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FAITH UNDER FIRE
WorldNetDaily Exclusive

Virginia governor endorses ban on 'Jesus' prayer

Dispute arose when chaplains ordered to accommodate everyone in audience

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Gov. Timothy Kaine of Virginia has affirmed his support for a new statewide policy under which state troopers serving as chaplains will not be allowed to pray "in Jesus name," explaining that he can pray "without mentioning Jesus."

"I would never do anything to inhibit anybody's religious worship. It doesn't diminish my ability to worship my God, to pray to the Father or the Lord without mentioning Jesus Christ," he said.

As a result, a coalition of pastors from a wide range of Christian groups and church denominations across the state is planning a rally Nov. 1, just three days before the fall elections, to protest the move that resulted in the resignations of six of the state's 17 trooper chaplains.

The "Stand Up For Jesus" rally is set for Nov. 1 at 10 a.m. at the Capitol Square Bell Tower in Richmond, "within earshot of the governor's mansion," according to former Navy Chaplain Gordon Klingenschmitt, who fought a battle with the U.S. military over the issue and lost his career as a result. He later won a victory in Congress allowing other chaplains to pray as their conscience dictates.

[WND reported earlier when the pastors wrote to Kaine seeking a change in the policy that suddenly was announced by Col. W. Steven Flaherty to chaplains.](#) The dispute became public

through the work of Charles W. Carrico Sr., a member of Virginia's House of Delegates, a former trooper.

(Story continues below)

In a GodTube video, Kaine indicates there should be no problem for Christian chaplains, because he can pray without any mention of Jesus' name.

In his written response to the pastors, Kaine said, "It is important for state employees to be sensitive to the entire population who would attend such events."

"Most of the members of the chaplaincy program understand this guidance from the leadership and accept it. I am very sorry that some members feel that this rule about the public ceremonies is unacceptable," he continued.

The governor also chided the pastors for mentioning the words "liberals," "atheists" and "homosexuals."

"I did note that the attachments to your letter contained some extraneous references to energizing voters before November 4 and disparaging comments about 'liberals,' 'atheists' and 'homosexuals.' I take matters of faith and religious liberty very seriously and am offended when people attempt to inflame passions about these sacred matters for political ends," he wrote.

Klingenschmitt said information he sent to pastors noted that several "'churches' with offensive names" had signed onto the effort seeking the reinstatement of the chaplains. "Unfortunately, a group of atheists and homosexuals are signing the pledge to combat our efforts and confuse pastors," he advised.

Besides misunderstanding that information, Klingenschmitt said the governor also made a number of misstatements in his letter, including his claim that, "No one lost their jobs."

"Six chaplains lost their jobs as chaplains, having effectively 'turned in their chaplain badge' in protest over the governor's 'non-sectarian' prayer policy," Klingenschmitt said. "They are no longer permitted to perform chaplain duties, until they comply with the prayer policy and get reinstated."

Klingenschmitt said the chaplains "were given direct verbal orders to stop praying 'in Jesus name' ... [and] faced with a choice between disobeying orders and violating their conscience by publicly denying the name of Jesus Christ, they resigned."

That's exactly what persecution is, he continued.

The governor's response was "degrading and insulting to me, to the chaplains, to the 86 pastors, and to our faith," Klingenschmitt said.

"In response, I am organization a statewide prayer rally, entitled 'Virginia, Stand Up For Jesus' on November 1st at Capitol square Bell Tower," he said. "We the people of Virginia will assemble to pray in Jesus name, even in public, the very act of prayer these chaplains are forbidden to do by Governor Kaine."

"The bottom line is these chaplains were given a choice between disobeying orders and violating their conscience, so they resigned as heroes who stood up for Jesus," he said.

Klingenschmitt, whose battle with the military over his use of the phrase remains in court where he's seeking reinstatement, said he "cannot believe we live in a society where government officials literally dictate the content of a chaplain's prayers and dare to punish or exclude chaplains who pray 'in Jesus name.'"

State officials said they were worried about future lawsuits because of an appeals court opinion written by former Supreme Court Justice Sandra Day O'Connor, who said discriminating against anyone who prays "in Jesus name" among officials rotating responsibilities to open city meetings is fair and reasonable.

That dispute focused on Rev. Hashmel Turner, a resident of Fredericksburg, Va., and a member of the town council, who was a part of a rotation of council members who prayed at the council meetings. He ended his prayers "in Jesus name."

That phrase, however, offended a listener, who prompted the involvement of several activist groups that threatened a lawsuit if the elected Christian council member continued to be allowed to pray "in Jesus name."

The city then adopted a non-sectarian prayer requirement, censoring Turner and imposing a ban on any reference to "Jesus."

O'Connor wrote: "The restriction that prayers be nonsectarian in nature is designed to make the prayers accessible to people who come from a variety of backgrounds, not to exclude or disparage a particular faith."

Klingenschmitt noted, "Ironically, she admitted Turner was excluded from participating solely because of the Christian content of his prayer. The Fredericksburg government violated everybody's rights by establishing a nonsectarian religion, and requiring all prayers conform, or face punishment of exclusion."

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