



Dear Friends,

In December of 1999, my oldest son David and I were stringing lights on the Christmas tree. I looked over at him, and I thought, “Three more Christmases.” Three more Christmases and he will be gone. He was fourteen at the time, but my mind had already raced ahead through fifteen, sixteen, seventeen, and then off to college. As he passed me another string of lights, I reminded myself that kids leaving home and learning to make it on their own is a good thing, but it didn’t keep me from wanting to freeze that moment in time and hold on to it.

In the twinkling of an eye, those three years came and went. In December of 2002, as David—by then a high school senior—and his three younger brothers were decorating our Christmas tree, my thoughts drifted back, and I pondered how quickly the time had passed. The boys were laughing as they placed their favorite ornaments on the tree. Amid their laughter and chatter, my thoughts once again raced ahead. I thought about Christmas next year, the next, then five years from now, and then ten.

I told myself that we’ll still have Christmas, and it will still be fun and special because we’re a family, and we will always be a family. Even if a time comes when we can’t all be together, we’re still knit together with bonds that nothing can break. That’s what counts.

About that time, David handed me an ornament. It said, “Christmas 1980,” the year Doris and I married. It is the oldest ornament in our collection. He motioned for me to do the honor of hanging it on the tree. As I placed it on the tree, I thought about how good the years had been and how good they’re going to be—not because we’re good, but because God is good.

As we finished decorating the tree and stepped back to survey our handiwork, I looked down at Mark—our eight-year-old—who was reclining in the easy-chair. He placed his hand under his chin and smiled contently. With the reflection of Christmas lights in his eyes, I heard him say, with the sincerity that only a child can express, “This is great!” Sometimes it takes the wisdom of a child to help us understand true greatness. While the world equates greatness with money, power, and influence, in God’s kingdom greatness takes the most unlikely forms, from a baby born in a manger, to that special bond that unites families in simple ways that nothing else can match.

Twenty-one Christmases have come and gone since then. We still have Christmas, and it still is fun and special because we’re a family. In a few days, Doris and I will gather with our four sons, four daughters-in-law, and seven grandchildren to celebrate Christmas at David’s home. The grandkids will hang their favorite ornaments on the tree and open presents while their parents, aunts, and uncles laugh and tell stories. If the grandkids and I have our way about it, maybe there will even be a little snow for a snowball fight in the backyard.

I hope you and your family have a wonderful Christmas, and I pray that you and your family will capture moments that you can cherish always. On behalf of me, Doris, our family, and all of us at Family Council, we want to wish you and your family a blessed Christmas season and a wonderful new year!



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Executive Director Jerry Cox

My Thoughts: Thank You to Everyone Who Helped Us Purchase the Family Council Building in Little Rock. A New Phase of Our Work Begins!

By Jerry Cox, Executive Director

Last summer I received a phone call from our wonderful landlady of 25 years. "Jerry," she asked me, "I was wondering if Family Council might be interested in buying the office building from me."

I was genuinely surprised. Family Council has been in the same office space on Pulaski Street in downtown Little Rock since 1998. We're just two blocks from the Arkansas Capitol Building. It really is the ideal location for us. We've gradually leased more and more of the building since then, and today we occupy about a third of the property. Over the years I've wondered what we would ever do if our staff outgrew our office space or if the building changed hands and a new landlord decided to raise

our rent or not renew our lease. At times our board of directors and I had discussed the possibility of purchasing a building to make sure Family Council had a permanent home, but it simply wasn't possible.

Over the summer Family Council's board, staff, and I prayed and discussed whether or not we should move forward with the purchase of the building. We reviewed financial documents and sought input from financial and real estate experts. Buying the building would save us thousands of dollars per year in rent. It would provide us with a permanent "home base" in Little Rock. And it would give us room to grow as needed over the coming years.

After a lot of thought and prayer, we decided to buy the building. Through the help of many generous friends, we were able to secure enough money to purchase the building completely debt free. We closed on the building October 19. The building belongs to Family Council, and we don't owe a dime on it!

Our Assistant Director, David Cox, made a valid point during one of the meetings before Family Council decided to purchase the building: "This shouldn't be about profit. If Family Council buys this building, it shouldn't be so we can get into the real estate business. It should be to help us grow our pro-family ministry."

