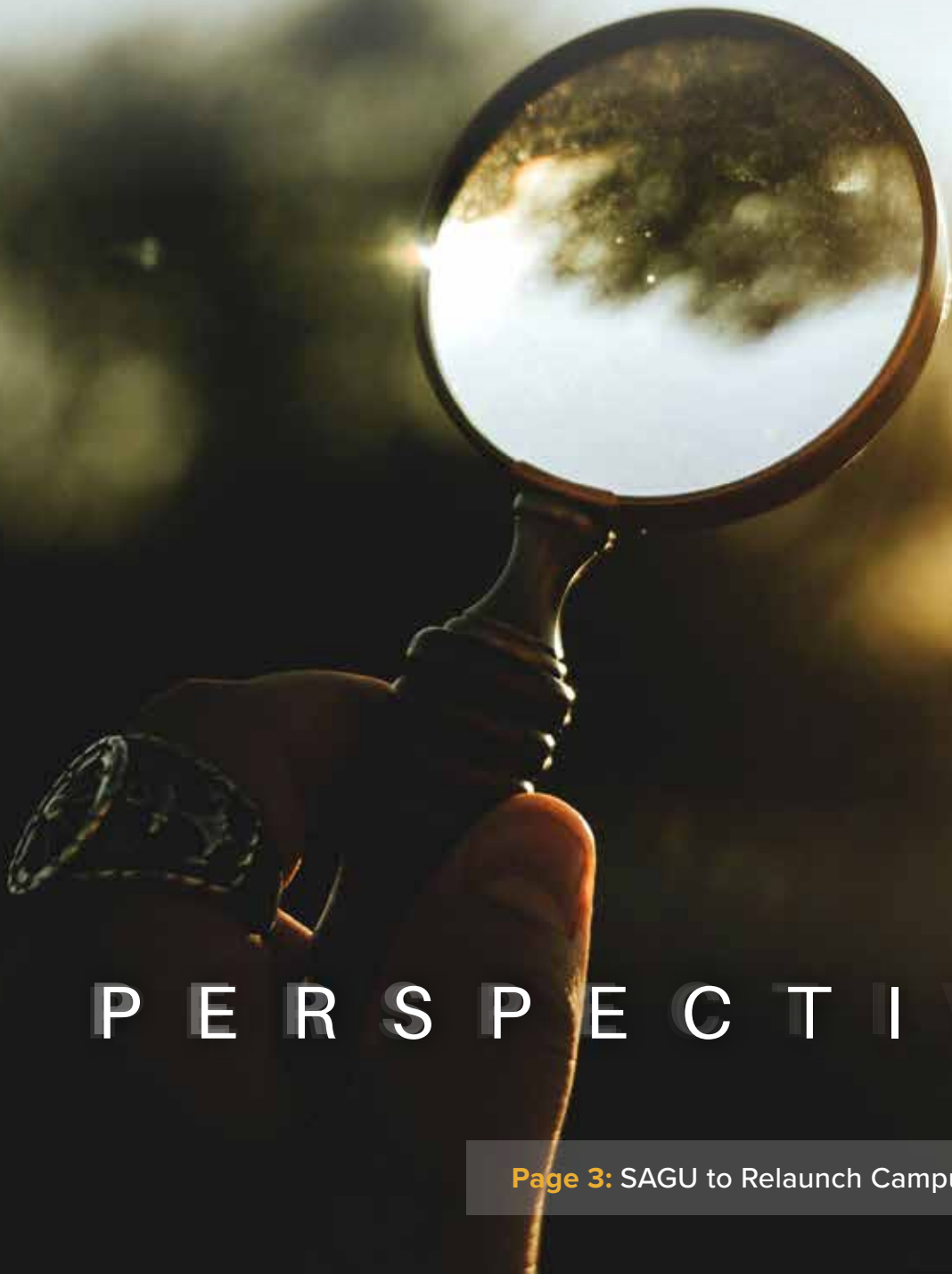


# *today*

 **sagu**

Summer 2020



P E R S P E C T I V E

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# Perspective Shaped by Faith

From **Dr. Kermit Bridges,**  
**SAGU President**

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When faced with a challenge one has not been specifically prepared for, it is common to hear someone say, “They didn’t teach me that in college!” It’s impossible for any institution of higher learning to anticipate every scenario a student will ultimately face in life and, if it were, then it would take twice as long to graduate.

