

Working to Preserve Religious Expression in School

By Jerry Falwell Date: May 11, 2007 In the May issue of my National Liberty Journal newspaper, we featured the story of Megan Chapman, who last year was forced to make a choice between standing up for her faith in Jesus Christ or allowing school officials to silence her. She chose not to be silent, even though Russell Springs, Kentucky school officials told her she could not mention Jesus or her faith in her valedictorian speech. At the commencement, more than 3,000 people packed her school's gymnasium, with members of the press in attendance. And before the principal of the school could finish making his opening remarks, the senior class stood together and recited "The Lord's Prayer." What an inspiring scene!

Then Megan walked to the platform, prepared only to read the poem, "The Road Less Traveled" because she had been warned not to mention her faith. But as she looked out over the audience, she prayed that God would give her a message. And He did. Megan put away the poem and began speaking from her heart, sharing how God is real in her life. She spoke of the peace she has encountered since giving her heart to Jesus Christ and wished that same peace for her classmates. The speech was frequently interrupted with cheers. One local media outlet noted a "revival-like atmosphere" at the graduation. The next night, Megan appeared on the Fox News Channel where she was able to again share her faith in Jesus Christ. Today, Megan, along with twin sister Mandy, is a student at Liberty University, where she is planning to study law and attend Liberty University School of Law. Her story has inspired many young people across this nation. I hope it encourages more to take a stand for their faith. I'm proud to stand with Mathew Staver, founder of Liberty Counsel and dean of Liberty University School of Law, and his wife Anita, president of Liberty Counsel, in the national "Friend or Foe" Graduation Prayer Campaign. This program is designed to educate and, if necessary, litigate to ensure that prayer and religious views are not suppressed during graduation ceremonies across the nation. As part of this year's campaign, Liberty Counsel has created red prayer wristbands which students can wear as a reminder to pray at graduation and all throughout the school year. The wristbands are embossed with "I WILL PRAY" and "PRAY WITHOUT CEASING (THESS. 5:17)." The wristbands serve as reminders to students that they have the constitutional right to wear religious jewelry and to pray during non-instructional times while at school. Liberty Counsel also has a free legal memo on graduation prayer which is available online at www.LC.org. Mr. Staver stated, "The purpose of Liberty Counsel's 'Friend or Foe' Graduation Prayer Campaign is to protect religious viewpoints at graduation. Liberty Counsel will be the friend of schools that recognize the free speech rights of students and the foe of those that violate their constitutional rights. The key to graduation prayer is that the school should remain neutral — neither commanding nor prohibiting voluntary prayer or religious viewpoints." High school students, don't be afraid to voice your faith in Jesus Christ! Liberty Counsel is here to help you if you should face persecution or punishment for doing so. I urge Christian students across this land to exhibit the strength of character of Megan Chapman by refusing to be silenced. Boldly live out your faith!