



The Messenger

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Religious Liberty: Conviction, Indifference, or Intolerance?

By: Alan J. Hodak

In this Issue ...

Feature: Religious Liberty 1
MACS Day at Capitol.....3
MACS SO/VB Tourney4
MACS 2019-20 Calendar8

Minnesota Association of Christian Schools

The Religious Freedom and Restoration Act (RFRA) was passed by the 103rd Congress by an overwhelming majority vote 97-3 in the United States Senate in 1993-94. The Senate bill was written by Democratic Senator, Chuck Schumer, from New York and one of many House co-sponsors was Representative Nancy Pelosi (D-CA). The Senate, that year, was made up of 54 Democrats and 46 Republicans. The bill was passed on to President Bill Clinton and signed into law. RFRA was written to protect the "free exercise of religion" in our country and protect U.S. citizens from government prohibitions regarding the exercise of personal religious beliefs and demanded the least of restrictive means of furthering government interest in government funding exemptions. Since then, the law has served to protect American citizens from bills passed by Congress and signed by the President in matters of religious liberty.

On my recent trip to Washington, D.C., I represented our state Christian school association at the American Association of Christian Schools (AACS) Legislative Conference. We met to discuss and lobby any issue which affects private education. This year, we have had great concern about H.R. 5, "The Equality Act," passed by a majority vote in the U.S. House of Representatives. On the surface, the Equality Act sounds good, but reading the bill causes great concern. In section two of the bill, one will find some 20 points of "Findings" from the author. The "Findings" detail discrimination of various types as it affects sex discrimination

identified primarily against lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender (LGBTQ+ people - highlighted in 16 of the 20 findings) and only mentions discrimination against women one time. The target of the bill is to modify the Civil Rights Act of 1964. If passed, the bill will repeal any claim RFRA may have and removes any basis for challenging the enforcement of this bill (see Section 1107). In what appears to be an effort to silence the religious right, the potential effects of this bill toward religious institutions appears inevitable. The bill could affect religious school hiring practices, admissions policies, ministry counseling, and a multiplicity of other potential issues. This effort is a direct attack against the civil liberties of Americans who love God and desire to live out their faith all in the name of discrimination.

Thankfully, the slightly right-leaning Senate will not hear this bill during the current session and most likely will table it. President Trump has stated he would not sign the bill into law. My goal, in our lobbying effort, was to speak to several of our state Representatives' aides to explain clearly our position against this bill and its potential damage to Christian education and religious liberty in general. My argument was simple: why would we pass a law that would attempt to remove the religious rights of the greater populace when every citizen has the freedom to choose to worship or choose to follow the religion or belief of their choice? Religious freedom is foundational in American history and was given to us by our Founders and has been defended throughout our American history.

Furthermore, this bill is bad for women's rights, an imposition upon the greater population with regard to restroom usage in public places. In addition, many of our government-run schools are already forcing the indoctrination of this view. What happened to the individual's right to live out his or her religious beliefs in the public sector without government prohibitions?

I spent a very hot and humid morning in D.C. visiting three of our Representatives' offices. I had the privilege of meeting with a number of staff members from three Representatives: Congressman Jim Hagedorn (R-1st District-First Baptist, New Ulm, Victory Chr. Rochester, Owatonna Christian, Oakland Baptist, Grace Christian Mankato), Congressman Collin Peterson (D-7th District-Heritage Christian Karlstad, FHL Academy-Bagley), and Congressman Dean Phillips (D-3rd District-Fourth Baptist, Coon Rapids Christian School, Bethany Christian Academy – Brooklyn Park).



My first stop was to Mr. Hagedorn's office where I spoke with his educational aide, a young man who was passionate about religious freedom. He knew all the in's and out's of "The Equality Act" and gave me some good advice as I would be meeting with two Congressmen that I did not believe would be receptive to what I had to say. I would like to refer to this Congressman as a man of "conviction."