As our faculty endeavor to equip students for their God-given careers and callings, training will be provided for many future scenarios, but not all. What distinguishes a SAGU education is the efforts of faculty and staff to lead students in the cultivation of a right mindset, attitude, and spiritual understanding. Specifically, I am referring to a healthy perspective on life that will guide them as they face difficult circumstances in the future.

What academic program could have prepared any of us for the COVID-19 pandemic and its impact on our nation and world? Yet with a perspective shaped by faith in a God who delivers, belief in the promises of Scripture, and confidence in our God-given gifts, we can take on the biggest of mountains in our path.

**II Timothy 1:7 declares, “For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind!”**

If you find yourself facing a situation you feel unprepared for, then be reminded God is not the source of fearful emotion, but instead He is the source of “power, love, and a sound mind!” A sound mind has a Spirit-led capacity to discern and judge between all the voices competing to alter your perspective. God intends for us to emerge from these days of crisis stronger than before. I believe He intends SAGU to see its greatest days of equipping students with a healthy perspective on life! ■

# WE ALL HAVE A PERSPECTIVE. A VOICE.

Unfortunately, there are times when certain voices tend to drown out others. Communication is lost in translation or misconstrued. The voices that need to be heard are silenced. As a community of believers, we must be better. We must make sure that every voice is heard. At SAGU, we are blessed with a diverse community of students from different backgrounds, each with their own opinions and perspectives. After surveying residential students regarding COVID-19 protocols and needs, students began connecting with our Dean of Students, Lance Meche, M.Div., concerning racism in our country and the need for more inclusion.



**DEAN MECHE** | As a spiritual leader, I have to be a spiritual interpreter of words. I have learned that our hermeneutical horizon (not just how we view scripture but also how we view others and life in general) is often myopic because we limit it to only our personal experiences and opinions. However, when we include others, our awareness increases so that we can see God's beauty in the much bigger picture. As our campus participated in a prayer march recently to stand against racism and injustice, and to seek the heart of the Lord during this season, I was reminded that many voices compete for our attention. For us to weigh which voices we receive into our lives, we need spiritual discernment, and the main way for us to do that is to listen to the heart of the Father through prayer and scripture. Another vital activity we can do is listen to each other. While engaging with social media recently, I realized that as much as I love to speak and be heard, I do not always follow what James 1:19 says by being "quick to listen and slow to speak."

So, I reached out to four students and asked the following questions:

**WHAT IS ONE THING YOU ARE TAKING AWAY FROM THIS EXPERIENCE?  
WHAT IS ONE THING YOU WOULD LIKE PEOPLE TO TAKE AWAY FROM THIS EXPERIENCE?**



## JORDAN ROSE

"I am learning that change starts within my heart. Racism is a tool of the enemy, just as offense and disunity are. If I allow offense to build up, then it will cause disunity where God calls for unity. This is a spiritual battle and the enemy is offering his tools to us in hopes that we will grab them. It is my responsibility, as a believer, to actively choose the tools that Christ offers to me. My tool recommendation: Love. Loving someone doesn't mean always agreeing with them, but it does mean letting go of offense and striving to understand."



## D.T. REASON

"The one thing I want someone to take away from this is that we have been persistent in getting our natural rights in this country and this time, everyone is on board and this is what happens when everyone - black, white,

Christian, or non-Christian comes together for one common goal. Now imagine if the Christian community came together no matter the denomination - the things we would get done for the Kingdom of God would be out-of-this-world, amazing."