When I first started Family Council, I sometimes dreamed of growing to a point where we might need our own building. After nearly 35 years, that time has come. Purchasing this building helps protect us in the future. It means we have the freedom to hire more staff and accomplish more in Arkansas. It helps ensure we will be able to continue doing a lot of good for many more years to come.

I cannot say thank you enough to everyone who gave to our Capital Campaign to help us buy The Family Council Building and grow our staff. Deep gratitude sweeps over me as I think of all the friends who helped us. If you're ever in downtown Little Rock, give us a call, and stop by to say hello. We simply couldn't do this without you.



In October Family Council officially purchased our office building on Pulaski Street, just two blocks east of the Arkansas Capitol Building.



From Left: Luke McCoy, attorney Matt Sharp, Hettie Lue Brooks, Rep. Robin Lundstrum, Jerry Cox, and Erin Hogan were among those who supported passage of Act 733 protecting religious freedom and rights of conscience in state law.

Family Council's Goals Met and Promises Kept for 2023

From time to time Family Council shares its vision and goals for the coming months. Each item on the list is like a goal and a promise that we make to ourselves and to our supporters. Looking back on the past year, it's clear Family Council has accomplished most of what it set out to do. Here's a brief recap of the goals we met and the promises we kept in 2023.

1. Goal Met: Making Arkansas a Better Place by Passing Pro-Family Legislation. This year we were able to support passage of legislation that helps prevent the teaching of critical race theory and the LGBT lifestyle and gender issues in public schools. We helped pass a law that prevents public libraries from providing obscene or pornographic material to children. We supported the LEARNS Act's school-choice framework that let students get a publicly-funded education at a private school or at home. We strengthened our 2023 No Patient Left Alone law that lets loved ones and clergy visit patients and residents in hospitals and nursing homes. And we continued to protect the elderly and disabled from assisted suicide, euthanasia, and other dangers.

2. Goal Met: Defending Homeschool Freedoms. Home schooling may be the most potent weapon against the cultural decay and immorality that afflicts our society. As a division of Family Council, the Education Alliance goes to the State Capitol and fights for homeschool rights and for the passage of new laws that help homeschoolers. In addition, we work with the Arkansas Department of Education to be certain that homeschool rights are respected. This year we were able to help stop multiple legislative proposals that could have hurt homeschoolers—such as state-mandated

testing requirements—and we worked with our friends in the legislature to ensure the LEARNS Act will provide valuable school choice opportunities to homeschoolers.

3. Goal Met: Carrying Out Our Three-Pronged Strategy for Making Abortion Irrelevant Now That *Roe v. Wade* is Reversed. When the U.S. Supreme Court reversed *Roe v. Wade*, Family Council unveiled a three-pronged strategy for protecting unborn children in Arkansas: First, encourage the enforcement of our pro-life laws that prohibit abortion except to save the mother's life. Second, work with our friends in the Arkansas Legislature to pass any laws necessary to strengthen our existing pro-life laws and end abortion. And, finally, expand our efforts to assist pro-life pregnancy help organizations across Arkansas. This year we were able to fulfill all three of those goals. Our pro-life laws are in effect and working as intended. We supported passage of other pro-life legislation at the capitol this year, and we worked with our friends at the Arkansas Legislature to secure \$1 million in funding for pro-life pregnancy help organizations that assist women and families with unexpected pregnancies.

4. Goal Met: Protecting Religious Freedom for Generations to Come. Arkansas now has the nation's best religious freedom law. Also written into it is a ban on government discrimination against religious people or organizations. This will protect churches, religious persons, and those who operate businesses. This helps churches stay open during pandemics, lets adoption agencies operate by their faith, and ensures individuals will not have to compromise their convictions.

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Family Council's Goals Met and Promises Kept for 2023 *(continued)*

5. Goal Met: Secure Millions of Dollars for Pregnancy Resource Center Funding. One way to save the lives of unborn children is to reduce the demand for abortion. In February of 2022, we worked with Gov. Hutchinson and leaders in the Arkansas Legislature to secure a \$1 million appropriation for state grants to pregnancy help organizations such as Arkansas' 44 pregnancy resource centers. This year we worked with lawmakers and Gov. Sanders' administration to renew that funding for the 2023–2024 budget cycle. Pro-life pregnancy help organizations across Arkansas are already applying for this funding, and we are confident they will be able to use it to help provide pro-life options to women and families with unexpected pregnancies.

