

Church commissions SpaceX astronaut for upcoming mission

March 29, 2022

University Baptist Church of Clear Lake in Houston commissioned one of its own March 27 to go out to a distant mission field.

Astronaut Bob Hines, a member of University Baptist, is scheduled to launch into space April 19. He will spend 144 days on the International Space Station and be the pilot on the SpaceX Crew-4 mission, a four-person team that will launch out of Cape Canaveral.

March 27 was the last Sunday before Hines went into a three-week quarantine as preparation for launch.

Kyle Wilson, associate pastor of student ministries at University Baptist, led the congregation in a prayer over the Hines family, including Bob's wife Kelli and their three daughters.

In addition to praying for safety during the mission, Wilson also emphasized that it was the church's duty to care for the family during Hines' absence.

"We have the honor and the blessing as those that get to stay here to take care of Bob's family," Wilson said.

Fulfilling a dream

Hines expressed his gratefulness to God that he was fulfilling a childhood dream. He spoke of his excitement at seeing Earth from afar.

"[I] want to look at this amazing creation that God has given us and just be

in awe of it," he said.

Hines is an active member of the church, where he has served as a Sunday school teacher. His daughter also sings in the praise team.

This is not the first astronaut commissioning service for University Baptist, which is located less than three miles away from the NASA Johnson Space Center.

David Hardage, executive director of the Baptist General Convention of Texas, has served as interim pastor at the church the last two months. He admitted to being surprised when he learned he was preaching to literal rocket scientists each Sunday. It was an honor, he said, to witness the church's commissioning of Hines.

"The church pledged to pray for him when he launches in mid-April and while he's on the International Space Station," he said. "Additionally, the church will be diligent in providing care for his wife and three daughters while away. Bob is a strong believer and committed church member and is also quite excited about fulfilling a lifelong dream of space flight."