toward more religiously neutral language. Nevertheless, Black also quietly drew on underlying biblical imagery in ways likely evident only to listeners familiar with the Bible. On May 5, 2010, for example, Black asked God to empower senators to "fight the good fight of faith" (a reference to 1 Timothy 6:12). Often Black asked God to lead the senators through the valley and beside the still waters (references to Psalm 23) or to provide a light unto their path (Psalm 119). In other instances, he asked God to "let faith, hope, and love abound in the [senators'] lives, as they seek to heal the hurt in our Nation and world" (June 18, 2010, a reference to 1 Corinthians 13:13) and to "empower [the senators] to do justice, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with You" (June 9, 2000, Micah 6:8). Such short biblical phrases might not be recognizable to listeners not steeped in biblical knowledge. This strategy would

29. Nolan McCarty, Keith T. Poole, and Howard Rosenthal, *Polarized America: The Dance of Ideology and Unequal Riches* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2006).

seem to be Black's way of connecting with a wider range of people than would be possible using explicitly Christian language and imagery.<sup>30</sup>

Each of these Senate chaplains asked God for things, mentioned Congress, and envisioned God as an active force in the life of the Senate and the nation, albeit in quite different ways. They engaged with Congress using distinctive personal styles. All three chaplains clearly imagined God as available to senators, but each also envisaged the connection between God and senators, and the results of that connection, in divergent ways.

Whether the differences among the chaplains' personal prayer styles reflect changes over time or simply the divergent personalities of three different men is impossible to untangle without data over a longer period of time. To think about this question more comparatively, we also considered the prayers of House chaplains who served a legislative body five times the size of the Senate and whose prayers, in this analysis, reflect additional themes rather than similar patterns.

## Chaplains to the House of Representatives

Thanks to the principle of bicameralism and the evolution of institutional norms over more than two centuries, the House of Representatives and the Senate are two vastly different bodies.<sup>31</sup> The two chambers compete with each other for dominance, status, and the upper hand in policymaking.<sup>32</sup> Leadership style and member autonomy vary greatly because of differences in size, organization, electoral dynamics, rules and norms, specific constitutional duties, and term length.<sup>33</sup> Perhaps the most important difference between the two branches for our purposes here is the House's special claim of closeness to ordinary American citizens. Unlike the Senate, the House has always been elected directly by constituents. Thus when a chaplain prays before the House, s/he might be seen as praying even more directly before "the people" than would be the case in the Senate. Paying close attention to these differences, we analyze prayers offered by the two House chaplains who served during the

30. D. Michael Lindsay, *Faith in the Halls of Power: How Evangelicals Joined the American Elite* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008).

31. Ross K. Baker, *House & Senate* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2008); Roger H. Davidson and Walter J. Oleszek, *Congress and Its Members*, 9th ed. (Washington, DC: CQ Press, 2008).

32. See, for example, Walter J. Oleszek, "House-Senate Relationships: Comity and Conflict," *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 411 (1974): 75–86.

33. Baker, *House and Senate*; David T. Canon, "The Institutionalization of Leadership in the U.S. Congress," *Legislative Studies Quarterly* 14 (1989): 415–43; Jeffrey Lazarus and Amy Steigerwalt, "Different Houses: The Distribution of Earmarks in the U.S. House and Senate," *Legislative Studies Quarterly* 34 (2009): 347–73.



same time period as Senate chaplains Halverson, Ogilvie, and Black: James D. Ford and Daniel P. Coughlin.

*Prayers for Daily Life: James D. Ford*

James D. Ford was the House chaplain from 1979 to 2000, the longest tenure of the five chaplains we studied. His personal style and his prayers were distinctive, focused largely on asking God to provide support and blessings for members of the House in their daily lives. More pastoral than prophetic, Ford focused on members of Congress as people rather than on policy debates or pending legislation. He often asked God's blessings or support for "us"—in other words, praying for members implicitly but never specifically on behalf of their role in the nation as legislators. On October 24, 1990, for example, Ford prayed, "Teach us, gracious God, not only to ask for Your mercy or to petition You for our needs, but also to listen to Your word to us." Such a prayer might have functioned equally well in the Lutheran congregations Ford pastored before becoming House chaplain.

Like his colleagues in the Senate, Ford prayed about the nation, but much less often and in more general terms. He mentioned the nation in only 14 percent of prayers, none of which conceptualized God as active in the history of the United States or the daily affairs of Congress. On August 3, 1990, when the Persian Gulf War was beginning, Ford said, "We specially pray, O God, for those to whom great responsibility is given in the life of our Nation." In another instance, on February 7, 1990, Ford prayed, "We are grateful, O God, for those people who devote their energies to the public good and who use the natural gifts that come from Your Hand in ways that promote justice and freedom in our land." Although this prayer suggests that God's "hand" gives people abilities that might be of use to the nation, no specific relationship between God and the nation is assumed.

