

## Five faith moments at the Paris Olympics

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Gold medalist Sydney McLaughlin-Levrone, of the United States, crosses the finish line ahead of silver medalist Anna Cockrell, of the United States, center, and bronze medalist Femke Bol, of the Netherlands, right, in the women's' 400 meters hurdles final at the 2024 Summer Olympics on August 8, in Saint-Denis, France. (AP Photo/Ashley Landis)

Athletes have long attributed faith to their success on the field. Paris was no exception, with moments of faith interwoven throughout the Paris Olympics from start to finish line.

Here are five moments from the 2024 Olympics where religion took center stage:

### **Team Fiji began each day with worship hymns in the Olympic Village**

On July 21, Team Fiji posted a [video](#) of the team singing a hymn during a Sunday

service they hosted at their lodgings. The Oceanic country is [predominantly Protestant Christian](#), with many Methodists. After winning the gold in Tokyo, the men's rugby sevens team [sang](#) the hymn "E Da Sa Qaqa," with lyrics that translate to "by the blood of the Lamb, in the Word of the Lord, we have overcome."

The worship went [viral on Instagram](#) thanks to Australian water polo player Matilda Kearns, who has over 137,000 followers on the social media site and whose room in the Olympic Village was near the building hosting teams from the Oceania countries.

The harmonious hymns were reportedly welcome. "They tend to start around 6:30 a.m.," an Australia team staffer told [Reuters](#). "No one's bothered by it . . . It just sounds beautiful."

### **Dutch runner wore a hijab to accept her gold medal**

Sifan Hassan chose to [wear her hijab](#) while accepting the marathon gold medal in a country that does not allow its own athletes to wear the headscarf. The 31-year-old Ethiopian-born Dutch middle- and long-distance runner came to the Netherlands as a 15-year-old asylum seeker. The Dutch athlete earned her country three medals during this year's games.

One of her favorite mottos, according to [Al Jazeera](#), is from the Quran: "with hardship will be ease."

Sports journalist Shireen Ahmed, who focuses on Muslim women in sports, posted on [X](#) that it doesn't matter that Hassan does not wear a hijab all the time off the field.

"The point is that she does when she wants to," Ahmed wrote. "She's a legend and a Muslim woman and if you don't like that legacy, too bad. ALL WOMEN SHOULD BE ABLE TO WEAR WHAT THEY WANT IN SPORT."

### **Underdog US steeplechaser draws inspiration from his fellow Latter-day Saint Olympians**

When United States runner Kenneth Rooks won the silver medal in the men's 3,000-meter steeplechase final, he reflected on Alma 26 from The Book of Mormon. "I was thinking about being an instrument in the hands of God, and how being here at the Olympics is an opportunity for me to do that," he told [The Church News](#).

Rooks served a full-time mission for the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in Uganda and Orem, Utah. The former Brigham Young University track star said he

also found inspiration for his final race from spiritual messages shared by his fellow Mormon Olympians at a [devotional](#) streamed from Paris on August 4.

### **Gold medalist sang a gospel song after winning shot put for Germany**

Shortly after winning Germany's first Olympic gold in women's shot put in 28 years, Yemisi Magdalena Ogunleye broke out into gospel music at a [press conference](#). The 25-year-old shot putter sang a popular Kurt Carr song, "[I Almost Let Go](#)."

With her background as a gospel singer, Ogunleye shared that after her impressive 20 meters throw, she returned to her stadium seat singing "I'm alive today because of His grace." The song's lyrics recall a time where the songwriter was ready to give up but eventually overcame his struggles thanks to God's grace.

While born in Germany, Ogunleye is of both German and Nigerian descent, with a German mother and Yoruba Nigerian father. After winning gold, [a clip](#) of Ogunleye singing a Yoruba gospel song went viral on social media. She thanked her communities in both Nigeria and her hometown in Bellheim, Germany, for their support, as well as her religious community: ". . . the support from my church . . . I'm just so overwhelmed, they supported me and believed in me, and we are definitely going to rejoice."

### **Track star Sydney McLaughlin-Levrone frequently credited her Christian faith for her success**

Immediately after Sydney McLaughlin-Levrone became the first woman ever to become a two-time Olympic champion in the women's 400-meter hurdles, [she praised God](#) for her record win. "Honestly, praise God. Was not expecting that, but he can do anything, anything is possible in Christ," she said.

The US evangelical track star won the gold medal in Paris with a time of 50.37 seconds. The [Associated Press](#) reported that she prays before every race with her coach, trainer, and husband. The couple attends Grace Community Church, a conservative non-denominational megachurch in Los Angeles under senior pastor John MacArthur.

"I credit all that I do to God. He's given me a gift. He's given me a drive to just want to continue to improve myself," she said at a [press conference](#). "I have a platform and I want to use it to glorify Him, and so whenever I step on the track, it's always the prayer of 'God let me be the vessel in which you're glorified' whatever the result is, how I conduct myself, how I carry myself, not just how I perform." —Religion

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