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Prayer Day proves God delivers; *No Tums needed*



Pausing for a moment after the event are (from left) Eighth Judicial Circuit Court Judge James Colaw, Levy County Supervisor of Elections Tammy Jones, Georgia Browning and Levy County Court Judge J.T. 'Tim' Browning, who was the keynote speaker that day. Judge Colaw was the keynote speaker last year.

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WILLISTON -- Mayor R. Gerald Hethcoat shortly before the start of the National Day of Prayer ceremonies in Williston on Thursday afternoon (May 5) confided that he was a bit concerned about the success of the event as one pastor had cancelled and at that moment he did not see the keynote speaker, Levy County Court Judge J.T. 'Tim' Browning.



"Keep the faith," he was advised by a fellow Christian.

And sure enough, lo and behold, the Pavilion at Williston Linear Park (also known as Heritage Park) was filled to capacity with an audience and the stage was taken by at least a dozen preachers of the Gospel.

Williston Mayor R. Gerald Hethcoat welcomes everyone and asks people to take more chairs from the storage area of the pavilion so that everyone can have a place to sit.

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The hour and a half program reflects that God delivers, and neither the Honorable Mayor Hethcoat nor the Honorable Judge Browning had to use Tums.

As the mayor opened the program, he mentioned to listeners that he was “about to have heart failure” and was a “pretty nervous” as he looked out at a relatively empty pavilion about 15 minutes before noon.

“My acid reflux was in overdrive,” the mayor said, as he thanked the many people who showed up for the event.

Once he noticed Judge Browning and Eighth Judicial Circuit Court Judge James Matthew Colaw had arrived, and he started greeting the many visiting pastors, Hethcoat felt comfortable. During his speech, Judge Browning mentioned that it was 11:20 a.m. when he was in court and so he was having a bit of indigestion due to time constraints, just like the mayor.

The Honorable Judge Colaw had been the speaker at this event last year in Williston.

The faithful again appeared at the scheduled National Day of Prayer event at the Linear Park Pavilion in Williston at noon. The first part of the pavilion was built with assistance from the Florida Department of Environmental Protection through the Florida Recreational Development Assistance Program.



The bells for whom all tolled at noon were installed, as were several other improvements, thanks to the taxpayers of Williston and the leadership of volunteers and staff of the Community Redevelopment Agency.

Jack Screws Jr. prepares to sing *The Lord's Prayer* near the start of the event. He also led the singing of *God Bless America* at the conclusion.

With all as it was meant to be that afternoon, Mayor Hethcoat served as emcee, when the event started a tad after noon so that the bells could ring a tune after the twelfth strike of the bells.

The Rev. Timothy C. Hass, senior pastor of Cornerstone Assembly of God of Williston, gave the opening prayer.

Williston City Council Vice President Nancy

Winger led the group in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Jack Screws Jr., a former City Council member, sang *The Lord's Prayer*.

Judge Colaw then read the prayer by Dr. Tony Evans, the honorary chairman of the National Day of Prayer organization.

Williston Deputy Chief of Police Clay Connolly read the proclamation by Gov. Rick Scott in regard to the National Day of Prayer. The governor extended his greetings and best wishes to all who celebrated the National Day of Prayer in Florida.

Before Judge Browning gave his speech, he let the audience know that the prayers after the keynote address are “where the blessing comes.”

He mentioned that some Americans may take their freedom to profess their faith in God without repercussions from the government. People in places such as North Korea, he said, are not so blessed. They worship God at peril of imprisonment and even execution in some nations.

The judge said he sees on TV that some people are expressing an opinion that the nation is divided – between rich and poor, by political parties, by race, by gender, and in other ways.

“We are one nation, under God, indivisible,” Browning said. “We may all be different, but

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what binds us together overwhelms whatever our differences are. We are bound by God, together as a family. We are brothers and sisters together.”

Being allowed to gather in public and worship God, Browning said, results because the United States of America is a nation of laws. The country’s forefathers in writing *The First Amendment* to the *United States Constitution* formed the foundation for these freedoms, he said.

The founding fathers went to sea in rickety boats, Browning said, not for fame and fortune. They put to sea for faith, he said. The judge asked people who would leave the country if they were told they could not worship.

He noted *The First Amendment* states “Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances.”

Judge Browning pointed out that the Founding Fathers are addressing themselves as they write this. “Congress shall make no law...”

The judge spoke about how some people when they become the person in authority, that they are “insufferable.” Instead, these leaders imposed this restriction upon themselves, as a result of what they had endured under the monarchy more than 200 years ago. They did not want people in the future to take liberty they had fought to establish.



There was therefore, he continued, a government created in which people could worship as they choose – with no restrictions imposed by the government leaders upon the people.

Those words are only words, he said, until the people resolve to do what is required to bring them into effect. Then he asked for a show of hands from people who served in the military or who had families who served or who were serving.

And with that, Browning concluded that the freedom people in America enjoy come from two things. The laws that are the foundation for freedom, and the freedom that is protected by men and women in the Armed Forces who are willing to fight to the death to defend that freedom.

Eighth Judicial Circuit Court Judge James Colaw

Many of those soldiers now, he said, are far from their families as they continue to fight to protect the legacy of freedom in the United States.

