

House OKs protection for clergy refusing gay marriage

ATLANTA (AP) — Georgia lawmakers on Thursday approved a bill explicitly stating that religious officials can refuse to perform gay marriages, their first significant action on a variety of proposals creating legal exemptions for same-sex marriage opponents.

Supporters of the "Pastor Protection Act" acknowledge that religious leaders already have that protection under the U.S. Constitution, but argue it will reassure them following the U.S. Supreme Court's recent ruling effectively legalizing gay marriage.

The court's decision has prompted at least eight bills that would create exemptions for opponents of the marriages in Georgia, one of more than 20 states where lawmakers have introduced such proposals, the ACLU has said.

The Georgia bill shielding religious officials moved quickly through the House with backing from the chamber's top Republican, House Speaker David Ralston, and little resistance from gay-rights advocates and business leaders who have opposed broader bills. Ralston was criticized by some Republican lawmakers and Evangelical groups, however, when he questioned the need for other measures, including versions of the federal "Religious Freedom Restoration Act."

Thursday's debate put that split on display. Conservative House members said the pastor bill didn't go far enough but



AP Photo/David Goldman

Fellow lawmakers watch as House Speaker David Ralston speaks on the House floor in favor of a bill explicitly stating that religious officials don't have to perform same-sex marriages that violate their faith, Thursday at the Statehouse in Atlanta.

all voted in favor. Several read aloud from the Bible before the House vote. Rep. Kevin Cooke, R-Carrollton, specifically called for action on a broader "Religious Freedom Restoration" bill; he didn't cast a vote on the pastor bill.

The broader bills would limit government's ability to infringe on religious beliefs without a compelling interest. State Sen. Josh McKoon, a Republican sponsoring one of the measures, has cited one example of a student group accused of violating hazing policies with a foot-washing ceremony at a public college. If Georgia had such a law, school officials would have been unlikely to take that step, McKoon has said.

Instead, Ralston floated the idea of a law specifically exempting religious leaders from performing weddings, and Rep. Kevin Tanner, R-Dawsonville, introduced the bill this year. The bill

passed by the House also allows religious institutions to refuse to rent their property for "objectionable" events.

Rep. Ed Setzler, R-Acworth, is sponsoring one of the broader bills. He said the pastor bill should be the start of a fight for religious freedom.

"This is an important protection," Setzler said. "But friends, we do have to do more. We were elected to protect the rights of all people."

Ralston, giving a rare speech from the House well, called the bill an opportunity to focus "where there is agreement and mutual trust." Citing Abraham Lincoln's use of the Bible verse "A house divided against itself cannot stand," Ralston said the bill could create "the first productive discussion" on a charged issue.

The bill now goes to the state Senate for review.

Pope to take trip to Mexico

VATICAN CITY (AP) — History's first Latin American pope travels to Mexico on Friday for a weeklong tour of some of the most violent, poverty-stricken and peripheral places in the Americas. He'll be bringing a message of hope and solidarity to victims of drug violence, trafficking and discrimination — a message the Vatican hopes will also resonate north of the border.

Nearly four decades after St. John Paul II began his globe-trotting papacy in Mexico, Francis too will begin his trip by praying before the Virgin of Guadalupe shrine. But after that, he will be entering into uncharted papal territory. Here are five things to know about Francis' trip to the largest Spanish-speaking Catholic country in the world:

Orthodox pit stop

Francis is known for his spontaneity, but even by Franciscan standards, the bombshell dropped last week was big.

For the first time ever, a pope and a patriarch of the Russian Orthodox Church will meet Friday in Cuba, in a stopover en route to Mexico. The Vatican sees the meeting as a historic step in the path toward healing the 1,000-year schism that split Christianity.

Popes as far back as Paul VI have met with the Istanbul-based Ecumenical Patriarch, "first among equals" in the 250 million-strong Orthodox Church. But the Russian Church — the biggest and most powerful in Orthodoxy — has always kept its distance from Rome.

The common concern over the plight of Christians in Syria and Iraq has brought the two churches together,

but that's not the only reason Patriarch Kirill has finally agreed to a meeting.