6. Goal Met: Standing Up to Planned Parenthood and the ACLU and Those Who Want to Weaken our Abortion Laws. Now that abortion is illegal in Arkansas, we need to keep it that way. This year we worked with Arkansas Right to Life and our friends in the Arkansas Legislature to defeat legislation that would have weakened Arkansas' pro-life laws. Family Council President Jerry Cox also testified against a proposed constitutional amendment that would have recognized a constitutional right to abortion on demand in Arkansas.

7. Goal Met: Keeping Arkansans Informed and Empowering People with the Truth about Current Issues. All year, our monthly update letters, regular email alerts, video livestreams, media interviews, and speaking engagements provided a biblically-based perspective on issues and an honest assessment of Arkansas politics. Family Council has been uniquely qualified to provide information and resources like no other statewide organization.

8. Goal Met: Empowering People to Make a Big Difference Through Our Rapid Response Network. In 2019 we formed the Family Council Rapid Response Team, a network of over 400 people in every area of Arkansas. When we ask them to call their lawmakers about legislation, they call. When we activate them on some local issue in their city or county, they step up and make their voices heard. On average, we have about three to five Rapid Response Team members in each of Arkansas' 100 State House Districts. We worked to grow our Rapid Response Network this year, and we empowered each of them to make their voices heard at the capitol during the 2023 legislative session.

9. Goal Met: Preventing Marijuana Legalization in Arkansas. After voters defeated the 2022 marijuana amendment, we promised that we would continue to fight against marijuana's legalization in 2023. We were able to oppose pro-marijuana legislation at the capitol this year, and we supported a new law that prohibits Delta-8 THC and other substances made from industrial hemp or cannabis.

10. Goal Met: Continuing Our Effort to Make Every City and County Pro-Life. Now that the U.S. Supreme Court has reversed *Roe v. Wade*, it is more important than ever for communities to stand against abortion. Last year we set out to double the number of pro-life cities and counties in Arkansas. We aren't there yet, but this year we updated and re-published our informational toolkit that guides citizens and policymakers in passing pro-life resolutions in their communities. We have used this resource to help Arkansans pass resolutions affirming their city or county is Pro-Life.



From Left: Family Council staff members Erin Hogan, Jerry Cox, and Charisse Dean rally at the Arkansas State Capitol in the 2023 March for Life.



Family Council staff member Erin Hogan (left) testifies alongside Rep. Julie Mayberry in the House Public Health Committee on March 9.



Above: Family Council staff member Luke McCoy testifies against Act 43 expanding Arkansas' law regarding public drinking in entertainment districts on January 24.



Above: Sen. Tyler Dees presents the Social Media Safety Act requiring parental consent for social media accounts on April 6. Family Council is proud to support this good law.

Celebrating Family Council's Greatest Hits This Year

Funding Pregnancy Resource Centers: This year we secured \$1 million to fund a grant program for pro-life pregnancy help organizations. We need to eliminate the demand for abortion, and these publicly-funded grants are an excellent way the State of Arkansas can do exactly that. By funding alternatives to abortion, we are helping pregnancy centers across Arkansas save the lives of unborn children.

Defending Religious Freedom: Arkansas now has the nation's best religious freedom law—Act 733 of 2023, the Conscience Protection Act. This good law protects religious liberty and bans government discrimination against religious people or organizations. By making important clarifications to the state Religious Freedom Restoration Act, Act 733 helps safeguard the ability of religious people and religious organizations to operate according to their deeply held convictions.

Creating School Choice and Keeping a Bad Agenda Out of the Classroom: We worked with Gov. Sanders and her team on the LEARNS Act. This good law addresses three of our important goals for education. It prevents the teaching of gender identity studies before fifth grade. It prevents the teaching of Critical Race Theory. And it ushers in real school choice with almost \$6,000 per year following the student to a public or private school—and it even provides funds for homeschoolers.

Fighting Human Trafficking: We worked with our friends in the legislature to pass five good laws against human trafficking. These good laws increased penalties for trafficking, broadened who can be charged, and gave victims greater ability to file civil lawsuits against perpetrators.

Blocking Pro-Abortion Legislation: As predicted, pro-abortion lawmakers attacked our good pro-life laws. They introduced a constitutional amendment that would have repealed our pro-life Amendment 68 and made abortion a state constitutional right. They also attempted to pass laws allowing abortions for health reasons and in cases of incest. We joined Arkansas Right to Life in opposing these bad laws, and all of them were defeated.