From 1775 to 2008, Browning said, more than 41 million American soldiers have fought for freedom. More than 1.1 million of them have died for American freedom, he said. Another 1.4 million were wounded in the line of duty, he added.

Those aren’t just numbers, he said. They are fathers, mothers, sons and daughters.

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Deputy Police Chief Clay Connolly reads the proclamation made by Gov. Rick Scott.

“They didn’t ask to die on Iwo Jima from a volley of gunfire from Japanese soldiers,” he said. “They did brutally, and they died for us. We’ve got to remember their commitment. We’ve got to remember their families when we see them.”

And there is an average of 22 past and present soldiers a day, he continued, who commit suicide each day from the things they saw and suffered. Keep them and their families in your prayers, he said to the audience.

He shared some verses from the Bible. Following are a few of those, using the King James Version.

“Therefore I say unto you, What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them.”

-- Mark 11:24

Then shall ye call upon me, and ye shall go and pray unto me, and I will hearken unto you.

-- Jeremiah 29:12

Rejoicing in hope; patient in tribulation; continuing instant in prayer

Judge Tim Browning calls for a show of raised hands from people who served in the military, or whose family members served or are serving in the military.

-- Romans 12:12

Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God.

And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

-- Philippians 4:6-7

Rejoice evermore.

Pray without ceasing.

In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you.

-- 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18

And the judge shared other verses. He added that he has seen the annual event grow over time. Browning would like to see a time when the pavilion would not be big enough to hold the number of people coming to celebrate the National Day of Prayer.

Judge Browning ended his presentation by saying “May we always be one nation under God.”

Mayor Hethcoat thanked Judge Browning.



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Pastor Johnnie Wallace

Pastor Johnnie Wallace of the Inspirational Church of Jesus Outreach Ministry opened the series of prayers for National Prayer Day. Each pastor was called upon to pray for various aspects of America.



Pastor Johnnie Jones III

Pastor Johnnie Jones III of Fountain of Life Church prayed for the President, the Vice President, the Secretary of State, for the United States Attorney General and for the entire Cabinet.

Pastor Jones prayed for their wisdom, judgment and guidance from God for everything they do. Like all the prayer warriors, Pastor Jones went a little off script and he asked God for mercy and guidance on all of the people who came to this event on that day.



Pastor Charles Williams

“Father God, we ask that You bless these people in this gathering, who have come faithfully,” Pastor Jones prayed, “O’ God to ask You for Your mercy and guidance. Bless us, and cover us, and keep us in Your care.

“Lord, we want to be a nation of love, a nation of unity. We want to represent those things that Your Word has taught us.”

Pastor Charles Williams of New Hope Baptist Church prayed for the members of the United States military. During his prayer, Pastor Charles Williams mentioned that he had served 20 years in the military, including three years in Vietnam.

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He said the 55,000 American soldiers who died in Vietnam outnumber the casualty count of World War I, WWII and the Korean Conflict combined.

This pastor asked God to protect soldiers from the fiery darts of Satan. He prayed for a smooth transition as the soldiers go and come from combat zones. He prayed for the mercy of God.

Pastor Reggie Williams

Pastor Reggie Williams prayed for members of the United States Senate and House of Representatives to get along with one another.

Pastor Wes Smith of Williston Church of God prayed for the governor and state leaders.

Pastor Jeff Buchanan of First Baptist Church of Bronson prayed for unity among the churches, and for the leaders of Levy County. He said only 10 percent of the population of Levy County believes in Jesus Christ as their Savior.

Pastor Eric Brooks prayed for first responders. He asked that as people hear sirens, they consider if they themselves are “first responders,” praying for the safety of the people going to the emergency and for the people who have called for help.

Pastor Callie Peterson of Restoration of Faith Outreach Ministries prayed for education. She prayed for the youth, asking God to deliver them from temptations of the world. She prayed for teachers to have the knowledge and strength to teach children properly. She prayed for children who are incarcerated, so that they know the law and live within the law.

Pastor Will Clark of First United Methodist Church of Williston prayed for the churches. As Pastor Clark spoke, he reminded the listeners that the church is more than the structures. It is the people who are the church. The church is outside the building, he added.

He prayed for leaders in the churches to work for unity in the body of Christ. He prayed for them to use words that inspire and motivate, rather than to break down and separate people from one another.

Pastor Clark prayed for the church to share the Love of Christ, “not the judgement and intimation of Christ.”

Rev. Timothy C. Hass, senior pastor of Cornerstone Assembly of God of Williston, who gave the opening prayer, also prayed that families in need could be found and helped.

Pastor Steve Miller of Destiny Church of God prayed for the city government of Williston.

Jack Screws Jr. called people to have a moment of silence after the prayers -- to be still and listen to God. After that he led the group in singing *God Bless America*.

There were many people at the event.

The Rev. Charlz Caulwell, Williston Police Department chaplain, was among pastors who were in the audience.

Among the elected officials in the audience were County Commissioner Lilly Rooks and Supervisor of Election Tammy Jones. Among the candidates for office was Berlon Weeks, a candidate for Levy County Commission.



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Pastor Wes Smith

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Pastor Jeff Buchanan



Pastor Eric Brooks



Pastor Callie Peterson



Pastor Will Clark

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Pastor Tim Hass

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Pastor Steve Miller