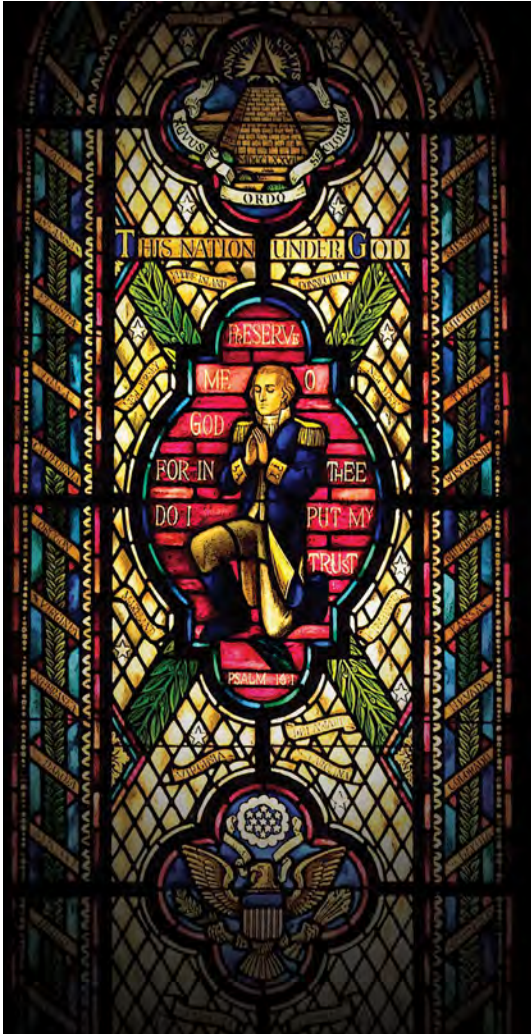




**OFFICE OF THE CHAPLAIN**  
—UNITED STATES HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES—



George Washington Prayer Window; anonymous gift, 1955; Congressional Prayer Room; image courtesy of the Architect of the Capitol



“I HAVE LIVED, SIR, A LONG TIME, and the longer I live, the more convincing Proofs I see of this Truth: that God governs in the Affairs of Men.... I therefore beg leave to move, that henceforth Prayers, imploring the Assistance of Heaven, and its Blessing on our Deliberations, be held in this Assembly every Morning before we proceed to Business, and that one or more of the Clergy of this City be requested to officiate in that Service.”

Benjamin Franklin | June 28, 1787  
*From a speech to the Constitutional Convention*





## MINISTRY OF THE CHAPLAIN

### OPENING PRAYER

The primary duty of the Chaplain of the House is to offer a prayer at the commencement of each day's sitting of the House, as called for in the *Rules of the House of Representatives*. The prayers, offered in the House Chamber, are broadcast live on [live.house.gov](http://live.house.gov) and C-SPAN and are archived in the *Congressional Record* as well as on the Office of the Chaplain website, [chaplain.house.gov](http://chaplain.house.gov).

The Chaplain also coordinates a guest chaplain program to host clergy, who are nominated personally by House Members, to lead the opening prayer. The richness of religious expression in the United States is well illustrated in these prayers.

### PASTORAL SERVICES

The Chaplain offers a ministry of presence to all members of the House community and serves Members and their families as well as congressional staff with spiritual care and counsel, prayer services, discussion events, and other activities.

Additionally, the Office of the Chaplain maintains the Congressional Prayer Room located near the Rotunda in the heart of the U.S. Capitol. Established in 1954 solely for Members of the House and Senate, the room is used for their communal and private prayer, study, and reflection.

## EVENTS AND INFORMATION SERVICES

The Chaplain leads prayer at official ceremonies on Capitol Hill—including historical commemorations, congressional award presentations, and memorial services—adding solemnity and dignity to the events. The Chaplain also embraces the opportunity to welcome visiting religious leaders from around the world to the Capitol.



Historical information, links to local houses of worship, and listings of events of a spiritual or religious nature are available on [chaplain.house.gov](http://chaplain.house.gov). The Office also assists congressional offices with requests for information concerning religious and spiritual matters.



## CHAPLAIN MARGARET GRUN KIBBEN

On January 3, 2021, Margaret Grun Kibben was elected by the House Membership and sworn in by Speaker Nancy Pelosi as the 61st Chaplain of the United States House of Representatives.

In her final active-duty assignment in the Navy, [Rear Admiral (retired)] Chaplain Kibben was the U.S. Navy's 26th Chief of Chaplains, serving as the director of religious ministry for the Department of the Navy and advising the Secretary of the Navy, the Chief of Naval Operations, the Commandant of the Marine Corps, and the Commandant of the Coast Guard on all matters pertaining to religion in their respective services. She led a community of 2,500 active and reserve officers and enlisted religious ministry professionals. Before this assignment, Kibben served as the 18th Chaplain of the Marine Corps and the Deputy Chief of Chaplains.

A native of Warrington, Pennsylvania, Chaplain Kibben entered active duty in 1986 through the Navy's Theological Student Program. She earned a Bachelor of Arts degree from Goucher College in Towson, Maryland; Master of Divinity and Doctor of Ministry degrees from Princeton Theological Seminary; and a Master's degree in National Security and Strategic

Studies from the Naval War College in Newport, Rhode Island. Kibben served as a senior fellow at the United States Institute of Peace in Washington, DC. Her military career spans both Navy and Marine Corps assignments ashore, at sea, and abroad, with several deployments to the Mediterranean, Norway, Turkey, and Afghanistan.

Following her retirement, Kibben established Virtue In Practice, LLC, a business dedicated to moral, ethical, and spiritual executive leader advisement. She also served as a consultant to the Department of the Navy's Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Office.

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“IT IS AN HONOR TO SERVE in this position and to pray for the House and the Members and staff who labor therein. In providing and facilitating for their religious needs and caring for them in a confidential manner, I hope that each will find a sacred space for their life's journey.”

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Chaplain Kibben serves on the Princeton Theological Seminary Board of Trustees, the Inamori International Center for Ethics and Excellence, and the Marine Corps Scholarship Foundation. She is a founding member of AI and Faith. Her personal awards include the Distinguished Service Medal, the Legion of Merit (two awards), the Bronze Star, the Meritorious Service Medal (three awards), and the Navy Commendation Medal (three awards).



“BE THOU PRESENT, O GOD OF WISDOM, and direct the councils of this honorable assembly; enable them to settle things on the best and surest foundation. That ... truth and justice, religion and piety, prevail and flourish amongst the people. Preserve the health of their bodies and vigor of their minds; shower down on them and the millions they here represent, such temporal blessings as Thou seest expedient for them in this world and crown them with everlasting glory in the world to come.”

Reverend Jacob Duché | September 7, 1774  
*From the First Prayer of the Continental Congress*





## HISTORY OF THE CHAPLAINCY

Prayer has been present in the deliberations of the United States' legislative body from the nation's earliest days.



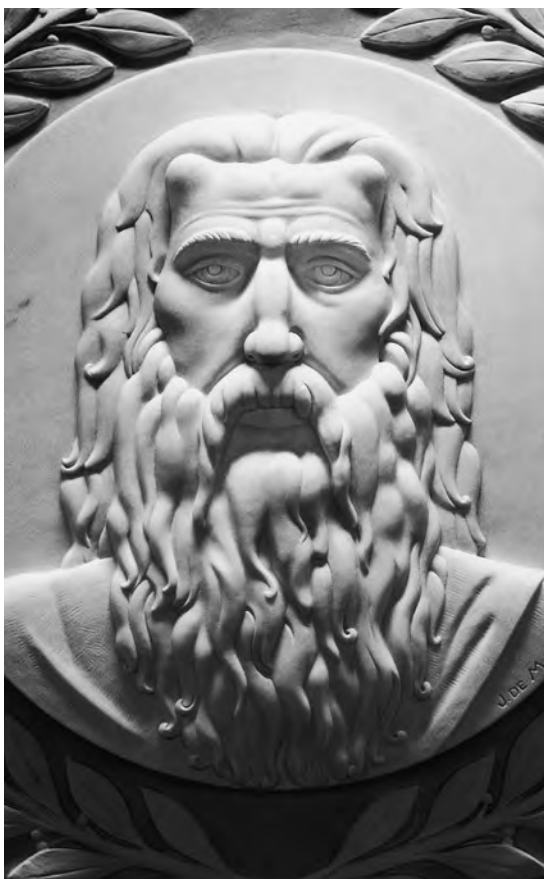
On September 7, 1774, the Continental Congress began with a prayer offered by the Reverend Jacob Duché (depicted above), an Episcopal rector from Philadelphia. During the Constitutional Convention in 1787, Founding Father Benjamin Franklin encouraged the practice of opening legislative sessions with a prayer. On May 1, 1789, in one of its first acts, the House elected the Reverend William Linn, a Presbyterian minister from Philadelphia, as the official Chaplain of the House.

For more than 200 years, each Congress has named a Chaplain of the House, excluding the years preceding the Civil War when local clergy served as volunteer chaplains. At the beginning of each Congress, the Chaplain is elected to a two-year term by the House Membership. There is no limit to the number of terms a Chaplain may serve.

Sixty individuals have held the office since its inception. A list can be found on the Office of the Chaplain's website, [chaplain.house.gov](http://chaplain.house.gov).

## DEPICTIONS OF FAITH IN THE CAPITOL

The U.S. Capitol is home to hundreds of pieces of art—statues, busts, paintings, portraits, friezes, and murals—that portray scenes of American history, celebrate its citizens, and symbolize the ideals that have built the nation.



Twenty-three marble relief portraits of lawmakers throughout history circle the wall above the gallery that overlooks the House Chamber, each serving as a reminder of the principles that underlie American law. The center relief of Moses (above) hangs directly across from the rostrum where the Speaker of the House presides and the Chaplain offers the daily prayer. Inscribed in stone above the rostrum is our nation's official motto—"In God We Trust."

The Old Hall of the House, now called Statuary Hall, contains part of the collection of 100 statues that honors two citizens from each state who are “illustrious for their historic renown.” Among the great political and military figures, reformers, inventors, and adventurers in the collection are religious leaders representing many faiths.

The Reverend Peter Muhlenberg was a Lutheran pastor who left the pulpit to take up arms for American independence, eventually becoming a general. Pennsylvania voters later elected him to the First Congress. His statue was added to the National Statuary Hall Collection in 1889. A portrait of his brother, the Reverend Frederick Muhlenberg—the first Speaker of the House and himself an ordained Lutheran pastor—hangs in the Speaker’s Lobby outside the House Chamber.



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*Moses*; Jean de Marco, 1950; House Chamber; image courtesy of the Architect of the Capitol

*John Peter Gabriel Muhlenberg*; Blanche Nevin, 1884, given by Pennsylvania in 1889; Crypt; image courtesy of the Architect of the Capitol

*Frederick A.C. Muhlenberg*; Samuel B. Waugh (after Joseph Wright), 1881; Speaker’s Lobby; Collection of the U.S. House of Representatives



One of two paintings in the House Collection by Albert Bierstadt, *Entrance Into Monterey* shows a luminous scene from Monterey, California, just as Spanish settlers first arrive in 1602. In the middle distance, Bierstadt depicts a Catholic Mass in progress under an oak tree, an event that reportedly took place the day after the landing of Spanish explorer Sebastián Vizcaíno. As a leader of the “Sacred Expedition,” Father Junípero Serra founded Spain’s first California missions around the time of the American Revolution. His statue (below) was given to the collection by California in 1931.



Roger Williams immigrated to the New World from England in pursuit of religious freedom. He served as an assistant pastor before he was banished by leaders of the Massachusetts Bay Colony for heresy and sedition. A master of Native American languages, he purchased land from the Narragansett Indians in 1636 that became the colony of Rhode Island. He championed full liberty in religious beliefs, an ideal practiced in the new colony and ultimately enshrined in the Bill of Rights. His statue (below) was given to the collection by the State of Rhode Island in 1872.



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*Entrance Into Monterey*; Albert Bierstadt, 1876; grand stairwell on the East Front of the Capitol; Collection of the U.S. House of Representatives

*Father Junípero Serra*; Ettore Cadorin, 1930, given by California in 1931; Statuary Hall; image courtesy of the Architect of the Capitol

*Roger Williams*; Franklin Simmons, 1870, given by Rhode Island in 1872; Senate Wing, Second Floor; image courtesy of the Architect of the Capitol



A statue of Mother Joseph (above) was added to the collection by Washington state in 1980. A nun of the Sisters of Providence, Mother Joseph led a group of five missionary sisters to the Pacific Northwest Territories in 1856. Her mission was responsible for the completion of 11 hospitals, seven academies, five Indian schools, and two orphanages.



Among the statues displayed in the Capitol Rotunda is a bust of the Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr. (far right), whose religious faith inspired activism that led to historic civil rights legislation. Overhead, the “Frieze of American History” rings the Rotunda with a series of 19 significant historical scenes. One features William Penn with the Delaware Indians at the time of the Treaty of Shackamaxon (above), which forged an amicable relationship between the Quakers and the Indians.



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*Mother Joseph*; Felix W. de Weldon, 1980, given by Washington in 1980; Capitol Visitor Center, Lower Level; image courtesy of the Architect of the Capitol

*William Penn and the Indians, 1682* (left); *Constantino Brumidi*, c. 1880; Frieze of American History (above), Rotunda; image courtesy of the Architect of the Capitol

*Martin Luther King, Jr.*; John Wilson, 1986; Rotunda; image courtesy of the Architect of the Capitol

THE CHAPLAIN PRAYS DAILY FOR  
THE MEMBERS OF THE U.S. HOUSE  
OF REPRESENTATIVES AND FOR  
THE NATION, AND MINISTERS  
TO THE SPIRITUAL NEEDS OF THE  
CONGRESSIONAL COMMUNITY.

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