

Area Churches of Christ Told “Don’t Be Afraid!”

Churches of Christ in Deep East Texas gathered on Saturday, August 4 in Jasper. Elementary, junior high, and high school kids enjoyed competitive games, food and a devotional while adults were treated to three high-level presentations summarized in the words “Don’t Be Afraid.”

The Jasper Church of Christ hosted congregations from Kountze, Warren, Buna and Kirbyville. Presenters included Sheriff Bobby Rader of Liberty County and Minister Richard Hale of Natchitoches, Louisiana speaking on “Church Security,” “Internet and Social Media Awareness,” and “Law-Enforcement Issues of Interest to Parents and Grandparents.”

“Don’t Be Afraid – To Defend Yourself” Rader said as he addressed Church Security. Noting that people go to worship with trusting and unobservant attitudes, the Liberty County Sheriff emphasized the “A” in the new ADD approach to dealing with active shooters.

ADD stands for Avoid, Deny, and Defend, where Avoid stresses the need to remain aware of surroundings so you avoid problems in the first place. Rader stressed the need for on-their-feet greeters who not only warmly welcome visitors but who also monitor those who enter church buildings, looking for unusual characters, unusual clothing or bags, and unusual characteristics like nervousness.

Rader added, “Don’t be afraid to say something and do something if you see something unusual.”

He concluded this presentation with the final DD in ADD. Churches can harden themselves by denying bad actors access to people with locked doors and distance created by instantly leaving the area of an active shooter. If all else fails, church members should defend themselves against threats of violence. GOOGLE “ADD Active Shooter” for more information.

Speaking on Internet and Social Media Awareness, Richard Hale said “Don’t Be Afraid – To Be A Parent.” Noting that parents and grandparents will probably never catch up with kids in the race to understand new technology, Hale recommended returning to the basics of parenting like limits, open communication, and a willingness to be the bad guy.

Children and teens should not have unlimited access to their communication technology he said. Instead of sneaking around and trying to catch children doing something bad, Hale told parents to sit down with their children in front of the computer and have their children show them where they are going and what they are doing as a way to maintain open communication. Finally, parents were advised to be willing to be the bad guy in demanding all access codes and taking away internet and social media privileges if problems arise.

Rader returned to the podium to tell listeners “Don’t Be Afraid – Well, Maybe There Are Some Things to Be Afraid Of.” He was referring to three unsettling trends in area law enforcement.

First, synthetic marijuana is a powerful combination of chemicals that law enforcement is unable to stay ahead of because providers constantly change its makeup. Second, meth is becoming even more prevalent with more methed-out suspects violently confronting law enforcement. Third, instead of competing for turf, and realizing that the drug trade can enrich all of them, gangs are cooperating to make the drug trade more efficient.

Although the presentation on law enforcement trends was unsettling, the overall atmosphere for the August 4th gathering was upbeat and positive. Parents and grandparents need information in order to help raise their kids. The Churches of Christ in Deep East Texas provided that information last weekend, and will continue to present similar seminars in area communities in the future.