My next meeting was with the office of Representative Collin Peterson (D-7th District). His aide was quite as knowledgeable about the bill and informed me that the Congressman did not vote for H.R. 5. Unfortunately, he did not vote at all, he abstained. His aide explained that while he was in favor of equal rights, he would not vote for a bill that did not guarantee religious liberty. In fact, his aide communicated a strong position regarding religious freedom. We spoke for

some time about the potential ramifications of this bill, and she assured me that his position would remain firm. However, he would not take a public stand and for this. I would like to label this Representative as a man of "indifference."

My third meeting was with an aide from our Congressman from the 3rd district, Representative Dean Phillips. I was grateful that his aide was willing to take the time to talk to me. This young aide had attended a private religious school in the Minneapolis area, understood our frame of reference, but became confused regarding the responsibility of education. Was it the parents? Was it the children's choice? Was the state responsible to legislate morality?

All are questions the liberal left are struggling to understand. I explained that parents choose our school based on our Biblical philosophy, which agrees with what our families desire for their children to learn. But many parents are also desiring to protect their children from what the public school is currently teaching. I further explained that people are fleeing public education in large numbers and that the private schools in the Congressman's district are growing and enrolling thousands of students. God has given our children to us. My five daughters were not given to the state to raise and educate. They were given to my wife and me. Every person, in the United States, regardless of conviction, has the right to choose a school to attend. Every person has the right to attend church. Religious freedom mandates a freedom to choose. If that freedom is taken away, then the government will be able to legislate morality in education. For some 57 million students who attend our government-run public schools, the social justice worldview will predominate. God help us! Unfortunately, I don't think I won a convert to my position from Representative Phillip's office. I would like, then, to refer to this Congressman's position as one of "intolerance."

When a Congressman is elected to office, he hires an army of dozens of workers to progress his agenda. The same is true of the office of President, but in the Executive branch, the President hires on thousands who push forth his agenda. So, when we put people in positions of power over us, we release armies of workers who are or are not sympathetic with our views. Please remember this when you vote in the next election. We lose or win based on the hundreds and hundreds of legislative aides who push through agendas and laws. We must be very careful about who we elect and ultimately what we protect.

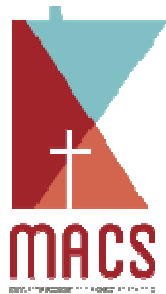
The exercise of visiting the Representatives' offices in Washington, D.C., that day, gave me a perspective of our

How will we then respond? With conviction? With indifference? With intolerance? The choice is up to you!

~Alan J. Hodak, Administrator, FBSC; Executive Director, MACS

nation's position regarding religious liberty. Will our nation exercise conviction on the issue of religious liberty? Will it exercise indifference? Or will it exercise intolerance? The Representatives that we have voted into office are giving us a glimpse of our future.

MACS Day at the State Capitol



Wednesday, December 18, 2019

Legislative Breakfast in *The Vault*

(Basement of the MN State Capitol)

8:30—11:00—Continental Breakfast for Representatives, Senators, and Legislative Aides

9:00—State Representative Josh Heintzman, District 10a

9:15—Lake Region Christian School Choir

9:30—State Representative Bob Dettmer, District 39a

10:00—Fourth Baptist Christian School Choir and Handbell Concert in the Rotunda

*Come out and meet your State Representatives and Senators by emailing
& inviting them to come! Find their emails at gis.leg.mn/imaps/districts*

Please RSVP to ahodak@fourthbaptist.org

Titus Huston, of Coon Rapids Christian School, was our MACS delegate to the AACS Youth Leadership Training Conference at the Leadership Institute in Arlington, Virginia this past July 8—12. He sent this letter of thanks for the opportunity.

July 19, 2019

Dear MACS and Mr. Hodak,

I just wanted to say thank you so much for your generosity in allowing me to see our Capitol and participate in my first mock Senate. The Senate was truly one of the most enjoyable things I did that week, and have done in my life. Not only did it give me a glimpse into how our nation works, but also provided me with some Christian fellowship that was truly encouraging.

