

Reviving Heritage USA

Since MorningStar Ministries purchased Jim Bakker's former Heritage USA property in 2005, its leaders, including founder Rick Joyner, have been on a mission not to rebuild but to resurrect the site that once drew 6 million visitors in its peak year.

The Fort Mill, South Carolina, property fell into disrepair after Bakker's PTL Club crumbled in the 1980s amid a sex and fraud scandal that resulted in Bakker's imprisonment.

"Rick and a number of others had gotten the word that PTL would die and ... then be resurrected," says David Yarnes, MorningStar executive vice president. "It was the third-largest destination at one point behind Disneyland and Disney World. It was known as a refuge and a pioneer in 24-hour prayer.

"We feel that as this property at one time became a symbol for a mar on Christianity, so to speak, and we'd like to see it become a symbol of God's resurrection."

That "resurrection" began in 2007 with the opening of the Grand Hotel, a cornerstone of the conference center at what is now called Heritage International. The 52-acre property also houses a school and office space several ministries use.

Next on the agenda is opening the 21-story Heritage Towers' centerpiece in the fraud case against Bakker in which units allegedly were oversold and the money diverted to other projects.

Although he initially thought the building was condemned, Joyner is working to open the 140-unit facility as a "Refirement Center" for those 55 and older. He says Heritage Towers will be "a major extension of MorningStar's overall mission to honor our fathers and mothers," and residents will

be encouraged to mentor younger generations.

"We anticipate that the fellowship that is developed will give birth to some of the most important missions and ministries of our times," Joyner says.

More than 200 people have expressed interest in living in the tower, but Yarnes says there is still opportunity for potential residents. MorningStar has some financial backing for the \$40 million project but continues to look for additional partners.

This has led to a dispute with York County officials, who threatened to raze the tower at MorningStar's expense if it couldn't prove it had financing to complete the project. York County Manager James Baker said the conflict is headed to mediation.

Joyner says he has "no doubt" the situation will be resolved, and the tower is expected to open within the next three years, the time frame Yarnes says the county agreed to in 2008.

MorningStar leaders believe Heritage will be better the second time around. "Something restored has a greater glory," Joyner says.