

Edwards' Actions Ruled Illegal, Unconstitutional

Supreme Court Frees Pastor

Rev. Spell Speaks On Major Decision By Supreme Court

CENTRAL — In a letter to his supporters, Rev. Tony Spell of Life Tabernacle Church reacted to last week's Louisiana Supreme Court decision, which found unconstitutional Gov. John Bel Edwards' mandates against churches and threw out the criminal case against the pastor. Here is what he said:

"I am relieved and happy to let you know the Louisiana Supreme Court has rendered its decision in the criminal case against me for the crime of holding worship services during the pandemic. This case has gotten worldwide attention and been a rallying point for Christians. Now the results are in and they are stunning! In the case of *State of Louisiana v. Pastor Tony Spell*, the Louisiana Supreme Court has ruled

See CENTRAL on Page 2



Photo by Kim Powers

Attorney Jeff Wittenbrink (left) and Rev. Tony Spell after Supreme Court victory.

Court Ruling Is Must Reading

NEW ORLEANS — The Louisiana Supreme Court was the scene last week of a major victory for religious liberty in a case out of Central. In *State of Louisiana v. Pastor Tony Spell*, the court struck

down Gov. John Bel Edwards' emergency orders closing churches and ended criminal charges against Rev. Spell, the pastor of Life Tabernacle Church in Central. It reads:

See READ on Page 8

Landmark Ruling Protects Religious Liberty, Ends Case Against Rev. Spell

Woody Jenkins
 Editor

NEW ORLEANS — In an historic 5-2 decision, the Louisiana Supreme Court last week ruled that Gov. John Bel Edwards' edicts closing churches and the subsequent arrest of Rev. Tony Spell for holding church services were illegal and unconstitutional. This means the pastor's arrest, imprisonment, house arrest, being fitted with an ankle bracelet, order not to hold church, and prohibition from leaving the state for the past two years were all illegal.

The court, with Justice Will Crain writing for the majority, said any attempt to limit the free exercise of religion is subject to "strict scrutiny" and the governor's decrees failed to meet that

See LANDMARK on Page 3

Two Years of Hell for a Crime That Doesn't Exist

How Could So Many Officials Go Along with Persecuting Pastor for A Protected Activity?

CENTRAL — After more than two years of arrests, handcuffs, fingerprinting, imprisonment, home incarceration, ankle bracelets,

surveillance, hearings, meetings with judges, and travel restrictions for a crime that doesn't exist, Rev. Tony Spell is a free man.

Last Friday, the Louisiana Supreme Court threw out the criminal charges against the Central pastor as illegal and unconstitutional. His arrest was based not on a crime defined by the legislature but an edict of Gov. John Bel Edwards.

You can look in the Criminal

Code of Louisiana or the Revised Statutes for as long as you please, and you will not find a crime called "Holding Church Services Without Permission of the Governor" or any such crime by any other name.

It simply doesn't exist!

Freeing Pastor Spell from the restrictions he has been under was part of a landmark 20-page opinion that determined Edwards' decree closing churches was unconstitu-

tional.

The fact that the Sheriff, Police Chief, and Mayor-President would all join together behind the Governor to prosecute a pastor for a constitutionally protected activity and a crime that doesn't exist raises many questions. Was it all just politics? The Governor asked them to go after the pastor, so they did? Or did they actually

See SUPREME on Page 5

What's Next: Deprivation of Civil Rights, Libel

Pastor Tony Spell Has Powerful Legal Options To Use in Addressing Violation of His Rights

Woody Jenkins
 Editor

CENTRAL — In the aftermath of the Louisiana Supreme Court decision in the case of *State of Louisiana v. Pastor Tony Spell*, many people have asked what Rev. Spell's legal options are. Both state and federal law provide powerful remedies to use when government



Photo by Woody Jenkins

FUN AND GAMES — It may have seemed like fun and games for local law enforcement to arrest and handcuff a pastor and then take his Bible in the sanctuary of his church on March 17, 2020, and again on April 21, 2020, but it could be a federal civil rights violation.

officials violate a citizen's rights. One of the most important is 42 USC 1983, which provides people the right to sue local officials who act "under color of law" to deprive people of their civil rights. Typically, these officials rely on state law to violate federal civil rights.

The Supreme Court decision spells out in considerable detail how Rev. Spell's rights were violated. In fact, the court's opinion tracks very closely the requirements of 42 USC 1983. However, new litigation is unlikely because Rev. Spell filed federal and state lawsuits two years ago that make the necessary claims. What could

See WHAT on Page 5