The opportunity to meet my Congressman and others on the Hill was one that I will remember as one of the many highlights of the week. Another highlight was being at the places where so much history took place, hundreds of years ago. The Capitol tour and Monument tour were some of the many things I enjoyed. As a lover of history, the World War II, Korean, and Vietnam Memorials were fascinating.

Arlington National Cemetery was a place I had read much about and wanted to visit. Getting to see the Kennedy flame, the thousands of grave markers, three 75mm artillery cannons, the Changing of the Guard, and the Laying of the Wreath were experiences that hold great value for me in remembering the cost of our freedom.

Thanks again for helping me get the scholarship to YLTC [AACS Youth Legislative Training Conference] that has encouraged me so much.

Sincerely,

Titus Huston



Fourth Baptist Senior Named a Commended Student by the National Merit Scholarship Program

Official Release—September 2019



The principal, Mr. Alan J. Hodak, of Fourth Baptist Christian School, has announced that **Aaron French** has been named a Commended Student in the 2020 National Merit Scholarship Program. *A Letter of Commendation* from the National Merit Scholarship Corporation (NMSC), which conducts the program, will be presented by Mr. Hodak to this scholastically talented senior at graduation.

About 34,000 Commended Students throughout the nation are being recognized for their exceptional academic promise. Although they will not continue in the 2020 competition for National merit Scholarship awards, Commended Students placed amount the top 50,000 scorers of more than 1.5 million students who entered the 2020 competition by taking the 2018 Preliminary SAT/National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test (PSAT/NMSQT®).

“Those being named Commended Students have demonstrated outstanding potential for academic success,” commented a spokesperson for NMSC. “These students represent a valuable national resource; recognizing their accomplishments. As well as the key role their schools play in their academic development, is vital to the advancement of educational excellence in our nation. We hope that this recognition will help broadened their educational opportunities and encourage them as they continue their pursuit of academic success.”

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Aaron’s PSAT score was among the top 1% in the nation. Because the program chooses a certain number of students per state in order to have a broader cross section of students among the semi-finalists, Aaron, being a student in Minnesota—a high academic-achieving state—just missed the cut-off for semi-finalists. Had he been in another state, Arizona, for example, his score would have placed him among the program semi-finalists. Aaron plans to attend Bob Jones University in Greenville, SC this fall.



Minnesota Association of Christian Schools

2019-20 MACS Events Calendar

- **August 12** – First day of Team Practices for Soccer/Volleyball
- **August 23** – Rosemount Jamboree (Soccer & Volleyball) at First Baptist in Rosemount
- **October 3-4** – AACCS Midwest Regional Teacher's Convention in Kalamazoo, MI
- **October 24-26** – MACS State Volleyball and Soccer Tournament at First Baptist in Rosemount
- **November 1** – MACS Choir Festival at Fourth Baptist
- **November 11** – First day of Team Practices for Basketball
- **December 18** – MACS Legislative Breakfast at the MN State Capitol
- **February 13** – MACS Speech and Bible Festival at Woodcrest Baptist Academy
- **February 27-29** – MACS Basketball Tournament at Fourth Baptist and Woodcrest Baptist Academy
- **March 6** – MACS JH Fine Arts Festival at First Baptist at Rosemount
- **April 3** – MACS SH Fine Arts Festival at Fourth Baptist & MACS Annual Meeting
- **May 1** – MACS Track Meet at Granite City Baptist in St. Cloud





2019 MACS State Soccer & Volleyball Tourney Results

Boys' Soccer

Champions: St. Francis Patriots

Second Place: First Baptist Rosemount Crusaders

Third Place: Lake Region Hornets

Consolation: Owatonna Christian Sabres



Girls' Volleyball

Champions: First Baptist, Rosemount Crusaders

Second Place: Fourth Baptist Warriors

Third Place: Heritage Christian Patriots

Consolation: Owatonna Christian Sabres



All Tournament Teams

Boys Soccer All-Tournament Team:

1. Rylan Boldt- St. Francis-MVP
2. Ryker Kloeckner- St. Francis
3. Jaris Johnson- Rosemount
4. David Fruetel- Rosemount
5. James Cobb- Rosemount
6. Jake Borders- Lake Region
7. Soren Benson- Lake Region
8. Isaias Covarrubias- Woodcrest
9. Jackson Schoonver- Woodcrest
10. Lucas Barth- St. Francis
11. Daniel Graves- Rosemount
12. Josh Emery- St. Francis

Girls Volleyball All-Tournament Team:

1. Callista Weber- Rosemount- MVP
2. Joelle Webster- Fourth
3. Krystal Wikstrom- Heritage
4. Lydia Neubert- Lake Region
5. Gabrielle Mendoza- Fourth
6. Tina Harms- Owatonna
7. Jordan Horton- Rosemount





Above:
St. Francis Patriots—Soccer Champions



Left:
Rosemount Crusaders—2nd place



Above:
Rosemount Lady Crusaders—Volleyball Champions



Left:
Fourth Baptist Lady Warriors—2nd place

All-Conference Soccer



First Team - Soccer

1. Rylan Boldt- St. Francis
2. David Fruetel- Rosemount
3. Lucas Barth- St. Francis
4. Jackson Schoonover- Woodcrest
5. Jaris Johnson- Rosemount
6. Landon Brahs- St. Francis
7. Daniel Graves- Rosemount
8. Ryker Kloeckner- St. Francis
9. Ben Anderson- Rosemount
10. McCoy Coons- St. Francis
11. Jacob Borders- Lake Region
12. Soren Benson- Lake Region

Second Team - Soccer

1. Luiz Bomfim- Fourth Baptist
2. Trey Ogren- Lake Region
3. Phil Imdieke- Lake Region
4. Carter Antoine- Chisago
5. Isaias Covarrubias- Woodcrest
6. James Cobb- Rosemount
7. Grant Brower- St. Francis
8. Noah McGuigan- Rosemount
9. Taylor Hugg- Granite City/ Grace Mankato
10. Silas Tolosa- Owatonna
11. Aaron French- Fourth Baptist
12. Edwin Terrazas- Rosemount

There were no Honorable Mention Soccer players this year.

All-Conference Volleyball

First Team – Volleyball

1. Joelle Webster- Fourth Baptist
2. Callista Weber- Rosemount
3. Lydia Neubert- Lake Region
4. Krystal Wikstrom- Heritage
5. Jordan Horton- Rosemount
6. Isabelle Anderson- Lake Region
7. Tina Harms- Owatonna

Second Team – Volleyball

1. Sarah Ureke- Woodcrest
2. Cassie Garcia- Rosemount
3. Gabriela Mendoza- Fourth Baptist
4. Jerica Dagen- Heritage
5. Maddie Hodak- Fourth Baptist
6. Emily Brink- Chisago
7. Katherine Gerdin- St. Francis

Honorable Mention – Volleyball

1. Maddie Frieze- St. Francis
2. Jackie Enriquez- Rosemount
3. Emily Roberts- Owatonna
4. Savannah Johnson-Skadsem- Heritage
5. Anna Cave- Chisago
6. Keelie Shafer- Lake Region
7. Anika Freshhour- Foundation



2nd Team All-Conference Soccer: Edwin Terrazas, Silas Tolosa, Taylor Hugg, Isaias Covarrubias, Carter Antoine, Phil Imdieke, James Cobb, Luis Bomfim, Grant Brower, Aaron French. (Not pictured: Trey Ogren, Noah McGuigan).



1st Team All-Conference: Rylan Boldt, Lucas Barth, McCoy Coons, Ryker Kloeckner, Landon Brahs, Jake Borders, Soren Benson, Ben Anderson, Daniel Graves, Jaris Johnson, David Fruetel, Jackson Schoonover.



All-Tournament Soccer Team: Jaris Johnson, David Fruetel, James Cobb, Daniel Graves, Josh Emery, Lucas Barth, