Good Morning My Friends:

Before I give my speech can I just say how great it is to be here. Thank you to Paul for the invitation. We’ve been friends for many years.

Thank you to BYU, my Alma Mater for hosting us today.

Thank you to all of you for being here. Your time is valuable and I truly appreciate you taking time out of your busy schedule to be here with me.    
  
What is it like to be the Mayor?

BBQ Chips Story 2:00 am

The takeaway I discovered with salty stained BBQ chip fingers is:

I **need your** voice in our community,

I **need your voice in Provo.** I want to be a resource and serve you to the best of my ability as your Mayor.

What a wonderful thing to have these few moments set aside so that we can reflect on the importance of **faith** in this land!

Like probably most of you, I have a conviction that God played a vital role in the establishment of this nation. I also believe he has played a vital role in the establishment of this area we live in.

I have a conviction that **what we do** in our government, both locally and nationally matters.

God wants leaders who are humble before Him, who consider the needs of the people, who recognize that the ultimate sovereigns over this nation are **not presidents or Supreme Court justices.**

**No**, the ultimate sovereigns, besides God Himself, are **ordinary citizens**.

In our system of government, things are set up so that the ordinary, law abiding citizen is ***protected*** from government overreach.

Citizens are free, so long as they live in accordance with the law.

It is elected officials, not citizens, that our **Constitution** focuses on restraining.

And elected officials are merely **temporary servants** of those who have elected them.

If we compare our system to that of a corporation, elected officials are the corporate officers**,**

**but citizens** function as the board of directors in selecting who to hire as company president, monitoring how he or she does, and then replacing them with a new president when they see fit.

Although the president may be more visible than the board of directors, and may appear to be more powerful in day to day functions, **it is the quieter, less visible board of directors who wields power over the president.**

And so, it is with citizens over their presidents and other elected officials.

What an awe-inspiring system!

How great that the ordinary citizen is so empowered in this system.

Heaven smiles when humans are empowered and live free. Heaven has long smiled on the American experiment.

Today is a day to remember the hand of divinity aiding our struggling nation.

That was the case in Philadelphia in 1887.

The constitutional convention looked like it was going to be a total failure.

Everyone was ready to pack up and head home. They couldn’t agree on anything.

Benjamin Franklin saw what was happening, and these are his words:

QUOTE:

“In this situation, groping as it were in the dark to find political truth . . ., how has it happened, that we have not once thought of **humbly** applying to the Father . . . to illuminate our understanding?

In the war with Great Britain, when we were sensible of danger, we had daily prayer in this room for . . . **Divine protection**.

Our prayers were heard, and were answered.

All of us who were engaged in the struggle observed frequent instances of a superintending Providence in our favor,

**Have we now forgotten that powerful Friend?** Do we imagine we no longer need His assistance? The longer I live, the more I see . . . this truth – **that God governs in the affairs of men**.

If a sparrow cannot fall to the ground without His notice, is it probable that a nation can rise without His aid?

I therefore move that from now on, prayers be held in this Assembly every morning.”

Close Quote.

How grateful we all are that Mr. Franklin rose up and said those words that day!

We might not be here if it weren’t for his words—and the prayers and heavenly help that followed.

What about today? Are the words he spoke **obsolete in the here and now?**

No. A thousand times, no!

America has become powerful because American citizens have done as Benjamin Franklin urged: they have recognized that God is a powerful partner in civic affairs, and that forgetting to seek His help is **risky** in the extreme.

The same can be said of individual towns and cities. I have no doubt that God has had an active hand in shaping my hometown, the town that helped raise me and my children, namely **Provo**.

God has been an active partner with the leaders and citizens of this community, in part because its leaders and citizens through the years have asked him to be.

And so, I ask each of you to join me in renewing your efforts to pray for elected officials, **including for me.**

We can’t do half as well without prayer as we can do with it.

We need a partnership, with help from above, to make things work the way heaven wants them to.

Well…………… enough of dear old Ben Franklin for one speech.

Let me turn our focus to another person.

We all have family members or ancestors who in their own **humble way**, serve as an inspiration to us.

Can you think of an aunt or an uncle, maybe a grandparent, who has lifted you and served as a strength to you, more than you have been able to express?

I’d like to tell you about one such person for me.

There’s a bit of America in this story. And there’s **faith**, and there is also **God’s power**, unleashed by the actions of **humble servants**.

Let me start this story in the middle.