## VALAREESE CECIL

"I would like to take this time to begin fostering conversations out of love. Respect is necessary for these conversations and the basis for understanding. Before assumptions are made, hear about people's experiences. I want others to be aware of who is in a room and be able to

listen to the voices that haven't been heard or a perspective that may be different. Acknowledge the differences and know you may never fully understand, which is acceptable. Loving and caring despite differences or misunderstandings is what we are called to do."



## EZRA DE LA GARZA

"The best advice I have ever heard is that it is better to surround yourself with like-hearted people than with like-minded people. I may not always agree with you but if I know that your heart's goal is the same as mine...then we

ultimately will end up at the same destination. All we're disagreeing on is the road to take to get there."



### From Rick Bowles, Vice President of Advancement

Recently, we were able to provide financial assistance to students who had suffered from the economic impact of Covid-19. One particular student lost her job during the pandemic and found herself unable to pay overdue tuition. This is an excerpt from her thank you note:

“Alumni & some SAGU staff have made me truly feel like family knowing that I am not alone and someone out there saw and considered me during this trying time. I am amazed at the generosity and compassion of the alumni. As I stated earlier, I was moved to tears and on my knees thankful and in awe that people I have never personally met wanted to help me.” - Melissa Salinas

I love getting emails like this! What a privilege to work with generous donors to provide much-needed aid to our students!

I am also excited to inform you that an alumni couple has committed a \$100,000 matching gift toward our new Church Ministry Degree Tuition Scholarship. What a huge blessing for our students! Please prayerfully consider partnering with us at [www.sagu.edu/MatchingGift!](http://www.sagu.edu/MatchingGift!) ■

## SAGU to Relaunch Campus Prayer Campaign

From the early '90s into the 2000s, it was common to see a group of visitors from a church gathered on SAGU campus sidewalks praying for the university. These church prayer teams made their way through the Waxahachie campus, praying for students, faculty, staff, finances, and most importantly, for God's presence to be evident on campus. At its peak, this intercessory prayer campaign resulted in more than 15 churches per year sending prayer teams consisting of ministers and church members.

During this season, SAGU experienced dramatic enrollment growth, expanded academic programs, and successful financial campaigns; however, the defining characteristic of this remarkable season was a growing spiritual fervor that fanned flames of revival.

Dr. Kermit Bridges, SAGU President, indicated the impact of the campaign is still felt today. He went on to share, “On various occasions during these subsequent years, I have contemplated re-launching the campaign, but these past months dominated by the pandemic and racial division have confirmed in my spirit that now is the time to restore the campaign because it is only through prayer and the power of God that SAGU can effectively minister in the face of such overwhelming challenges.”

**“As God faithfully met the needs of this university 25 years ago as we humbled ourselves and prayed, even so today we must cry out to God in prayer for the supernatural help needed to effectively lead in this time of societal chaos and become the instrument of hope and healing that our nation and world so desperately needs.”** - Dr. Kermit Bridges, SAGU President

The facilitation of the campaign requires a coordinator to recruit prayer teams from local churches and organize and host campus visits. The search for a candidate to head the campaign led to a familiar face, **Reverend James Bridges**, who since 2018 has been serving the university in a part-time role directing the Harvesters traveling ministry group. In this capacity, he has proven experience as a SAGU representative who is already familiar with pastors through his ministry in individual churches and district events. He will continue to lead the Harvesters as part of this expanded assignment.



As James steps into his new position this July, he is most excited about reintroducing the prayer campaign with a modern approach. “The core tenets will remain, but I can't wait to see what new things we can incorporate, such as the possibility of remote prayer gatherings or using tools like smartphones to engage others in the prayer experience.”

“We hope that our vision will remain close to its original purpose – to create prayer allies and ambassadors for SAGU in churches and organizations across the country and the world.” ■

# 2020 GOLF CLASSIC

Thursday, October 1 with Guest Speaker, Jim “Sunny” Sundberg  
Former Texas Ranger's Hall Of Fame Catcher and Six Time Gold Glove Winner

For more information, contact [golfclassic@sagu.edu](mailto:golfclassic@sagu.edu) or visit [www.sagu.edu/golfclassic](http://www.sagu.edu/golfclassic)





## Criminal Justice Coordinator Receives MPO Certification



Most will agree that for anything great to succeed, it must be championed by a great leader. Bruce Stayments, M.A., serves as the Coordinator for SAGU's Criminal Justice degree program.

To say Stayments's career is impressive would be quite the understatement. Over the span of his law enforcement career, approximately 35 years with 25 spent in full-time policing, Stayments has served in numerous roles, including:

- International Police Advisor to Afghanistan National Police
- Chief of Police for the Town of Elmira, NY.
- Former Death Investigator for County Medical Examiner's Program in Chemung County, New York

He has also received several policing awards including International Association of Chiefs of Police and Parade Magazine's Officer of the Year. His most recent accomplishment is one that he states he has been working on for over a decade.

With over 6,477 hours of training, Bruce Stayments has received a Master Peace Officer (MPO) Proficiency Certification.

This certification, awarded by the Texas Commission on Law Enforcement, is given to individuals who have undergone the most intensive and laborious law enforcement training by the state. It is the highest recognition in regards to training and years of experience that a Texas Police Officer can receive.

While Stayments' MPO certification and career in law enforcement are certainly noteworthy, some of his greatest professional feats were not on patrol or Afghanistan - they were in a classroom. While serving in various capacities of law enforcement, Stayments has been teaching. For over thirty years, he has raised up hundreds of the next generation of law enforcement, many of whom are proud SAGU graduates.

**"You know, I was never the greatest student myself but I remember having professors that believed and invested in me. If I can be that kind of professor to these students, then I am doing my job."**

Over decades of service, Stayments is certain that he has found his calling and is right where God wants him to be. Having discovered his purpose, it is no surprise that one of his greatest passions is helping students find theirs.

"I get to be a part of that. I can pour into their lives and inspire them to be all that they can be." ■

### HOME COMING OCT. 1-3, 2020

[sagu.edu/homecoming](http://sagu.edu/homecoming)  
Check the website for updates!

**OCT 01 2020** **MICHAEL W. SMITH LIVE**  
Join us for the 2020 Homecoming celebration and experience the musical stylings of Michael W. Smith! Save the date and your seat today. Don't miss out!



**TICKETS NOW AVAILABLE**  
[www.sagu.edu/concert](http://www.sagu.edu/concert)

## COVID-19 Causes Abrupt Conclusion to Basketball Season

The SAGU Lions (25 - 7, 13 - 7) beat the odds this past season upsetting two nationally ranked opponents to win the SAC Conference Championship. This placed them in a position to win the NAIA National Championship Tournament.

However, like many sports teams across the nation, their season came to an abrupt and unforeseen conclusion. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, sports events were cancelled including the NAIA National Championship.

Instead of traveling to Kansas City to play in a national tournament, the basketball team remained on the SAGU campus.

Senior Forward, Darian Davis, said he felt sick upon hearing the news of the cancelled tournament. "I'm still in disbelief," he said.

As a whole, the team felt heartbroken.

"There's always that thought in the back of your head - what could have been? Could we have gotten it done?" said Head Coach, Delton Deal. "I believe we would have had a chance to make some noise."

The season may have ended early but the team claimed that the bonds and friendships that were built amongst each other will continue into the future.

"I've been playing basketball all my life," Davis said. "I can truly say this team is a real family. These are my real brothers."

Despite the circumstances, the basketball team celebrated a truly remarkable season in a suitable fashion - playing pickup basketball games amongst themselves. With smiles on their faces, the Lions basketball team continued to play the game they love. ■



### Student Spotlight: Lana Casper

“During my time at SAGU, God has opened me up to experience more of Him. I have experienced more of His freedom and His joy. SAGU offers various opportunities for students to encounter God in different ways. At various SAGU events, I was able to encounter Him, but even more than that, I was able to experience God's presence in my dorm room. I learned here that I don't have to be somewhere where there is a band to experience God's presence.

At SAGU, I was a leader in community outreach and involved in MTEN all three years I have been here. I was a team member for missions trips to the Philippines and New Zealand. In my third year, I was the student leader for a missions trip to Las Vegas.

My current plans for after graduation is to be a Missionary Associate for the Chi-Alpha team in Utah. I am most excited to see the different opportunities I will have to learn and grow in ministry. ■ ”



## SAGU Ranks #1 in Nation for Online Bachelor's in Biblical Studies

SAGU offers a Bachelor's of Biblical Studies degree both on-campus and online covering the study of biblical research, hermeneutics, and biblical preaching. SAGU's church ministry degree programs are well known for their approach to practical training to equip the next generation of ministers for real-world situations in church leadership and evangelism.

In the Online Schools Report ranking, SAGU was ranked among other distinguished universities including Oral Roberts University, Dallas Baptist University, Barclay College, and Trinity Bible College. ■



# SHARE *your* NOTE

[www.sagu.edu/mynote](http://www.sagu.edu/mynote)

All notes are published online at [sagu.edu/alumninotes](http://sagu.edu/alumninotes). Your submission may be featured in the printed Fall issue of SAGU Today.



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## CELEBRATIONS

**1 Dr. Gary Royer, Adjunct Instructor** recently released his latest book, “Out of the Darkness, Into His Wonderful Light.” The book is based on the course on the spirit world he wrote for SAGU in 1997 and taught nearly every semester since. To learn more, you can search for Dr. Royer’s book on Amazon!

**2 Brad Robnison (2000-2004)** is a thought leader in developing relationships and marriages. He just completed a TEDx talk on “What Makes Love Last?” He has a podcast that is the top in its category called, “Healing Broken Trust” and his private practice is the highest rated in Oklahoma. He has two children, Luke and Brenna, ages 4 and 1, and a 3rd child on the way! He has been married for almost 11 years to his soulmate, Morgan.

**3 Krista Heyer (2008-2011)** married this last September. She recently published a history book and began teaching history at Navarro College.

**4 Jonathan & Amanda Bottoms (2012-2016)** moved to Beaumont, Texas, after Jonathan received his church ministries degree in 2016. He now serves as the Family Life Pastor at Christian Fellowship. Amanda graduated from SAGU with a degree in Education in 2017 and is currently teaching 1st grade. Jonathan and Amanda have two daughters, Eloise, who is 2 years old, and their baby daughter, Ezra, who was just born this past May.

**5 Joshua Kinney (2011-2014)** and his wife, Linda, just celebrated 5 years of full-time ministry. Joshua serves as the Connections & Young Adult Pastor of Bethel Church in Blackwood, New Jersey.

**6 Daymond Sewell(1998-2006)** and his wife Lyonie, adopted their now-daughter Sarah Grace. “She is an answer to prayer. She brings light and joy to our lives each day,” says Daymond. Both work in ministry at Bayside Chapel in Depoe Bay, Oregon. Lyonie also serves as a pre-school teacher.

## IN MEMORIAM

**Kenneth Starnes (1955-2020)**  
Kenneth Ray Starnes, 64, passed away this February after a courageous battle with Lou Gehrig’s Disease (ALS). He was known as a man who faithfully served God, loved his family dearly, and a loyal friend. Before retiring in 2012, Kenneth had a long and successful career serving in various locations for DuPont. In 2019, SAGU gave him the Honorary Alumnus Award. Kenneth is survived by his wife of 36 years, Liz (Savell) Starnes, son, Christopher, and his mother, Joyce Starnes Shipman.

**Rev. Lindell Warren (1947-2020)**  
Rev. Lindell Houston Warren, 72, passed away after a fulfilling life of service in ministry with his wife, Phyllis. In 1986, Lindell was appointed as the District Missions and Mens Director for the Oklahoma Assemblies of God. After retiring in 2016, he and Phyllis enjoyed a brief time of retirement before he became a pastor of Grace Assembly of God in Weatherford, Oklahoma. When he was not in the pulpit, he could be found with his grandkids or out amongst his cows. He is survived by his wife, Phyllis, and three daughters.

**Mildred Yeatts (1915-2020)**  
Mildred Grace Joyner Yeatts passed peacefully in the presence of her family in February. In her youth, Mildred attended the Shield of Faith Bible Institute in Amarillo. She later worked with her brothers to help build a new church in Wichita Falls. It was there she met her future husband, Henry J.O. Yeatts. Together they started four churches and pastored several more. The two most important things to Mildred were her relationship with God and that her family serve Him.

**Rev. Dr. Bill Virgin (1960-2020)**  
Rev. Virgin died unexpectedly in Lee’s Summit, MO, this past April. He and his wife, Laurie, served in ministry in Chicago, Dallas, and Lee’s Summit where he ministered at Christian Fellowship Church on The Rock—Rockwell and Church on the Rock South, and finally Life Christian Center Church. Bill is survived by his wife Laurie and their four daughters.

Update your  
contact information!  
[www.sagu.edu/alumni](http://www.sagu.edu/alumni)



COVID-19 presented some unique challenges for higher education institutions across the nation. It stirred up feelings of doubt, fear, and even panic amongst communities worldwide. Yet, even in the midst of such uncertainty, one thing will always remain certain – we need to continue hearing the hope of the Gospel, being discipled, and experiencing Christian community. This pandemic may have altered our plans for the Spring 2020 semester, but it did not alter who we are.

**We were not able to meet with our students for an in-person chapel service for much of this spring semester, so we sought creative ways to fellowship and engage with them. This past April, we were excited to launch a series of devotionals led by our very own faculty and staff!**



**DR. KERMIT BRIDGES, PRESIDENT** “God intends for us to emerge from these days of crisis as stronger than ever before. His plans for you have not altered and I believe He intends SAGU to see its greatest days of preparing God-called students.”



**DR. AMY GEORGE, Professor** “Your Shepherd cares for you. He takes personal responsibility for your well-being. So go to Him. Cast your anxieties on Him.”



**DR. GARLAND OWENSBY, Professor** “Being cheerful when you pray doesn’t mean that you ignore the reality of a situation. In fact, it’s the opposite. It’s because of Christ we can be full of cheer. Knowing that Christ is with you gives you courage in the face of pain, disappointment, and challenges.”



