

*Remarks for the
Tabernacle Baptist Church Revival
March 12, 2003*

The work of this church, this community of faith, is like a constant, ongoing revival. The word revival, in some definitions, refers to “a restoration of life, an awakening.”

I believe Mississippi is going through a revival – in its commitment to making the most of the promise of *all* its people, in all areas of the state.

That revival begins with how we care for one another. It begins with how we focus our efforts on health care, on education, on jobs that put food on the table and roofs over our heads.

You've heard me talk before about priorities – priorities for the people of this state, in education, in jobs, in safety. If we are going to be successful in our revival, we have to set priorities for how we want to reach our goals and achieve our dreams.

Now, I've always believed that God makes our dreams a size too big so we can grow into them. Mississippi is growing; we're growing fast and we're growing together.

I believe we are far beyond the Mississippi that most people think of; we are a Mississippi that shares a common belief and a common commitment to the worth of all people.

We're moving beyond issues like race and focusing on issues like education, health and economic development.

We've raised teacher pay. We've put an Internet-accessible computer in every classroom in the state. And, during a national recession, we are the first state in the nation to fund education first – and to fund it at 62 percent of our general budget.

That's how we make a commitment to the future of this state – by investing today in our children and in the tools they need to succeed in life.

We're proving that we mean business about education – and that business means jobs for the people of this state.

In January I proposed the creation of the Rural Economic Impact Authority, to help with economic development efforts in rural areas of the state. We have to ensure that every part of Mississippi – and every Mississippian – has the training, the skills, and the opportunity to get a quality, high-paying job.

And our potential as a state isn't limited to the metropolitan areas; the promise of our people is just as strong in Noxubee County as it is in Hinds County.

In the end, economic development is economic development – it doesn't matter if it's two people in a truck or 5,000 people building a truck. We have to look down the road to where we want to go as a state, to our goal of building good schools, good jobs and good communities.

I am tremendously blessed in my life and in my work. God has been good to me. It's interesting to me about how some people talk about finding God – as if he could ever be lost.

My faith, my beliefs, tell me that God found me. He knew me before I was born, and he continues to walk with me every single day. He knows what is in my heart, He knows what's in your hearts, and He knows that He is the one who will bring us together.

I have watched with admiration and with happiness the work being done here tonight. People are making a new commitment to Christ as their savior.

I know they will extend that commitment to their fellow man – a commitment that extends beyond color, beyond economics, beyond background.

I try to keep that commitment every day in the work of the state.

There are 2.8 million people in Mississippi who look to me and other elected officials to help provide leadership, direction and guidance for them.

I pray every day for the strength and the wisdom to do this job, a job that I love. I would ask for your prayers as well – not just for myself, but for all in public service – that we might do work that serves our people and serves God.

That work includes doing everything we can to come together not just as Mississippians but as creations of God – made in His image, blessed by His grace, and saved by His son.

I try to do this work every day, and I challenge you to do the same. Let's live out the words we speak; let's make it happen.

As we move further into the 21st century, let's continue the commitment and the dream of so many who have come before us. Let's live out the word of God, the word that teaches us a simple lesson – to simply love our neighbors as ourselves.

We can do this. It's happening right now. It's helping make a better, stronger, healthier Mississippi – and I'm thankful for it.

God bless you, God bless this community, and God bless our great state.