A young father opens a letter calling him to abandon his employment and instead dedicate his time and efforts to serving a mission with his wife and family, all with **no compensation**.

To accept the call, the family would need to sell almost everything they had, and basically head out without purse or script, eight children in tow.

Well, this fine father did what many of us have done when we’ve first felt a higher pathway beckon to us.

He ducked, hid and shrank. More particularly, he took that letter in his hands, crumpled it up, and chucked it into a fire.

Now before we judge too harshly, let’s move back towards the beginning of this story.

To understand that “fiery” moment, I think you need to be aware of three things:

(1) four years earlier, this same father had received a mission call asking him to put aside his desire to provide for his family and instead labor for free building chapels and other church buildings. He accepted that call and fulfilled its two-year term.

(2) having finished that mission, he obtained a precious visa to travel from his homeland, Tonga, to the United States.

The plan was to come here and earn enough money to pay for his family to join him.

He and his father in law made it by boat to Samoa, and he was about to depart for Hawaii, when a telegram arrived.

What was the urgent news?

He had been called to serve another mission in Tonga. This was not welcome news but after some discussion he decided to return to Tonga and complete the **second mission**.

I wanted to note that his service as a missionary was not limited to building structures for his own church. Rather he also helped build structures for the dominant religion in the refrain at the time, namely the Methodist Church.

And (3), only a few months before the “fiery-furnace” moment I mentioned earlier—the one where a letter ended up a literal fire while its recipient was enduring a figurative one—his wife’s mother died.

While that was beyond tragic, the practical impact was also staggering.

His wife had younger siblings that now needed a home and so this young family took in four of those and this young father of four became a father of eight young mouths to feed virtually overnight.

Little wonder his knees were feeble at the thought of a third mission.

Well, now is probably a good time to tell you that the hands who so understandably crumpled that mission call were the hands Petelo (or Peter) Kaufusi, my husband’s father.

Steve, my husband was their oldest child. You may not have known that yes, my dear Steve was born in a thatched hut, and lived most of his early life in very humble accommodations on various islands of Tonga while his dad served these 3 missions.

Back to the story. Thankfully Steve’s **angel mother** was there to strengthen her husband and to fetch that letter out of the fire.

After her words of comfort and reassurance, young Petelo chose faith and self-denial for an **incredible 3rd time in a row.**

The family headed to the port town, so that they could sail to the first island they were assigned to.

Their problem?

They didn’t have money for the fare. As they arrived, Mom Kaufusi (her name is Eveline) had an impression to go to the post office.

Acting on the feeling, she stepped into the venue and learned there was an envelope there for her that had been sent from somewhere in the United States.

Surprised, she opened the envelope and saw 50 U.S. dollars, more than enough to get the family to their first assignment. **And so, their third mission began, their partnership with heaven already evident.**

I don’t have time today to recount all the miracles and blessings that have come from this humble young family’s **willingness** to do what they felt God wanted them to do, in trying circumstances.

What I **can** tell you is that Dad Kaufusi’s six years of missionary service culminated with a special spiritual experience.

While I consider the details too sacred to share publicly, I can tell you this. My husband Steve, who at the time was about 8 years old, was significantly impacted.

I would like to share one more legendary family moment not too long after the mission concluded.

Dad Kaufusi had finally made it to Salt Lake and it was time for Mom and the 8 kids to come.

Arrangements were made for her to fly into San Francisco. A relative was sent to be there when they arrived and help them then get to Salt Lake.

Well, one day out of the blue, Mom Kaufusi’s Dad, who was living in the Salt Lake area, had the impression that his daughter and her kids were going to be at the Salt Lake airport any moment now.

He turned to his son Sam and told him they needed to get to the airport to get Eveline and the kids. Sam was incredulous but his father insisted, so they headed to the airport.

The next scene is of Eveline’s father and Sam walking one way down a hallway of the airport and Eveline and the 8 kids walking the other way, seeing each other up ahead and recognizing that heaven had orchestrated the moment.

To me, this story is a powerful reminder that God can be our partner not only in civic affairs but in personal and family ones, as well.

I hope we can all enter into a partnership with him in all aspects of our lives.

Well, as I wrap up, I want to share with you something that my faith helps me with in approaching public office.

That is the idea of being a bridge builder.

Credit goes to Bill Hulterstrom of United Way for helping crystallize this idea for me.

From a book he read, Bill explains that there are two kinds of connections: **bonding connections** and **bridging connections**.

