

# FREEDOM FROM RELIGION *foundation*

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April 30, 2021

**SENT VIA EMAIL ONLY: [crobinson@bunnellcity.us](mailto:crobinson@bunnellcity.us)**

The Honorable Catherine Robinson  
Mayor, City of Bunnell  
201 W. Moody Blvd.  
P.O. Box 756  
Bunnell, FL 32110

Re: Unconstitutional Sponsorship of National Day of Prayer Event

Dear Mayor Robinson:

I am writing on behalf of the Freedom From Religion Foundation (FFRF) to once again urge you to cease using Bunnell resources to organize and promote National Day of Prayer events. We wrote to you regarding this matter last year and you informed us that you would take our comments under advisement.

It was reported to us that the City of Bunnell is once again hosting a National Day of Prayer event. Please see the enclosed screenshot, which shows a National Day of Prayer event hosted by the official City of Bunnell Facebook page. It urges citizens to “Come celebrate the National Day of Prayer with the City of Bunnell, Pastors and Reverends from throughout the community.” This is an explicit recognition that this is a Christian event.

As you know, the National Day of Prayer is a sectarian event. It originated with the Reverend Billy Graham during his evangelical crusade in Washington, D.C. in 1952. He expressed an openly Christian purpose, seeking an annual prayer proclamation by the President because he wanted “the Lord Jesus Christ” to be recognized across the land. Subsequently, the National Day of Prayer Task Force was created to “communicate with every individual the need for personal repentance and prayer, mobilizing the Christian community to intercede for America and its leadership.” The task force issues annual National Day of Prayer proclamations and submits them to the President, choosing a theme with supporting scripture from the bible. This year’s theme is “Lord Pour Out Your Love, Life, and Liberty” based upon the New Testament verse 2 Corinthians 3:17.

In its announcement of the theme for 2021, the task force reveals that its idea of “love, life, and liberty” amounts to religious assimilation through proselytization. It writes<sup>1</sup>:

Everyone needs to know that they were created by God and that He loved them so much He put His image in them and authored their value and purpose that no person can take away from them. As followers of Jesus we must come together in obedient unity and love that spreads God’s glory across the earth. We must share this message of love and life, so that our neighbors, co-workers, classmates – so that all the world would come to repentance, that NONE may perish and know the LIBERTY, the freedom from the stain and shame of sin. Everyone can have freedom ring in their hearts, liberty that pronounces you, “NOT GUILTY” from the One true Judge. God alone knows your heart, knows everything about you;

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<sup>1</sup> [https://www.nationaldayofprayer.org/introducing\\_the\\_national\\_day\\_of\\_prayer\\_2021\\_theme](https://www.nationaldayofprayer.org/introducing_the_national_day_of_prayer_2021_theme).

everything you have thought, done and had done against you. God alone is our judge and in Christ alone, we experience authentic, eternal LIBERTY.

The task force has a Statement of Faith that is exclusive to Christians, including that “The Holy Bible is the inspired, only, infallible, authoritative Word of The Living God” and a belief in “the spiritual unity of believers in our Lord Jesus Christ.”<sup>2</sup>

We, once again, ask that the City of Bunnell drop its support for this divisive, evangelistic vision for America and cease holding National Day of Prayer events.

The City’s organization and endorsement of a National Day of Prayer event poses constitutional concerns. The Establishment Clause of the First Amendment prohibits the government from organizing or endorsing a religious event. As the Supreme Court has put it, the Establishment Clause “mandates government neutrality between religion and religion, and between religion and nonreligion.” *McCreary Cty., Ky. v. Am. Civil Liberties Union of Ky.*, 545 U.S. 844, 860 (2005); *Wallace v. Jaffree*, 472 U.S. 38, 53 (1985); *Epperson v. Ark.*, 393 U.S. 97, 104 (1968); *Everson v. Bd. of Educ. of Ewing*, 330 U.S. 1, 15-16 (1947).

In 2002, a federal court enjoined a city and mayor from organizing, advertising, promoting or endorsing a prayer breakfast. *Newman v. City of East Point*, 181 F. Supp. 2d 1374 (N.D. Ga. 2002). In that case, the court restricted the use of city funds, employees, resources and supplies in facilitating the Mayor’s Prayer Breakfast. *See id.* As a result of the city’s activities (making and sending invitations, issuing press releases, advertising the event, etc.), the court stated, “an objective observer would most certainly conclude that the City of East Point has endorsed religion, specifically Christianity, by its actions.” *Id.* at 1381.

With each year that the City continues to host and promote National Day of Prayer events it provides further evidence of the City’s intention to endorse Christianity and prefer Christians over nonreligious citizens and those who practice minority religions. As you know, the National Day of Prayer is explicitly designed to exclude the 24% of Americans who are nonreligious and, more broadly, the 30% of Americans who are non-Christian.<sup>3</sup>

The City must cancel this event and refrain from further organization and promotion of religious events. Please inform us in writing of the steps taken to respect the right of conscience of all Bunnell residents and to send a message that is inclusive of the minority religious and nonreligious among you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Chris Line", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Christopher Line  
Staff Attorney  
Freedom From Religion Foundation

Enclosure

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<sup>2</sup> *Statement of Faith*, NATIONAL DAY OF PRAYER TASK FORCE (last visited Apr. 16, 2021), [www.nationaldayofprayer.org/statement\\_of\\_faith](http://www.nationaldayofprayer.org/statement_of_faith).

<sup>3</sup> Robert P. Jones & Daniel Cox, *America’s Changing Religious Identity*, PUBLIC RELIGION RESEARCH INSTITUTE (Sept. 6, 2017), available at [www.ppri.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/PRRI-Religion-Report.pdf](http://www.ppri.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/PRRI-Religion-Report.pdf).

THURSDAY, MAY 6, 2021 AT 11 AM CDT

# National Day of Prayer

Free · Carver Gymnasium

About

Discussion

☆ Interested

✓ Going

✉ Invite



## Details

6 people responded

Event by City of Bunnell

Carver Gymnasium

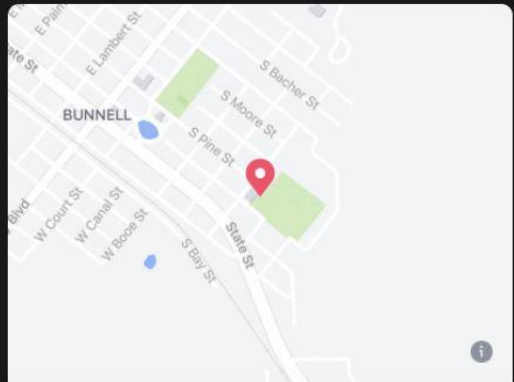
Thursday, May 6, 2021 at 11 AM CDT  
64–88°F Thunderstorms

Price: Free

Public · Anyone on or off Facebook

Come celebrate the National Day of Prayer with the City of Bunnell, Pastors and Reverends from throughout the community.

Religion



**Carver Gymnasium**

29.463340, -81.252140