Ford's largely pastoral, person-focused approach was further evident on the few occasions when he did mention either the institution of Congress or policy issues. He mentioned Congress in only 5 percent of the prayers we analyzed and policy issues in only 8 percent. On February 7, 2000, Ford mentioned Congress in personal terms: "On this special day," Ford said, "we mourn the death of our former Speaker, Carl Albert. . . . We recall his devotion to this institution, the House of Representatives, and his commitment to the ideals of this assembly." Ford's mentions of policy issues were similarly few and pastorally oriented. On August 3, 1990, for example, the day after the Gulf War began, Ford prayed: "[M]ay our work for justice be for people in all places of the world." A month later, on September 27,

1990, Ford prayed, “We remember in our prayer the members of the armed forces who leave home and family to do their duty.” While this prayer was likely referring to the Gulf War, the conflict was not named, and the concern throughout was pastoral: for members of the armed forces and their families.

Ford’s colleagues in the House recognized his pastoral style and talked about him much as they would a congregational leader. Ford was ordained as a Lutheran minister, like his father and grandfather, but House Speaker Tip O’Neill (who was Catholic) affectionately referred to Ford as “monsignor,” and Jewish lawmakers called him “rabbi.” When then–House Speaker Dennis Hastert heard of Ford’s upcoming retirement, he said: “He has married us. He kept marriages together. He has baptized our children. He has visited us in the hospital. He has been there with our families as we bid farewell to our beloved colleagues.”<sup>34</sup> While various other chaplains combined pastoral and prophetic roles, Ford’s personal style was almost exclusively pastoral.

Interestingly, Ford framed his pastorally oriented prayers largely without mention of the Bible, Jesus, or other explicitly religious subject matter. He did often close prayers in 1990 by saying, “We pray in Your name” or “We pray in Your Holy Name,” which implies Jesus but does not name him. This practice changed in Ford’s prayers in 2000, when he closed saying, “This is our earnest prayer,” perhaps suggesting a shift toward religious inclusion. Unlike in the Senate chaplains’ prayers, we note little biblical imagery in his prayers, a reflection of his personal style. His prayers overall were very short and not as narratively driven as those of other chaplains.

### *Prophetic Vision: Daniel P. Coughlin*

Father Daniel Coughlin was appointed as the first Catholic chaplain of the House when Ford retired in 2000, and he proved to be Ford’s opposite in many ways. Coughlin had served as a priest and vicar in Chicago before coming to the House and was appointed amidst considerable controversy.<sup>35</sup> However, he received praise from both sides

34. Tom Webb, “House Loses Its Favorite Pastor,” *Chicago Tribune* (November 18, 1999), available at [http://articles.chicagotribune.com/1999-11-18/news/9911180088\\_1\\_rev-james-ford-house-chaplain-house-speaker-dennis-hastert](http://articles.chicagotribune.com/1999-11-18/news/9911180088_1_rev-james-ford-house-chaplain-house-speaker-dennis-hastert).

35. Following Ford’s retirement, a bipartisan committee of Representatives convened to consider possible new chaplains. The committee selected three names to present to Speaker Dennis Hastert. Hastert selected Charles Wright, a Presbyterian minister, from the list. Some of the Democrats on the committee complained that there had been considerably more support for a Catholic priest and accused Hastert of anti-Catholic bias. Hastert encouraged Wright to withdraw and then selected Coughlin, despite the fact that Coughlin’s name had not been under

of the aisle when he retired in 2011; then-Speaker Nancy Pelosi (Democrat; California) said, “He has seen us through the dark and through the bright,” and Representative James Sensenbrenner (Republican; Wisconsin) commented that he was “a better person for having known Father Coughlin and having been counseled by him.”<sup>36</sup>

Coughlin was concerned not only about members of Congress as individuals but also about the moral and ethical issues with which they work. In the 60 percent of his prayers in which he mentioned Congress, Coughlin prophetically named questions and challenges facing the House. On July 22, 2010, for example, Coughlin prayed, “The members of Congress seek answers to the deepest questions facing the Nation. Attentive to their districts and the human cries of families they know and individuals lost in the void of unemployment, they hear tangible truth breathing beneath the blanket of pundits and pollsters.” Rarely short with words, Coughlin’s prayers put stories and color around the issues of the day in Congress.

Coughlin viewed representatives as public servants and regularly asked God to guide their actions and decisions in ways that reflected his prophetic personal style. On December 4, 2000, for example, Coughlin prayed, “May the members of this House and all public servants of the court and government be agents of stability and Your instruments of peace now and forever.” He understood God to be active in members’ lives as well: “Bless the gifted members of this House,” Coughlin prayed on October 16, 2000, “guide them to use their gifts to accomplish Your Holy will in such a way that Your goodness and justice may be recognized in all their accomplishments.” Coughlin, like his colleagues in the Senate, saw God as active in Congress—and members as capable of acting on behalf of God.

Coughlin also saw God as active in the nation and referred to the nation in over half of his prayers. Often Coughlin asked God to bless or support the nation. “As the 111th Congress reassembles to meet its constitutional commitments in its second session” Coughlin prayed on January 12, 2010, “may the prophetic cry of Israel, from the prophet, be heard in the hearts of all Members and in the attitude of all America’s people.” While Coughlin saw God at work in the nation, he did not frequently include providential themes or speculate on God’s specific plan for the nation.

