

GUEST COLUMNISTS

Morris: We cannot live in fear of terrorism

By G. Scott Morris, Special to The Daily Memphian

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New Orleans police and federal agents investigate a deadly New Year's Day truck attack on Bourbon Street in New Orleans on Wednesday, Jan. 1, 2025. (Chris Granger/The New Orleans Advocate via AP)

In the wake of the recent terror attack in New Orleans, it is easy to let fear take root in our hearts.

The images, stories and uncertainty make us question the safety of our world. Fear is a

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natural response, but we must remember: fear cannot and must not rule our lives.

Health. He is a regular contributor to The Daily Memphian.

I suspect a large percentage of Daily Memphian readers have been to New Orleans and walked on Bourbon Street. My first time was on New Year's Eve 1969, the day before the University of Georgia played Arkansas in the Sugar Bowl.

I walked up and down Bourbon Street listening to Arkansas fans call the hogs. People walked shoulder to shoulder. It was wild and exhilarating, and no one feared that a truck might run them over.

Morris: Carter was instrumental in promoting health care as a human right

I am certain that today our police are looking at every possible way to make sure something similar can't happen on Beale Street. Still, the element of fear has now ratcheted up.

When tragedy strikes, as it did in New Orleans, it's natural to feel overwhelmed, even helpless. We watch the news, scroll through updates, and see the faces of victims. The pain and grief of loved ones affected weigh on our hearts.

Terrorism seeks to sow fear, to disrupt our lives, and to make us question our trust in one another. That fear tempts us to retreat, to isolate, to live smaller lives.

But that can't be what we do.

Morris: 'Mr. Scott, why do you care so much about Christmas?'

A lot of us have taken down the trees and put away the lights, but today we are still in the Christian season of Christmas — day 11 of the 12 Days of Christmas.

But whether or not you are a person of faith, I hope you will take to heart a piece of the Christmas story.

At the time of Jesus' birth, the gospel writer Luke tells us, shepherds in the fields were tending their flocks when an angel suddenly appeared. In that moment, the shepherds, ordinary people like you and me, trembled at an extraordinary event.

The angel's first words to them acknowledges their fear, but immediately points them toward hope. The shepherds are told "Do not be afraid."

While the shepherds' reaction is understandable, the angel's message teaches us that fear can be transformed into courage and purpose when we place our trust in something greater.

Morris: Our local needs outweigh our national desires

The paralyzing helplessness that comes from fear is human, but it is not the end of the story.

The next part of Luke's story was the shepherds' resolve to go — together, in the strength of a group — to see the reason for the good news the angel brought.

Fear. Reassurance. Good news. Binding together. Action. Hope.

“ The paralyzing helplessness that comes from fear is human, but it is not the end of the story. ”

Even if you don't follow the Christian faith, you can see the health of this pattern. We don't stop at the intersection of fear and terror. However small our actions may seem, we move from fear toward hope, and we do it with more certainty and strength when we do it together.

Here in Memphis, we know the power of community and resilience. We've faced challenges before, and we've risen together.

Now is that time again, the time to lean on that strength, to reach out in kindness, and to support one another as we grieve for those affected by the tragedy in New Orleans, including those in our own midst who may be connected to New Orleans.

My favorite memory of walking down Bourbon Street was on Dec. 16, 2003, the day the University of Memphis beat North Texas in the New Orleans Bowl. We hadn't been to a bowl game in anyone's living memory. But from that day onward, things changed in how our city saw itself in the world of college football.

Morris: Spiritual problems require spiritual solutions

Yes, I know that was just about football, but that day lifted us up as a city driven by resilience and pulled forward by hope. I implore us all not to let this terror attack allow the terrorists to win by impacting our desire to stand together.

The mantra "Don't be afraid" is repeatedly spoken to the disciples of Jesus and to all who seek a life lived not in the shadows but in the light.

I pray with all my heart for the families of those who have been torn apart by this act of terror, and I pray equally for us, that we will turn our back on the power of fear.

TOPICS

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