

Christian Leadership Institute develops young leaders of tomorrow

By Tony Martin

Editor

The Christian Leadership Institute (CLI), a leadership development ministry for young people sponsored by the Christian Action Commission of the Mississippi Baptist Convention, kicked off a week of intensive leadership training July 8 on the campus of Baptist-affiliated Blue Mountain Christian University in Blue Mountain.

The camp is designed to equip and encourage young men and women to consider and pursue a life of public service. Students ages 13-19 are eligible to attend.

This year, there were 48 students, eight coaches, and eight speakers participating in the CLI.

Keynote speaker for the July 8 dinner banquet was Shawn Parker, Executive Director-Treasurer, Mississippi Baptist Convention Board.

“For those of you who are participating in the Christian Leadership Institute this week, welcome,” Dr. Parker said. “I’m glad you’re here. And for those of you who are parents supporting them, I know that your kids are going to have a magnificent time and hopefully they’re going to come back home stronger in their faith than they left. But I hope in addition to that, that they are going to develop some leadership skills in the course of this week that are going to serve them well in their pursuit of ministry and in their endeavors in life. And that really is what this week is all about.

“It is called the Christian Leadership Institute, the sixth installment,” Parker continued. “The middle word for the entire week is ‘leadership,’ and I suggest that we’re living in a day and age where there seems to be a terrible void of Godly leadership. There is a void of leadership, period.

“I mean, look at the culture around us and there seems to be too many gaps in the leadership parade that ought to be leading us. And if we’re going to make a difference in that, we need to start with a young generation and train them up to follow the Lord and to follow his leadership and therefore become leaders of others. That’s what this week is all about.”

During the week of camp, each student is assigned a coach/mentor. There are opportunities for camper groups to compete in games and earn awards. The week includes breakout sessions focusing on leadership skills development. College scholarships of over \$16,000 have been provided to date.

Coaches included:

- John Boler, pastor, Calvary Church, Tupelo
- Will Carr, pastor, Mt. Zion Church, Independence
- Rob Jones, pastor, Ingomar Church, New Albany
- Jason Middleton, pastor, Gaston Church, Booneville
- Libby Digby, work at home mom, Project Manager, CRVAS
- Lisa Smith, school psychometrist, Alcon School District
- Becky Digby, director’s wife
- Kenny Digby, Executive Director-Treasurer, Christian Action Commission, and founder, Christian Leadership Institute

On Tuesday through Thursday, camp days consist of breakfast, breakout sessions, a speaker, lunch, activities, free time, dinner, and another speaker. Friday’s schedule features breakfast, a breakout session, a panel discussion, and lunch.

Speakers who participated in the 2024 Christian Leadership Institute included:

- Linda Ray, Missionary to Ukraine (retired), International Mission Board
- Rebekah Ray Peavy, Missionary Kid (1995 – 2005), Ukraine, and Administrative Secretary, Christian Action Commission
- Ronald Meeks, Chair & Professor of Biblical Studies, Director of Church Relations & Ministerial Recruiting, Blue Mountain Christian University
- Kathy Chism, Mississippi State Senator, District 3; Benton, Marshall, Pontotoc, Prentiss, Union
- Dough Hayhurst, Major General (Retired), U.S. Army, Mississippi Commander (Retired), Mississippi State Guard
- Lee Yancey, Mississippi State Representative, District 74; Rankin
- David Curry, Alderman at Large, Corinth

The Christian Leadership Institute is supported each year by gifts to the Mississippi Cooperative Program and sponsorship fees. The 2025 Christian Leadership Institute will be July 7-11 at Blue Mountain Christian University. For more information contact Kenny Digby at kdigby@christianaction.com, or Rebekah Peavy at rpeavy@christianaction.com.