

PRESS RELEASE

Russell Moore addresses religious leaders in interview on COVID-19 challenges to churches, religious liberty questions

ERLC provides robust set of resources to counsel churches & families during pandemic

BY ELIZABETH BRISTOW

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NASHVILLE, Tenn., April 16, 2020—Russell Moore, president of the Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention, outlined the variety of ways the ERLC is equipping churches and families to “live a life honoring to Christ” during the coronavirus pandemic as a part of a [Facebook Live interview](#)

https://www.facebook.com/BaptistPress/videos/224023888809486/?notif_id=1586973617488018¬if_t=live_video_explicit) April 15 with Baptist Press.

Moore and interviewer Jonathan Howe, vice-president of the SBC's Executive Committee, discussed the CARES Act, religious liberty, drive-in services, hospital chaplaincy, immigration policy, the future of church ministry and more. Below are key statements from Moore during the interview.

CARES Act and SBA Paycheck Protection Program

When asked if SBA-backed loans violate the separation of church and state, Moore said:

“What is happening here is a guaranteeing and backing up of a loan that the government has an interest in because they want to keep the flow of lending going and keep the economy afloat...I don't think there's a religious liberty or union of church and state problem here.

“A church that's taking out this loan is no more taking a benefit than a church who calls the fire department when the church is on fire.”

Religious liberty and drive-in services

In the interview, Moore addressed religious liberty concerns stemming from Louisville Mayor Greg Fischer's order to report church attendees to local health departments on Easter weekend, calling the mayor's threats, "inconsistent and incoherent saber rattling."

“When it comes to these drive-in churches, if you have churches doing this and they’re meeting all of the guidelines for social distancing...you can’t penalize people with tickets in that way if you’re not going to do that at the Sonic,” Moore said.

Hospital chaplaincy

When asked about churches and other ministries being considered “essential” to communities, Moore said the following about hospital chaplaincy:

“We understand the essential nature of our heroic doctors, nurses, hospital custodians and others. The same thing has to be true of hospital chaplains in terms of meeting spiritual needs of people who in many cases are dying, not only in terms of making accommodation but also in ensuring the protection of those people who are going into harm's way as they’re ministering to people.”

Future legislative actions and the nonprofit sector

When asked about another phase of an economic package, Moore said the following about charitable giving:

“One of the things we’ve been working on is to make sure any act going forward does not penalize charitable giving. There’s always a push to cap deductibility of charitable giving and disincentivize charitable giving. If this pandemic has shown us anything, it’s shown us that the government can’t do all of this. The government needs the nonprofit sector and the generosity of the American people working in ways that aren’t necessarily governmental.”

Other recent [COVID-19 resources \(https://erlc.com/resource-library/series-index/covid-19\)](https://erlc.com/resource-library/series-index/covid-19) from the ERLC include:

- [“A Q&A for churches on government restrictions with a religious liberty attorney \(https://erlc.com/resource-library/articles/a-q-and-a-for-churches-on-government-restrictions-with-a-religious-liberty-attorney\),”](https://erlc.com/resource-library/articles/a-q-and-a-for-churches-on-government-restrictions-with-a-religious-liberty-attorney) by Jeff Pickering
- [“When will our church buildings reopen? \(https://erlc.com/resource-library/articles/when-will-our-church-buildings-reopen\)”](https://erlc.com/resource-library/articles/when-will-our-church-buildings-reopen) by Joe Carter
- [“Explainer: Department of Justice Statement of Interest regarding religious freedom case in Mississippi \(https://erlc.com/resource-library/articles/explainer-department-of-justice-statement-of-interest-regarding-religious-freedom-case-in-mississippi\),”](https://erlc.com/resource-library/articles/explainer-department-of-justice-statement-of-interest-regarding-religious-freedom-case-in-mississippi) by Travis Wussow and Josh Wester

Moore’s Facebook Live interview can be accessed [here](#)

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