Addressing Abortion Drugs and Abortion Referrals: The problem with abortion drugs has proven hard to solve, but we made progress. Working with our friends at Arkansas Right to Life and in the legislature, we helped secure passage of a law that requires an ultrasound to be performed before a woman can be referred out-of-state for an abortion. We also helped secure passage of a law to revoke the licenses of doctors who provide abortion-causing drugs.

Protecting Nursing Home Residents: We thought the nursing home industry might introduce legislation to make it easier to withhold care from the terminally ill—putting us on a path to assisted suicide—but they didn't. They also did not attempt to shield themselves from lawsuits if they neglect or abuse a resident. Our work against these forces in previous sessions is paying off. Many lawmakers don't want to deal with such bad legislation.

Letting Clergy Visit Patients: Two years ago, we helped pass the No Patient Left Alone Act. This good law allows people in hospitals and other facilities to have visitors during a pandemic. This year we strengthened this good law by ensuring that pastors must be allowed to visit if the facility allows any other visitors.

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Celebrating Family Council's Greatest Hits This Year *(continued)*

Stopping Marijuana: We helped stop a proposed state constitutional amendment to legalize recreational marijuana statewide. In addition, we worked to ban Delta-8 THC, a psychoactive marijuana derivative that is currently legal and being sold to kids in some parts of Arkansas.

Blunting the LGBT Agenda and Helping Homeschoolers: We helped secure passage of a bill that requires public schools to provide sex-specific facilities that correspond to the student's biological sex. In addition, we helped pass a bill that prevents teachers and students from being forced to use pronouns that do not correspond with the student's biological sex. In the homeschool arena, we successfully worked against a law that would have required state testing of all homeschoolers. We increased homeschoolers' opportunities by expanding their ability to play sports at public schools.

Suing Doctors for Sex-Change Procedures on Children: Right now the SAFE Act lawmakers passed in 2021 that prevents gender-reassignment procedures on children is tied up in court. This year we helped secure passage of a law that enables child victims of these surgeries or medical procedures to sue doctors until age 33.

We helped pass two good laws that protect children online.

Protecting Kids from Pornography and Other Dangers Online: We helped pass two good laws that protect children online. One requires age verification with a driver's license to be scanned and uploaded before a person can access an Internet pornography website. The other requires age ver-

ification to ensure that children under age 18 cannot open a social media account online without parental consent.

Creating a Culture of Life: In 2021, we secured passage of a law that allows cities to pass resolutions declaring themselves to be Pro-Life. This year we expanded this law to include counties and any other political subdivisions of the state. We are looking forward to school districts declaring themselves to be pro-life.

Eliminating Exemptions for Public Libraries in the State's Obscenity Statute: A bill by Sen. Sullivan and Rep. Gonzalez revealed a lot about some librarians. State law allows librarians to promote obscene material. When Sen. Sullivan and Rep. Gonzalez tried to make librarians subject to the same obscenity laws that apply to the rest of us, the librarians alleged it was "book banning." The bill passed, and Arkansas law now prohibits public libraries from sharing obscene material.

Hosting Our Leadership Summit in Little Rock. In August Family Council hosted a worldview and leadership conference in Little Rock—and it was a huge success! Citizens, church leaders, and elected officials from all over Arkansas gathered to learn about the worldviews that we see colliding in America right now.

Honoring Arkansas' Longest-Married Couple: Family Council honored Cleovis and Arwilda Whiteside of White Hall for their 84 years of marriage. Mr. and Mrs. Whiteside have 12 children—six daughters and six sons—42 grandchildren, 101 great grandchildren, and 16 great-great grandchildren. We know of no other living couple in the United States who has been married longer than they have. What a legacy! Mr. and Mrs. Whiteside are a living testimony that love and commitment really can last a lifetime.



Family Council's 2023 Foundations of Truth Summit equipped people to make a difference in their communities.



Above: Mr. and Mrs. Whiteside recently celebrated 84 years of marriage. They are Arkansas' Longest Married Couple for 2023.

Here are Just a Few of Family Council's Goals for 2024

Making Abortion Obsolete: Secure \$1M in Funding for Pregnancy Help Organizations, and Oppose Pro-Abortion Ballot Efforts. Now that abortion is mostly prohibited, we need to make it irrelevant and unthinkable. In 2022 we worked with the legislature and the governor to secure \$1 million in funding for pregnancy centers. We did the same for 2023, and we plan to be back at the State Capitol in 2024. In addition, this year we've raised more than \$100,000 in private funds to give to Arkansas pregnancy centers. We're also monitoring pro-abortion forces to see if they may hire petition canvassers to place an abortion amendment on the 2024 Arkansas General Election Ballot. If they do, we will fight it with all of our strength.

