
News Updates

HERITAGE USA RESURRECTED, AGAIN

The South Carolina resort facility that led to the eventual ruin of televangelist Jim Bakker has again been revived, this time by his good friend, Rick Joyner. Joyner's MorningStar Fellowship Church purchased 52 prime acres of the 2,200-acre property last fall for a reported \$1.6 million. MorningStar's parcel includes the 510-room Grand Hotel, an unfinished 21-story condominium tower, a restaurant, and parking lots.

Prior to MorningStar's acquisition and restoration, the complex had laid dormant for seven years: its buildings in disrepair with peeling paint, cracked sidewalks, and weeds growing throughout the exterior and parking lots. Almost immediately, 250 workers — many of whom were volunteers from Joyner's church — began the process of cleaning and making repairs. Initially, complete restoration was expected to take two years at a cost of between \$4 and \$5 million. More recent figures reduce the cost to between \$3 and \$4 million and cut the time of completion in half. According to Joyner, because of its hazardous condition, the condominium tower will be demolished. York County officials have given Joyner two years to tear down the tower.

Earl Coulston, who sold the tract to Joyner's ministry, also plans to develop single- and multi-family residences and townhouses on another 900 acres of the property.

The facility was renamed Heritage International Ministry and has become the headquarters for Joyner's organization. In addition to holding its regular worship services there, MorningStar also plans to use the campus for conferences and retreats, and hopes to establish a ministry training college.

On Dec. 5, the 2,000-member church dedicated the new location during a Sunday morning worship service in a temporary assembly hall located in the lobby of the former Grand Hotel. Following nearly an hour of music, Joyner addressed the congregation for more than an hour, saying he's committed to learning from Jim Bakker's mistakes.

Bakker's dream for Heritage USA as a Christian resort met its demise amid a sex and money scandal in the 1980s. Construction of the original Heritage structures was paid for by donations of at least \$1000 acquired by Bakker in exchange for the promise of lodging. However, Bakker allowed the number of donors to far exceed the recreational facility's lodging capacity. In 1989, he was convicted of defrauding 116,000 followers and was

originally sentenced to 45 years in prison. While serving jail time for his scheme, Bakker's wife Tammy divorced him. He was released from prison in 1994, remarried, and later connected with Joyner. MorningStar Ministries donated to Bakker a 17,000-square-foot log lodge in Charlotte. Bakker has since resurrected his own television ministry and is now headquartered in Branson, Mo.

—MKG

CONTROVERSY BESETS HINN IN INDIA

Faith healer Benny Hinn, whose miracle crusades continue to spark controversy, found his Jan. 21-23 meetings in Bangalore, India, igniting violent protests. Opposition to Hinn's assembly came from a variety of directions, including government and religious leaders.

Two days before Hinn began his three-day "Festival of Prayer for India," a dozen Swamijis staged a protest against Hinn and his prayer meetings. The group insisted the government withdraw its consent for Hinn to lead his series of meetings, claiming "Hinn was a hoax and his claims were false and misleading." However, not all of the antagonism toward Hinn came from Hindus. According to one government leader, "Even Christians have expressed displeasure over Hinn's meeting." Several petitions by various groups petitioning the Karnataka High Court to cancel Hinn's meetings were rejected by the court.

Hinn normally calls his assemblies "Miracle Crusades," but strict Indian legislation may be the reason he called these a "Pray for India" program. According to India's Drugs and Magic Remedies (Objectionable Advertisement) Act of 1954, police can arrest anyone suspected of deceptive healing. A later ruling stipulated, "anyone advertising or carrying pamphlets or any related literature which claim that diseases can be cured by mere touch, hug or by chanting mantras is an offence and any violator can be jailed for six-months and later if found practising again, another one-year jail term."

Prior to Hinn's meetings, another self-styled healing guru appeared in Bangalore claiming divine power to cure ailments with his healing powers. Aslam Baba was arrested and jailed after gullible followers invested personal fortunes to receive healings. Baba's recent demise may have well been in the minds of the public as rumors and theories of a possible Hinn undoing were

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