'Mexicanization'

Francis made the first major diplomatic faux pas of his papacy when, in a private email to a friend last year, he warned that Argentina's increasing drug problem risked turning it into a trafficking haven like Mexico, where cartels have terrorized the population and infiltrated police and other public institutions.

The "Mexicanization" comment understandably irked Mexico, and the Vatican promptly apologized. But it underscored Francis' tough line on drug trafficking and corruption, which he has called a sin incompatible with Christianity.

Francis is expected to address both blights during his Feb. 12-18 visit, though he has said he's not bringing policy solutions to fix Mexico's ills. But relatives of some of the 43 students who disappeared in 2014 in suspicious circumstances have been invited to Francis' final Mass in Ciudad Juarez, once considered the murder capital of the world.

Church-State relations

Francis has previously urged his bishops not to shy away from denouncing corruption and organized crime, and he may well do the same in Mexico.

"Above all, we have to raise our voices to condemn the corruption and links that exist between certain power structures and the drug cartels and narcotraffickers that allow them to move freely with impunity," the Vatican secretary of state,

Cardinal Pietro Parolin, told the Italian weekly *Famiglia Cristiana* recently.

It was perhaps a diplomatic way of addressing a Mexican church that even Mexican prelates say shows too much deference to the country's wealthy and powerful.

Francis, however, has signaled his priorities: Last year he made a cardinal out of the bishop of Morelia, Mexico, and will honor his ministry to victims of drug violence by visiting his diocese.

Cross-border prayer

The highlight of the trip comes on the final day, when Francis travels to Ciudad Juarez and prays at Mexico's northern border for all who have died trying to cross. A group of migrants in El Paso, Texas, will join him in prayer across the frontier, and then watch Francis' subsequent Mass in Juarez in an El Paso stadium.

Francis has demanded that countries welcome migrants and refugees fleeing poverty and oppression, calling for bold new solutions and denouncing the "globalization of indifference" that the world shows migrants. His appeal comes amid a U.S. presidential campaign where immigration is a hot-button issue, with Republican contenders Donald Trump and Ted Cruz vowing to expel Mexicans and build a better border wall.

Will Francis' message get any airtime north of the border?

"I'm not sure people are paying attention to it," said Neomi De Anda, assistant professor of religious studies at the University of Dayton who grew up in El Paso. "I'm not sure our political candidates are all that interested."

BRIEFLY

Faith-based film highlights hope

PENDLETON — A faith-based drama that focuses on a young family struggling with modern day issues and temptations will be shown in Pendleton.

The public is invited to view "War Room" Saturday at 6:30 p.m. at Harris Junior Academy, 3121 S.W. Hailey Ave., Pendleton. The film presents a story of hope, forgiveness and renewal.

The event is sponsored by the Pendleton Seventh-day Adventist Church. For more information, call 541-276-0882. For more about the film, visit www.warroomthemovie.com.

Pendleton churches host Lenten services

PENDLETON — The special Wednesday Lenten Worship Services continue through March 16 in Pendleton.

The weekly events feature a light soup and bread supper at 6 p.m., followed by a special service. The services rotate at different venues and feature sermons by area pastors. The schedule includes:

Feb. 17: Peace Lutheran Church, 210 N.W. Ninth St. Sermon by Rev. Charlotte Wells.

Feb. 24: Episcopal Church of the Redeemer, 241 S.E. Second St. Sermon by Rev. Roger Harwerth.

March 2: First Presbyterian Church, 201 S.W. Dorion Ave. Sermon by Rev. Jim Pierce.

March 9: Peace Lutheran Church, 210 N.W. Ninth St. Sermon by Rev. Rod Harwood.

March 16: First United Methodist Church, 352 S.E. Second St. Sermon by Rev. Kate Botorff.

Each of the services features the liturgy of the Holden Evening Prayer, written by Marty Haugen while in residence at Holden Village, a Lutheran retreat center near Lake Chelan, Washington. In addition, communion will be taken.

The gatherings are free, but weekly freewill offerings will be taken to benefit Domestic Violence Services.

