



**20 Years! Looking Back on How It All Began**

20 years! It is hard to believe that 20 years ago, a young preacher heard a message from 1 Timothy 2:1-4 that changed his entire life.



*Matthew at the Statehouse, 2005-2024*

I will never forget Oct 31st, 2004. This is the day that PSP was born. Our family was attending church while on vacation in South Carolina when God began to open my eyes to His next step for our lives. The pastor preached on praying diligently for each of our leaders, getting to know them personally and learning how to pray for each leader's specific needs. This was a lightbulb moment for me, something I had never considered and didn't know how to begin. I was gripped with a heavy burden for our leaders and went forward to pray and surrender to whatever God was calling me to do.

We came home from vacation but the burden didn't leave. Specific prayer for politicians? I had always loved the political arena. Even as a child, I dreamed of becoming president of the United States and making a difference in the political sphere. However, in December of 1996, God redirected my political plans and called me to make a difference as a minister of the gospel. I thought that was the end of any involvement in the political arena. But eight years after I became a minister, God used that message we heard on vacation to work in our hearts and lead us in a new direction. Following much prayer and counsel, my wife and I knew God was calling us to make a difference by ministering *in* the political arena. I still marvel at the fact that God knit two of my pursuits into one calling. A mere two months later we began the ministry of PSP.

We decided at the outset that we would focus on the most important thing - the gospel - and stay out of politics. After all, we reasoned, what good is it twisting the arm of a leader to vote a certain way, and neglecting to tell them about the life changing gospel of Jesus? This was reinforced to me at the beginning of the ministry when I had the opportunity to lead a legislator to the Lord and then he died soon afterwards. Over the years, we have been reminded time and again that when we show Christ's love to leaders and point their hearts to the gospel, *He* changes everything. We have seen legislators come to know the Lord or deepen their walk with Him, and the Holy Spirit does a work that lobbying can never do. All glory to God!



*First Statehouse Prayer Service, 2005*

## The Beginning

Most of you have probably heard my testimony of how I pulled up to park in front of the elegant and intimidating massive limestone structure of the Statehouse that first day and froze in fear. You'll recall how I phoned my mother and asked, "Why didn't God call my outgoing brother instead of my introverted self to this ministry?" And how she wisely answered, "So that when God does a great work in the Statehouse, you'll know it was *all His doing* and had nothing to do with you, because in your weakness He is strong." I got off the phone with her and complained, "God, that was a really good spiritual answer, but what do I DO? I don't know anyone in there! I have no job description. This was a great idea that You gave us but I don't know where to start!" God didn't answer me audibly, but He did whisper to my heart, "Matthew, get out of the van!"

And so it began. It was no picnic. I remember after our third year lamenting to my wife that I felt I could leave the Statehouse, never walk back in, and no one would notice or care. Those early years were hard. We had virtually no money, we lived an hour and 45 minutes from the Statehouse, and I felt disconnected from the heartbeat of the Capitol. By the grace of God, we kept at it.

For the first nine years I was not authorized to be on the House and Senate floor with the legislators. As the ministry expanded, I was able to teach Bible studies and develop relationships with legislators in the halls, but during the actual sessions I spent a lot of time in the public galleries of the House and Senate. I am thankful for those years because I learned the intricacies of legislative protocol and procedure. I also had the opportunity to meet with and minister to the many lobbyists that sit there. I became well versed in how to pray effectively for the activities on the floor of the House and Senate as well. To be honest, those were lonely and challenging years, but they caused me to rely more fully on the Lord's direction. I remember asking the Lord throughout each day which direction He wanted me to go, where He wanted me to sit, whom He wanted me to talk to. Constantly meeting new people was extremely difficult for an introvert like me! But God used my weakness for His glory and continued to open doors of ministry.



2019 Statehouse Prayer Service

## **Progression and Expansion**

Reflecting back over these 20 years, much has changed. We now have a team who minister faithfully with us. Pam Russell and I are both permitted on the House and Senate floors to minister during session. Our team is kept quite active at the Statehouse going from one point to the next as God expands the ministry exponentially and the needs are great. We have a nationwide prayer website implementing prayer for our approximately 8500 state and U.S. national leaders. We can't begin to rehearse all the incredible opportunities God has provided over the years to minister locally, statewide, nationally, and internationally.

Additionally, we are immensely grateful for the many wonderful friends God has given us over the years, most of whom are now retired. After this next election there will only be 13 state legislators remaining who were there when I arrived in 2005. Not long ago I was invited to become a member of the Association of Retired Members of the Indiana General Assembly - not because I'm retired or even ready to retire, but because I have so many retired legislator friends! I love wearing my ARMIGA lapel pin in the Statehouse, but this can have unintended consequences. Lately someone approached me saying they heard I was retiring. I had to put that rumor to rest with a personalization of the words of Mark Twain, "The reports of my [resignation] are greatly exaggerated." In fact, at year 15 of the ministry, I asked the Lord that if He delays His return, I would love to serve at least 50 years in the political arena. If He decides to answer my prayer in the affirmative, we only have 30 years left! So much to do before then!



*Ruthie & Tim Lindsey, Rita Bowman, Jessica Ray, Anita Luckhaupt, Pam Russell, Vicki Maughmer, Matthew & Miriam Barnes*

## **Prayer Needed!**

- Please pray for the Lindsey family as they continue to mourn the loss of Ruthie and work through adjusting to all that her absence means for their family and church family.
- Pray that our team has the health and strength to keep on the firing line. Specifically, pray for several members of the Barnes family struggling with serious health issues.
- Pray God brings laborers for the harvest that we can train to continue the ministry.
- Pray that, by His grace, we stay encouraged and faithful to the Lord and His Word.

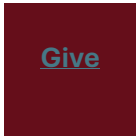
Thank you for your faithfulness in praying for us and supporting the Lord's work in the political arena. May His will be done!

Your Missionaries to the Political Arena,

Matthew Barnes, for the PSP Team



*First and most recent prayer cards*





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