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## SBC DIGEST: CARES Act explained; Churches use LifeWay digital curriculum; Florida holds multilingual prayer calls

by Staff, posted Tuesday, March 31, 2020 (27 days ago)

### CARES Act explained for churches, pastors, employees

By Staff

NASHVILLE (BP) -- Pastors, church members and religious organizations concerned about the financial repercussions of the COVID-19 global pandemic have multiple options for relief with the passage of the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act (CARES Act).

Featuring individual payouts, enhanced unemployment benefits and government-backed payroll protection loans, the CARES Act offers economic stimuli in a variety of applications, many of which are available to ministries and ministers.

Harold Loftin, chief legal counsel and GuideStone Financial Resources, joined Jonathan Howe, vice president for communications at the SBC Executive Committee, to discuss the CARES Act and how churches, pastors, and ministries might be able to benefit from it.

Video here.

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### Digital curriculum helps church groups stay connected

By Aaron Earls

NASHVILLE (BP) -- As the coronavirus spread across the country and across North Carolina, Dwight Horrell decided to do something he'd never done before in his nearly 50 years of teaching Sunday school -- take his class online.

His church, Haw Bluff Baptist Church in Ivanhoe, N.C., had a little experience in livestreaming, with pastor Jacob Lewis placing his sermons on Facebook Live.

But with government and medical experts recommending no group gatherings larger than 10 and asking people to stay in their homes, Horrell asked his class to join him for an online version of Sunday school.

Everyone in Horrell's class received an email on how they could prepare and how they could join via Google Hangouts for their weekly discussion of LifeWay Christian Resources' "Bible Studies for Life" lesson.

"To those my age or who feel intimidated in using technology this way, doing this is worth it," said Horrell, 75. "Just because we're not gathering physically doesn't mean group discipleship needs to stop. I don't want to waste this opportunity to bring hope to people in a world of heightened worry and suffering."

Horrell is among thousands of small group leaders who have used digital methods to continue meeting with their classes during the COVID-19 crisis.

Since launching on March 20, more than 3,800 churches and 21,000 individuals have accessed LifeWay's free digital curriculum at [Curriculum.LifeWay.com](http://Curriculum.LifeWay.com), according to Todd Adkins, director of LifeWay Leadership.



Dwight Horrell of Haw Bluff Baptist Church in Ivanhoe, N.C. teaches his Sunday School class through an online video meeting.

Photo by Joy Allmond

Ronnie Richardson, discipleship pastor at Clarke-Venable Baptist Church in Decatur, Miss., said the platform made it easy to sign up and set up the curriculum for the classes.

"Most people are eager to continue meeting and appreciate the access to the curriculum online," he said. "Any church that is currently meeting online should definitely take the step toward providing their curriculum digitally."

Richardson said the shift to digital was driven primarily by the social distancing guidelines, but it has also provided Clarke-Venable Church the opportunity to try out digital curriculum for future use.

For Alan Taylor, executive pastor at First Baptist Concord near Knoxville, Tenn., the necessary shift to digital allowed the church to better coordinate groups and curriculum and point them toward a shared goal.

"Since all of our groups had to meet digitally, I thought I could use this opportunity to leverage the digital curriculum to help merge our curriculum into our discipleship pathway," he said.

Taylor said the congregation is working out some kinks as they've never done church in this way, but "our people are embracing the change and the challenges."

Churches should recognize that groups have never been more important, according to Taylor.

"Without the privilege of physically meeting together for worship," he said, "being connected to a group of people has become even more needed and even more valued."

In the midst of the shift to digital, Taylor said this remains a relational world.

"In these days of social distancing, people still cherish their friends," he said.

He said he spoke with a senior adult woman from his church whose group met online for the first time.

"She was ecstatic sharing about their group experience," he said, "and how everyone was so glad to not only talk with one another but to actually see one another. She said, 'We acted like a bunch of teenagers.'"

Horrell has high expectations for his Sunday school class of primarily 40-somethings moving forward and the "Bible Studies for Life" lessons they'll be studying.

"This is a time when God has our attention, and the subject matter is perfect for what we're all going through," he said, adding: "I believe the class will be even stronger when this is all over, and we'll be more grateful for the ability to physically meet together."

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## **Florida Baptist Convention hosting multilingual prayer calls through April**

By Staff

JACKSONVILLE (BP) -- Tommy Green is urging all Florida Baptist pastors to unite in a statewide time of "crying out to the Lord in prayer" during the coronavirus (COVID-19) worldwide crisis.

This "Call to Prayer" includes three simultaneous videoconference meetings led by pastors in three languages -- English, Spanish and French. The calls will be held each Thursday at 7 p.m. EDT, through the end of April.

"We are in this moment of crisis together," said Green, executive director-treasurer of the Florida Baptist Convention. "I am calling for our pastors to unite in a statewide prayer, led by pastors in our state for a period of an hour. We need each other more than ever, and I urge all Florida Baptists to join together crying out to the Lord in prayer."

The first "Call to Prayer" event was hosted last week and featured Florida pastors Erik Cummings, Willy Rice, Ken Whitten and Tim Maynard.