Concert features orphaned children

HERMISTON — An international children's choir featuring rescued children ages 6-13 will perform a community concert in Hermiston.

The energetic, culturally unique, faith-based program by His Little Feet brings attention to the plight of millions of orphaned and vulnerable children living in the world today and offers opportunities for people to make a difference. The concert is Saturday, Feb. 20 at 6 p.m. at Armand Larive Middle School, 1497 S.W. Ninth St., Hermiston.

Admission is free, but a love offering will be taken to support the His Little Feet ministry. In addition, merchandise will be available for purchase.

For more information, visit www.hislittlefeet.org.

Catholic author is keynote speaker for conference

PENDLETON — The Northwest Catholic Men's Conference welcomes author Mark Shea as its keynote speaker.

Describing himself as a double-jump convert, Shea said he was raised as an agnostic pagan. He became a non-denominational evangelical in 1979 and entered the Catholic church in 1987.

Until recently, Shea wrote a blog entitled "Catholic and Enjoying It!" In addition, he has penned 15 books about church teachings, Catholic controversies and even "The Da Vinci Code" and "The Chronicles of Narnia." Shea speaks around the country and is a columnist.

The conference kicks off Friday, Feb. 26 at 4 p.m. at the Pendleton Convention Center, 1601 Westgate. It ends with a blessing Saturday, Feb. 27 at 5 p.m. The cost is \$40, which includes three meals. Men and their sons, ages 15 and older, are invited to attend.

For more information or registration forms, visit www.nwcmg.com or by call 541-276-3615. For more about Shea, visit www.patheos.com/blogs/markshea or www.facebook.com/mark.shea.2.

CHURCH DIRECTORY

Worship with us!

Peace Lutheran Church
210 NW 9th, Pendleton
Join us Sundays
9:30 am Sunday Worship
10:30 am Fellowship
11:00 am Sunday School & Adult Class
~Come and be at Peace~
on 1290 KUMA noon each Sunday

Faith Center Church
Worshiping God
Loving People
108 S. Main • 276-9569
Sunday Worship
10:30 am
Sr. Pastor, Ray O'Grady
pendletonfaithcenter.org

St. Johns Episcopal Church
All People
Are Welcome
Scripture, Tradition
and Reason
Family service 9am Sunday
Gladys Ave & 7th Hermiston
Fr. Dan Lediard, Priest, PH: 567-6672

FAITH LUTHERAN CHURCH
in Mission for Christ LCMC
Bible Study.....9:00 AM
Sunday Worship.....10:30 AM
Red Lion Hotel
(Oregon Trail Room)
www.faithpendleton.org

FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
-Presbyterian Church (USA)-
201 SW Dorion Ave.
Pendleton
Service of Worship - 10:00 am
Children's Sunday School - 10:20 am
Fellowship - 11:00 am
www.pendletonpresbyterian.com
Open Hearted...Open Minded

PENDLETON FIRST CHURCH OF GOD
FIRST SERVICE 8:30 AM
SECOND SERVICE 10:30 AM
712 SW 27th ST.
541-276-1894
www.fcogpendleton.com

Living Word Christian Center
Sunday Worship 10:00am
Wednesday Bible Study 7:00pm
Youth Classes - Nursery thru grade Sun & Wed
YOUTH GROUPS: Jr Hi, Wed 7pm
Sr Hi, Sun after the service
Sharon Miller, Pastor
401 Northgate, Pendleton
541-278-8082
www.livingwordcc.com

The Salvation Army
Center for Worship & Service
Sunday Worship Service
9:30 - Sunday School
10:30 - Worship Service
Wednesday Bible Study
5:30 Family Fellowship Meal - 6:00 Bible Study
COME AS YOU ARE
150 SE EMIGRANT
(541)276-3369

NEW HOPE COMMUNITY CHURCH
1350 S. Highway 395, Hermiston
Sunday Worship Services
English- Pastor Dave Andrus
9:00 & 10:45 am
Spanish- Pastor Genaro Loreda
9:00 & 10:15 am
Classes for kids during all services
For more information call
541-567-8441