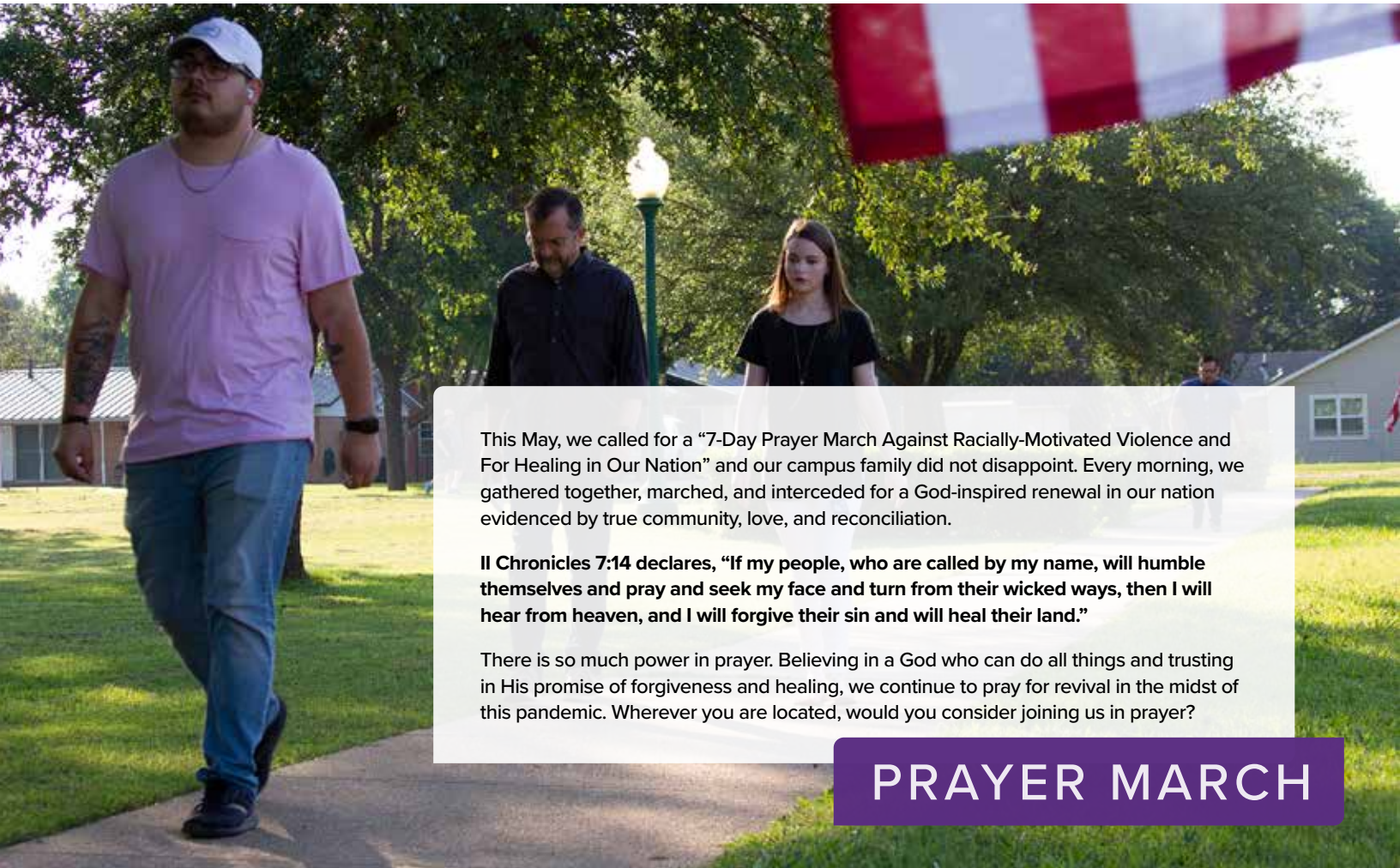
**DR. SHELLY ZALDIVAR, Business Department Chair** “God often speaks through the simplest interactions. If we allow Him to, God will speak to us in any situation and through that, we can always be learning. Fear can be turned to confidence in a sovereign plan bigger than anything meant to harm.”



**JEFF FRANCIS, M.A., Senior Director of Financial Aid** “In times of crisis and uncertainty, it’s important to express our doubts and fears to God...and this is where faith comes in. There will always be things we cannot understand. But in times of uncertainty, we focus on what we do know: God is good. God loves us. And, we can trust Him.”



**DR. MIKE CLARENSAU, Dean of Bible and Theology** “The first step to meaningful success comes from the value of what you are attempting. Our culture may sometimes define such a work as pleasing yourself or making yourself happy but great works are defined as those that benefit others.”



This May, we called for a “7-Day Prayer March Against Racially-Motivated Violence and For Healing in Our Nation” and our campus family did not disappoint. Every morning, we gathered together, marched, and interceded for a God-inspired renewal in our nation evidenced by true community, love, and reconciliation.

**II Chronicles 7:14 declares, “If my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and I will forgive their sin and will heal their land.”**

There is so much power in prayer. Believing in a God who can do all things and trusting in His promise of forgiveness and healing, we continue to pray for revival in the midst of this pandemic. Wherever you are located, would you consider joining us in prayer?

**PRAYER MARCH**