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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE 11/7/17

Billy Graham Avenue Dedication

Cleveland extended Billy Graham Avenue on Tuesday to honor one of its most famous students on his 99th birthday.

In 2014 the city renamed a portion of 15th Street between North Ocoee Street and Parker Street for Rev. Graham. In 1936 Rev. Graham enrolled at what was then Bob Jones University in Cleveland.

The Billy Graham Avenue extension picks up at Parker Street and continues to People Street, completing its route through the Lee Campus.

The street sign unveiling Tuesday was relayed live via Skype from Cleveland to Montreat, N.C. where the Graham family, including Rev. Graham, was watching.

State Rep. Kevin Brooks announced to the Graham family that Rev. Graham was made an honorary Tennessean by Gov. Bill Haslam. Mayor Rowland announced Rev. Graham is now also an honorary Cleveland citizen too.

Mayor Tom Rowland began the broadcast at 11 a.m.

“Good morning Mr. Graham, Franklin, Will, Gigi and everyone in Montreat N.C. Greetings from Cleveland, Tennessee. The City Council has extended Billy Graham Avenue to go through the entire campus of Lee University.”

The mayor introduced Rev. Jay McCluskey, senior pastor at North Cleveland Baptist Church, to lead a dedicatory prayer.

“What an honor,” Rev. McCluskey told Dr. Graham through Skype. “When I was a young boy in the late 60s, I went around the golf course with my dad in Black Mountain, N.C. and we met Billy Graham. Now five decades later I’m helping celebrate your 99th birthday. It’s a deep, deep honor.”

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Rev. McCluskey said he attended Rev. Graham's Knoxville Crusade at Neyland Stadium in 1970 and "what a blessing that was."

In his prayer, Rev. MCluskey noted ". . . roads are designed to take us somewhere, and throughout his life You have blessed Billy Graham to point the road to the Heavenly Father; a road that goes by the foot of the Cross, makes a brief stop at the tomb and ascends to that place in Eternity where the roads are made of gold. . ."

Mayor Rowland introduced City Councilmen Bill Estes, Tom Cassada and Charlie McKenzie.

The mayor introduced state Rep. Kevin Brooks.

Mr. Brooks told Rev. Graham it was a great honor to speak to him, and now be his representative.

"My grandmother told everyone she met that her grandson lived in the same dormitory where Billy Graham lived in Cleveland, Tennessee," Brooks said. "It's an honor to follow in your footsteps."

Mayor Rowland told Graham that he also attended a Knoxville crusade as well as one at Madison Square Garden in New York City.

"Thank you for all the lives you have changed" Mayor Rowland told Graham. He invited the Graham family to visit Cleveland again.

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