Seventh-Day Adventist Church
Saturday Services
Pendleton
1401 SW Goodwin Place
276-0882
Sabbath School 9:20 am
Worship Service 10:45 am

GRACE AND MERCY LUTHERAN CHURCH, ELCA
OPEN HEARTS - OPEN DOOR
www.graceandmercy.lutheran.org
Sunday Worship 9:00 a.m.
Sunday School 10:00 a.m. (Nursery Provided)
Fellowship, Refreshments & Sunday School
Check Out our Facebook Page or Website for More Information
541-289-4535
Tom Inch, Pastor
Grace and Mercy Lutheran Church, ELCA
164 E. Main St. / P.O. Box 1108
Hermiston, Oregon 97838

Grace Baptist Church
555 SW 11th, Hermiston
567-9497
Nursery provided for all services
Sunday School - 9:30 AM
Worship - 10:45 AM
6:00 pm
Wed Prayer & Worship - 7:00 PM
"Proclaiming God's word, growing in God's grace"

First United Methodist Church
352 SE 2nd Street
Pendleton, OR
541-276-2616
Sunday Worship 9am
Open Hearts, Open Hands, Open Doors
Facebook: www.facebook.com/FUMCPendleton
Services are broadcast every Sunday on KUMA-1290 AM @ 11am
Rev. Dr. Jim Pierce, pastor

Community Presbyterian Church
14 Martin Drive,
Umatilla, OR
922-3250
Worship: 10 AM Sunday
School at 11:30

THE COUNTRY CHURCH
Pastor James Becker
32742 Diagonal RD
Hermiston OR 97838
Sunday School 10 am
Worship 7 am
Evening Service 7 pm
Bible Study Wednesdays 7 pm
Firestarter Youth Ministry
(Ages 12-17)
Monday @ 6 pm

PILOT ROCK BAPTIST CHURCH
585 SW Birch, Pilot Rock, OR 97868
(541) 443-2500
prbconline.blogspot.com
Sunday School: 9:30 am
Worship Service: 10:45 am
Wednesday Services:
Kids' Club: 6:00 pm
Youth Group: 7:00 pm

Redeemer Episcopal Church
241 SE Second St. Pendleton
(541)276-3809
www.pendletonepiscopal.org
Sunday Morning Worship 9:00 a.m.
Wednesday Worship Noon
Wednesday Evening Prayer
and Pot Luck 6:00 p.m.
All Are Welcome

COME meet Jesus at PENDLETON BAPTIST CHURCH
3202 SW Nye Ave Pendleton, OR
541-276-7590
Sunday Morning Worship 11:00 AM
Sunday Bible Classes 9:45 AM
Sunday Youth Group 6:00 PM
Mon. Community Women's Study
9:30 AM & 6 PM
Awana Kids Club (K-6th grade)
Wed Men's Study 6 PM
MOPS meeting the 1st Thur of the Month
6 PM

St. Paul Anglican Church, APA
New Location at White Eagle
Grange Hall - 43828 White Eagle
Road, Pendleton, OR
541-303-1261
Holy Communion -
1st, 3rd & 5th Sunday
Morning Prayer - 2nd & 4th Sunday
All Services - 10:00 am Sundays
The Rev. Fr. Vincent Varnas
facebook.com/stpaulanglicanchurchapa

FIRST CHRISTIAN CHURCH
(DISCIPLES OF CHRIST)
215 N Main • Pendleton
Sunday Worship: 10:40a
Bible Class: 9:30a
Office: 276-5358
M-F, 8:30-12:30

a place to belong
Pendleton First
INVITING ENRICHING
INVOLVING EMPOWERING
SUNDAY SERVICES
AM Celebration-10:00am
AM Kids Place -10:00am
The Connection--6:00pm
Groups for all ages:
Adults, Children, Youth, & College
Thursdays
Celebrate Recovery-6:00pm
Celebration Place-6:00pm
Other Groups Available Weekly
For more info visit
WWW.PENDLETONFIRST.COM
1911 SE Court Ave
541-276-6417
Assembly of God Church

To share your
worship times
call Amanda Jacobs
541-278-2683