

Living Faith on Capitol Hill

by Marie Dalby '08 M.A.R.

THE OUTSPOKEN LATE YALE CHAPLAIN William Sloane Coffin Jr. '49 B.A., '56 B.D., famously wrote, "Good patriots carry on a lover's quarrel with their country, a reflection of God's lover's quarrel with all the world." This call to work passionately for—and challenge when necessary—one's country has been heeded by U.S. Congressman David Price (D-NC) '64 B.D., '69 Ph.D., the recipient of the 2006 William Sloane Coffin Award for Peace and Justice. In accepting the award at October's Alumni Awards Banquet, Price recalled these words, saying, "That is the kind of patriot Bill Coffin was, and I could wish for nothing more important as an elected representative than to bring that perspective to public service."

Price, who lives in Chapel Hill, NC, and represents North Carolina's Fourth Congressional District, entered YDS after earning a B.A. from the University of North Carolina in 1961. "I had just come from an undergraduate experience in Chapel Hill shaped as much by sit-ins and the picketing of theaters as it was by what went on in the classroom," Price said. "Yale became the place where I sorted things out—discovering the Hebrew prophets, who had pretty effectively been removed from the canon of many southern Protestant churches; relating my inherited faith to the world around me; rethinking my social and political worldview."

Price's worldview consists not only of a commitment to education and national security in the United States, but also a call to support emerging democracies elsewhere in the world. The congressman has a leadership role on the House Democracy Assistance Commission that supports parliaments in shaky democracies like Afghanistan, Lebanon, and Kenya. "Our country's moral authority has been squandered," Price said in an interview after receiving the award. "The country needs a new beginning in our diplomacy around the world but much will depend on the president we elect next, either Democrat or Republican."

Advocating justice is a key part of what the Coffin award seeks to recognize. "We are cajoled and extolled every day to be 'uncritical lovers,' to simply 'stay the course,'" Price said in accepting the award. "But we must reignite that 'lover's quarrel,' relying on faith, hope, and love as we pursue the unfinished work of social justice at home and the restoration of America's moral leadership in the world."



U.S. Congressman David Price (D-NC) '64 B.D., '69 Ph.D., with Representative Rosa DeLauro (D-CT) at the 2006 Alumni Awards Banquet

As it did for Coffin, faith informs Price's work. In the House, Price is co-chair of the Faith Working Group of the Democratic Caucus, where he helps coach some Democratic lawmakers on how to get over their awkwardness in speaking on religion and faith. Committed to explaining how to avoid seeing discussions of faith as opportunistic, Price explained, "We need to think about how we can do this authentically, in a way to connect with people."

Price dedicated a chapter of his book, *The Congressional Experience, Transforming American Politics*, to religion and politics. He wrote, "When we stand up for toleration and religious freedom, we're not suggesting that somehow our religious convictions are weak or indecisive. On the contrary, we're standing up for the strength of those convictions and defending our right to express them."

Other 2006 Award Recipients

Distinction in Theological Education
Preston Noah Williams '54 S.T.M.

Distinction in Congregational Ministry
Thomas S. Neilsen '76 M.Div.

Lux et Veritas
Hallam C. Shorrock Jr. '52 M.Div.