That said, Coughlin mentioned specific policy issues in detail in about a quarter of prayers, sometimes taking sides. On September

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previous consideration by the committee. See Ben Pershing, “Daniel Coughlin, House Chaplain, Marks Ten Years of Service,” *Washington Post* (April 27, 2010), available at <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2010/04/26/AR2010042603725.html>.

36. Pershing, “Daniel Coughlin.”

6, 2000, for example, Coughlin prayed, “Help this government to enact laws that respect the right of parents and protect children. Guide this Congress and all local communities to create homes and neighborhoods where trust in creative deeds may flourish.” On January 22, 2010, Coughlin prayed,

May the immediate scene of Haiti prove to be a living parable of Your redeeming love, lifting Your people from slavery to freedom, from death to new life. . . . Lord, allow the commitment of liberation and justice to grow, that the good news of Your faithful presence will overcome the shadowy image of death and destruction.

Like his Senate contemporary Barry Black, Coughlin was more likely to evoke Christian imagery than he was to use explicitly Christian language in his prayers. We found just one reference to Jesus in the prayers we analyzed, on October 19, 2000, when Coughlin prayed: “You teach us Lord, to look upon all suffering with the eyes of faith. Isaiah’s suffering servant speaks to the Jew. Jesus’ cross interprets life for the Christian. All religions hold up champions who persevere in the name of wisdom, love, or justice.” Interestingly, this reference to Jesus took place in the context of Coughlin naming multiple religions and their commitments to wisdom, justice, and love. Coughlin did occasionally refer to the Bible (in 13 percent of prayers), exclusively referring to the books of Psalms or Hebrew prophets, which might make the references accessible to Christians and Jews alike. Thus his was a somewhat more inclusive style, as befits a non-Protestant chaplain in an era of increased religious diversity.

## Conclusion

Our guiding question has been one of how congressional chaplains relate through prayer to members of Congress, and indeed to the nation, against the backdrop of church–state separation. The principal conclusion we reach is that each of the five congressional chaplains we study here employed a distinct personal prayer style. We observe much variation in these styles, including a continuum from the pastoral to prophetic; different underlying assumptions about how God works in Congress, the nation, and the world; varying approaches to policy issues; and different ideas about how to negotiate religious diversity in prayers.

It seems that the role of congressional chaplain is institutionally loose and flexible and thus is molded idiosyncratically by its occupant more than by set guidelines or even by evolving professional standards. The fewer institutional strictures a workplace places on the individual, the freer she is to negotiate the specifics of how she

will do her job. Sometimes this flexibility is nothing more than a norm that is institutionalized into a “job description” over time. For example, there are no written rules indicating that senators should be freer than members of the House to pursue their own policy agendas without pressure from party leaders; this is simply a folkway.<sup>37</sup> This flexibility has likely been vital to the institutional survival of the congressional chaplaincy. The specifics of such written rules would remain just as contentious as establishing a national religion would have been for the constitutional framers. In some ways, congressional chaplains also are just like other people hired to work for Congress. They have specialized knowledge; they exhibit a demonstrated commitment to public service; the boundaries of how they do their jobs are set through norms; and they “have a range of acceptable behaviors . . . [that] emphasize deference and loyalty vis-à-vis members of Congress.”<sup>38</sup> In short, they must find ways of making the job their own with rather little explicit, or even implicit, guidance.

Perhaps this study has the effect of asking more questions than it answers. Indeed, future studies ought to move in a variety of directions suggested by our work here. Scholars would be well advised to explore the prayers of congressional chaplains over a longer period of time or artifacts of chaplains’ activities beyond the text of their prayers. Analysis of the content of state legislative chaplains’ prayers would be instructive, both over time and comparatively across regions. Our project also hints at the importance of moving beyond court cases when asking questions about how church and state interact. Through attention to how prayer and other forms of religious practice actually play out in government bodies on a day-to-day basis, we gain greater substantive insight about not just whether but also how “religion” is brought to bear on the public square. It seems clear that chaplains can (and often do) draw attention to topics and issues that might otherwise escape notice and that they have the capacity to do so in ways that might shape agendas or influence debate. The mere fact that the U.S. Congress continues to allocate funds to support its chaplains is an indication that both the House and the Senate see clear value in this longstanding yet potentially constitutionally problematic (notwithstanding the precedent in *Marsh v. Chambers*) component of the federal government.

While some commentators might applaud the diversity of prayer styles and orientations we identify among these chaplains’ prayers,

37. Baker, *House and Senate*; Donald R. Matthews, *U.S. Senators and Their World* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1973).

38. Barbara S. Romzek and Jennifer A. Utter, “Congressional Legislative Staff: Political Professionals or Clerks?” *American Journal of Political Science* 41 (1997): 1251–1279, 1275.

others might find their Judeo-Christian orientation troubling or worry that congressional chaplaincies themselves might be anachronistic. Again, additional studies of chaplains in state legislatures and other positions supported by government funds would be a means of enhancing our understanding of how religion and prayer are made present in public institutions, how that presence has varied over time and across organizational contexts, and what effects, if any, such prayers might have on participants and on the nation more broadly.