

Virginia Governor Announces Day of Mourning and Prayer

The governor asked the entire country to hold prayer services in their states at noon for the victims of Monday's Virginia Tech shootings.



Friday, the eighth anniversary of the Columbine High School tragedy, Virginia Gov. Timothy M. Kaine declared a statewide day of mourning for the victims and families of the Virginia Tech shootings. At noon a interfaith prayer service was held on the campus of Virginia Commonwealth University in Richmond. "I ask that everyone in Virginia pause at noon on Friday to offer prayers of support for the victims, their families, and for all those affected by this tragedy," Kaine said. The governor also asked the entire country to hold services in their states at noon and to memorialize the victims by ringing bells simultaneously at noon. On April 17 President George W. Bush encouraged the Virginia Tech community by telling them that many are praying for them. "All across America, houses of worship from every faith have opened their doors and have lifted you up in prayer," the president said. "People who have never met you are praying for you; they're praying for your friends who have fallen and who are injured. There's a power in these prayers, real power. In times like this, we can find comfort in the grace and guidance of a loving God. As the Scriptures tell us, 'Don't be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.'"

Evangelical Appointed to U.S.

Commission On Int'l Religious Freedom

Don Argue, a former president of the National Association of Evangelicals, will serve the Commission for two years.



Don Argue, president of Northwest University in Kirkland, Wash., and a former president of the National Association of Evangelicals, has been appointed to serve on the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom. Created by the International Religious Freedom Act of 1998, the commission is an independent, bipartisan government agency that monitors international religious freedom and gives policy recommendations to the president, Secretary of State and Congress. "Dr. Argue is a leading expert in religious freedom. His dedication to the right of worship and opposition to intolerance and persecution are inspiring," said Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid, D-Nev., who with Sen. Hillary Rodham Clinton, D-N.Y., announced Argue's appointment Tuesday. "He will bring a valuable perspective to the Commission's work." Considered an authority on international religious freedom and human rights, Argue previously was appointed by President Clinton and Secretary of State Madeline Albright to the President's Advisory Committee on Religious Freedom. President Clinton also invited Argue to serve as part of the first official delegation of U.S. religious leaders to visit China and challenge its leaders about religious freedom and religious persecution. "Don will bring a critically needed voice to the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom," Sen. Clinton said. "His expertise is surpassed only by his dedication to achieving the goal of religious freedom for people around the world. I'm proud to recommend such a respected and valued leader and proud to call him a friend. He will be an invaluable member of the Commission." Argue will serve a two-year term.

U.S. Supreme Court Outlaws Partial Birth Abortion

On Wednesday the Supreme Court upheld a federal ban on partial birth abortion, a highly controversial late-term abortion procedure.



The Supreme Court upheld in April a federal ban on partial birth abortion, the highly controversial late-term abortion procedure that involves partially removing the fetus and crushing its skull. The court's majority opinion stated: "The law need not give abortion doctors unfettered choice in the course of their medical practice," The Associated Press reported. The 5-4 ruling by America's more conservative bench preserved the Partial Birth Abortion Ban Act that Congress passed and President Bush signed into law in 2003. "This is the first legal crack in the crumbling Roe v. Wade foundation," said Operation Rescue President Troy Newman. "If partial birth abortions are unconstitutional, then all abortion should be as well," he added, describing "suction abortions" as even "more gruesome" than partial birth abortion.

Charisma News –

After a shooting rampage on the Virginia Tech campus Monday, Christian ministries already have plans for prayer events and crisis counseling.



