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SBC DIGEST: BP to interview Russell Moore; Moore, others support release of detained immigrants; Prayer hotline for NYC residents

by Staff, posted Tuesday, April 14, 2020 (13 days ago)

Baptist Press to interview Russell Moore on Facebook Live

By Staff

NASHVILLE (BP) -- Russell Moore, president of the Southern Baptist Convention's Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission, is scheduled to participate in a Facebook Live interview April 15 with Baptist Press, the daily news service of the SBC, to discuss the most pressing issues for America's faith communities.

Moore will be interviewed by Jonathan Howe, vice-president for communications for the SBC Executive Committee, Wednesday from 1-1:30 p.m. CT to help Southern Baptist leaders and pastors navigate issues related to COVID-19, religious liberty and the federal stimulus.

ERLC's Moore supports release of detained immigrants amid COVID-19 pandemic

By Staff

NASHVILLE (BP) -- Russell Moore, president of the Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission, signed an open letter from the Evangelical Immigration Table (EIT) to Chad F. Wolf, acting secretary for the Department of Homeland Security, calling on the agency "to utilize alternatives to detention for individuals who do not pose a threat to public safety."

These "alternatives to detention" most frequently consist of electronic monitoring, specifically ankle monitors. According to the National Immigration Forum, these monitors are "less restrictive and more humane than immigration detention" and "ensure that individuals waiting for immigration court proceedings are subject to supervision by immigration authorities."

The reasoning cited in the letter for calling for the release of detainees stems from the impact of the COVID-19 global pandemic. The letter notes that detainees confined "within a constrained space, are effectively unable to practice the 'social distancing' advised by the Center for Disease Control and Prevention."

The letter explains that "expanding the use of alternatives to detention would provide those individuals who must remain in detention with more space, limiting the public health threat to them and to staff who work in these facilities, while allowing those who can be safely released to reside with family members, friends or hosts from local churches."

Joining Moore as cosigners of the letter were:

- Scott Arbeiter, president, World Relief
- Doug Clay, general superintendent, Assemblies of God USA
- Shirley V. Hoogstra, president, Council for Christian Colleges and Universities
- Hyepin Im, president & CEO, Faith and Community Empowerment
- Walter Kim, president, National Association of Evangelicals
- Jo Anne Lyon, ambassador, General Superintendent Emerita, The Wesleyan Church
- Chris Palusky, president & CEO, Bethany Christian Services
- Samuel Rodriguez, president, National Hispanic Christian Leadership Conference



SBDR creates prayer hotline for NYC residents

By Barbara Denman

NEW YORK, N.Y. (BP) -- A spiritual care hotline offering prayer and comfort to New York City area residents living in the epicenter of the nation's COVID-19 pandemic went online Saturday, April 4, 2020.

"We are dealing with an unseen enemy," said Mike Flannery, disaster relief director of the Baptist Convention of New York. "Fear is permeating New York City and the surrounding areas. You can't walk a block without seeing the fear on faces."

"A lot of people don't know the hope in Jesus Christ, so they have no one to turn to in this time of stress and pressure," Flannery added. "The line is set to give pastoral encouragement and prayer, while showing the love of God."

The spiritual care hotline number is 888-877-NYPRAYS; or 877-697-7297.

Under the auspices of Southern Baptist Disaster Relief (SBDR) and the North American Mission Board, the toll-free hotline is staffed daily from 9 a.m.- 9 p.m. ET by trained, SBDR volunteer chaplains from across the nation.

While chaplains are not mental health professionals, they have received mental health and crisis training.

The hotline is similar to one established in Florida in March. Other state conventions sponsoring prayer lines include California, Texas, Virginia, Arizona and Illinois.

The suggestion to establish a prayer line in New York City was made by Delton Beall, Florida Baptist disaster relief director, as he watched news accounts of the coronavirus and its devastating impact on the city.

"I had such a burden for the people and their suffering," said Beall. "I felt led to reach out to them to offer prayer and comfort."

Flannery said New York City's Southern Baptist churches are distributing food and medicine to their communities, showing the love of Christ in tangible ways.

To implement the hotline, Flannery presented the idea to the state's coalition of Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster (VOAD), which overwhelmingly approved the idea.

Barbara Denman writes for the Florida Baptist Convention.