Standing Up for Homeschooling: Help Parents Raise a Countercultural Generation. Families who raise their children to be respectful, responsible, godly adults are the countercultural movement of the twenty-first century. Homeschooling may be one of our best tools against the cultural decay we see around us. Since 1998 our Education Alliance homeschool division has fought for homeschool rights at the legislature, worked with the Department of Education to create more homeschool opportunities, and provided services ranging from how to get started to how to graduate and get into college. We plan to continue this good work in the coming year.

Distributing Voter's Guides: Helping People Vote Their Values. For more than 30 years, voters have relied on our voter's guide for information on where candidates stand on issues like abortion, school choice, guns, critical race theory, marijuana, the LGBT agenda, and more. We survey the candidates, publish their answers, and let the voters

decide who reflects their values. We look forward to distributing tens of thousands of voter's guides in the 2024 election cycle.

Growing Our Staff: Become Stronger So We Can Take On Bigger Challenges. We've pretty much reached the limit of how much work can be done by a staff our size. We need a larger staff to meet the challenges and opportunities ahead of us. We intend to hire a church liaison to work with ministers, a staff attorney to help with legislation, an assistant bookkeeper to help manage the growing financial data we process, and an I/T and social media manager. This will help us make a bigger impact at the local level as well as at the capitol in Little Rock.

Fighting Indecency: Blunt the LGBT Agenda in Public Schools and Libraries. We are working to pass laws and empower citizens to clean up their schools and libraries. Drag Queen Story Hours, obscene library books, vulgar reading assignments, and critical race theory have no place at school or at the library.

Standing Up for Parental Rights: Build Better Families in Arkansas. Most states have very few laws protecting parental rights. Every parent has a God-given right and responsibility to raise and care for their children. Our laws must reflect that fact and protect the rights of parents and children in Arkansas. Arkansans thrive when we respect parental rights and promote good families.

Don't Forget
TO PRE-ORDER YOUR FREE COPIES OF
OUR 2024 ARKANSAS VOTER'S GUIDE

Our 2024 voter's guide tells you where candidates stand on issues like abortion, school choice, guns, critical race theory, marijuana, the LGBT agenda, and more. We survey the candidates, and we publish their answers in print and online. You will receive a free copy of the 2024 Arkansas Voter's Guide in February. If you would like to pre-order additional guides for your family or church, call our office at (501) 375-7000 or visit ArkansasVotersGuide.com. We will mail them to you as soon as they are available.



MERRY CHRISTMAS FROM FAMILY COUNCIL!

In 2021 my last living uncle passed away at the age of 100. Not very long before he died, I visited him at his home in Sevier County. We talked about people we had known—most of whom had long since passed away and whose children had inherited their land and possessions. “In the end,” he said as he waved his hand at the furniture in his living room, “we’re all just borrowing it anyway.” That’s not a bad way to look at it.

That’s why I am so thankful there are friends like you who give generously to our work. It’s all God’s money, and He meets our needs. But every dollar Family Council receives passes through the hands of our friends. Unless they follow God’s leading to help us, we can’t do the work that needs to be done. No matter how much money each of us has, we all face the same question about how much God wants us to give away and who to give to. Family Council works hard to promote, protect, and strengthen traditional family values in Arkansas, and we trust the Lord to direct our friends across the state to support our work.

Next year Family Council turns 35 years old. Since 1989 God has graciously met our needs every step of the way, because friends like you supported our work with your finances and your time. As the year draws to a close, I hope you will remember us and the important work we’re doing in Arkansas. As the Lord leads you, I hope you will consider supporting us with a generous, tax-deductible donation before December 31. We have big plans for the coming year, and I would like for you to be a part of what we are doing.

Thank you for your friendship, your financial support, your kind words, and your prayers. Please call on us any time if there is ever anything me or my staff can do for you. I hope you and your family have a merry Christmas and a happy new year!

Sincerely,

Jerry Thank you!!

Jerry Cox, President



From Left: Charisse Dean, Luke McCoy, David Cox, Jerry Cox, Doris Cox, Erin Hogan, Leslie Byrd, Lisa Crook, Zoe Dean