Bonding connections are when like-minded individuals enjoy their commonality.

Think of a convention for Star Wars fans.

Bridging connections, on the other hand, are where one person or group **extends itself** to connect with another person or persons with whom they are **not** naturally aligned.

When I think of bridging connections, I think of an article I recently read: By Steven G. Vegh

**The Virginian-Pilot**

IN THE ENTRYWAY at Norview Presbyterian Church, a wall plaque toasting annual softball teams is frozen at 1991. A few steps away, a guest registry started in 1996 is less than half full.

On an early Sunday morning, the air of ebbing vitality was just as thick in the hushed sanctuary.

Large enough for 400, it held a lonely-looking flock of about 40 mostly elderly members, including Al Taylor, 89.

"There's no youth coming to this church, and that's a death knell," Taylor said. "You can't just keep burying people - you've got to replace them."

*Norview* hasn't. But it did the next best thing by opening the church to *“Faith Christian Center”*, a new congregation of about **100** that needed space for its own worship services.

By 11:15 a.m., the foyer bustled with *Faith Christian members* deployed as greeters.

"Good morning! Is this your first time with us? Welcome!" Stephanie Adams said warmly to a couple with a little boy and a baby. Another greeter escorted the young family into the sanctuary, where two singers belted out praise music before the service began.

The two congregations beg odd-couple comparisons.

*Norview* is a 1940s-vintage, mainline congregation with placid, hymn-singing services.

*Faith Christian* is 2 years old, Pentecostal in theology and exuberant in its hand-waving worship.

There's one other, unmistakable difference. *Norview* is virtually all **white**, while *Faith Christian* is **black.**

But the seeming mismatch may have been made in heaven states Stephanie Adams.

"It's nothing but God," she said of the two churches' unlikely symbiosis. "When things work out that wouldn't or shouldn't work according to your carnal mind, then you know that God is involved."

So how exactly does my Christian faith fit into this idea of bridge building?

I believe in the teachings of Jesus.

And he taught that if we give salutations or greetings only to our brethren we are no better than anyone else.

He asked, don’t the publicans greet their own friends?

To me he seems to be saying that relishing in bonding connections, connections with people we naturally like, is well and fine **but** that I’m asking you to reach beyond that.

I want you to reach out to those who **aren’t your brethren**.

I want you to rise a notch higher than the publicans.

I want you to build bridges with those you aren’t naturally drawn to.

And he exemplified that….didn’t he?

He ate with the publicans, befriended adulterers, touched lepers, and even chose a civil servant as one of his disciples.

For an example of neighborliness, he used a Samaritan, despised by the dominant culture in the area.

Yes, I believe that Christians, including members of my denomination, are called upon to reach out to those who are not our quote unquote **“brethren.”**

We are to endeavor to build bridges to those who are the modern-day equivalents of lepers, and Samaritans as well as to virtually everyone else.

Praise goes to so many in this room who are bridge builders.

Let’s all pledge to keep that concept a little more front and center as we work through the issues of our day.

Let me end with what I might call a

**Prayer for Provo.**

I pray that we will continue to prosper.

But that we’ll continue to be humble and helpful.

I pray that we will be kept safe.

I pray that we will be neighborly.

That we will build bridges one to another.

That we will build bridges to those beyond our geographic boundaries, as well.

Although my office is focused on Provo itself, my prayer is also that these concepts will be talked of more throughout this valley and perhaps beyond.

I pray that we will long remain one of the best places to live and to raise a family.

I pray that no one will feel excluded here.

I pray that in this region, the pioneering spirit will be alive and well, including a spirit of making

“do with what we have”,

a spirit of innovation,

and a spirit and willingness to sacrifice, so that the Provo of tomorrow—**of 20 or 40 years from now—**will be better off because of what we do today.

If you’ll forgive me one footnote, I want to watch this video with you and say just a few sentences after that. The video is less than two minutes long.

Video - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pSmF2-nH4EI>

Isn't that sobering? As religion is on the decline in so many Americans' lives,

I hope that today has served as a reminder that we need the **power of prayer** in both our **public** and our **private lives**,

that we need to be in a **partnership with heaven** in those things we do on earth,

that humble service has impacts we can never fully measure,

and that as our partner, God will at times help us in ways that make it clear

**He is powerfully active in earthly affairs.**

Thank you for this opportunity, and I pray God's blessings on us all.