

McCain pastor prays for 'very special blessings' on 'prepared' nominee: Offers final prayer at Republican convention

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The confetti and popping balloons had barely subsided at the end of the Republican National Convention when John McCain's media-shy Southern Baptist pastor delivered a closing prayer bordering on a plea for God's endorsement.

Dan Yearly, pastor of North Phoenix Baptist Church, where McCain attends but is not a member, on September 4 asked God for "very special blessings" on the presidential nominee, including "wisdom and courage," inasmuch as "we feel that he has been prepared for such a time as this."

In giving a few interviews last spring, Yearly avoided making a personal endorsement of McCain. The pastor then told Associated Baptist Press only that McCain "has the potential to be a great president."

A lifelong Episcopalian, McCain attends the SBC church when he is in Phoenix with his family. His wife, Cindy, was baptized and joined the 7,000-member congregation in 1991 when the pastor was Richard Jackson.

Carrying the banner of Southern Baptist moderates opposing the fundamentalist-led takeover of the denomination, Jackson lost in the SBC presidential races in 1987 and 1988. Yearly, who succeeded Jackson at the North Phoenix church in 1993, also identified with moderate Baptists. Yearly told the Century this year that one of the most influential persons in his ministry was seminary professor Ken Chafin, a leading moderate in the losing power struggle against SBC conservatives.

Yearly, in his prayer at the GOP convention, cited 2 Chronicles 7:14, a favorite verse at prayer breakfasts. The pastor also prayed that God would "heal our land" and

protect those in military service “who are protecting us from terrorism,” according to an online story posted by the SBC-run Baptist Press.

Finally, Yearly prayed, “in humility, we ask that you remind us that we cannot put our country first unless you are foremost.”