Christians are reaching out to the victims of the recent

shooting at Virginia Tech. The gunman, identified by police as a 23-year-old Virginia Tech senior from South Korea, killed 33 including himself during a shooting spree at the school Monday. InterVarsity Christian Fellowship (IVF) campus staff and students met for prayer Monday night at Virginia and were planning a campuswide prayer event on Wednesday at noon. "Our thoughts and our prayers are with the students of Virginia Tech and their families," IVF President Alec Hill said Monday. "Events such as today's tragic shooting bring students to an abrupt confrontation with their own mortality. InterVarsity staff are trained to help students face life's issues and find their hope in the promises of Jesus Christ. Our staff members, Wes Barts, Lindsey Jones and Robert Howe, ask for your prayers as they and their students deal with the impact of this tragedy." In a statement released the day of the shooting, Franklin Graham, president and CEO of the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association, said his organization has offered the community of Blacksburg, Va., where the school is located, the resources of its Rapid Response Team, which sends chaplains trained in crisis counseling. "Sadly, we have once again been reminded of the evil that people can perpetrate on others; and while many theories will surface in the coming days and weeks about how such a terrible act occurs, I believe what we've seen here is ultimately a reflection of the condition of the human heart," Graham said. "My prayer in this time of tragedy is that it will pull us together as a nation and focus our attention on those families who have suffered great loss and turn our eyes to the Prince of all peace, Jesus Christ."

Humans Are Built to Serve God, Scientist Says

A neuroscientist at the University of Pennsylvania, said humans may be wired to believe in a higher power.



Dr. Andrew Newberg, a neuroscientist at the University of Pennsylvania, said humans may be wired to believe in a higher power. Newberg and his research team studied Franciscan nuns, Tibetan Buddhists and Pentecostal Christians speaking in tongues and found that similar parts of the brain are always activated when participants think about religious activities, CNN reported. "When we think of religious and spiritual beliefs and practices, we see a tremendous similarity across practices and across tradition," said Newberg, who once studied the brain from a neurological and psychiatric perspective. Because the same areas of the brain are affected during prayer and meditation, he says humans are built to believe in God. Some Christians have said Newberg's research confirms what was already believed and that it would only make sense that God would create humans with a way to communicate with Him. Newberg's work to track the relationship between the human brain and spirituality is part of a new field that is being called neurotheology.

Rick Warren Publicly Debates Renowned Atheist

Earlier this month 'Newsweek' magazine moderated a four-hour debate between Rick Warren and Sam Harris, a prominent atheist and doctoral student in neuroscience.



Newsweek magazine moderated a four-hour debate at Saddleback Church in early April between Rick Warren and Sam Harris, a prominent atheist and doctoral student in neuroscience whose latest book, *The End of Faith*, argues for a world based on reason. "Every specific science ... has surpassed and superseded what the Bible tells us is true about our world," Harris said in his opening remarks. When *Newsweek* asked him which secular source provides an acceptable moral code,

Harris rejected all sacred texts and pointed to the “ethical impulses” of human empathy and compassion found in an atheistic experience. But Warren, mentioning the Inquisition, Mao Zedong, Joseph Stalin and Pol Pot, countered: “Far more people have been killed through atheists than through all the religious wars put together.” Harris criticized “faith-based altruism” for being “contaminated with religious ideas that have nothing to do with the relief of human suffering.” Warren struck a pseudo-conciliatory note with Harris to end the debate: “You’re more spiritual than you think,” the pastor said. “You [just] don’t want a God who tells you what to do.” In May Ray Comfort and Kirk Cameron, from the popular evangelism show *The Way of the Master*, will debate two atheists about the existence of God. The debate will be moderated by Martin Bashire, streamed live on ABC's Web site and aired on *Nightline*.

Washington Lawmakers Call for Prayer

The Congressional Prayer Caucus is asking Americans to commit to five minutes of prayer for the nation so that someone is praying 24-7.



Last week lawmakers renewed a 2005 call asking Americans to pray for God to heal the country. “Prayer is good for the soul,” said Rep. Tim Walberg, R-Mich., Gannet News Service reported. “It forces us to lean on the One who is greater than us.” Walberg and other members of the Congressional Prayer Caucus are asking Americans to visit their Web site to sign up for a five minute slot so that someone is praying for America 24-7. “[We want to] build a spiritual prayer wall around America until God heals our land,” said caucus leader J. Randy Forbes, a Republican congressman from Virginia. In 2005 Forbes

began a prayer meeting in the 219th room of Capitol Hill. The congressional prayer meeting eventually grew into the Congressional Prayer Caucus Inc., a nonprofit organization formed to call individuals as well as local “219 Groups” across the country to pray without ceasing. Many lawmakers believe prayer can help change the U.S. “I’m driven to prayer many, many times every day,” Rep. Virginia Foxx, R-N.C., told Gannet. “Sometimes on my knees, sometimes just walking to meetings. I believe prayer can change things.”

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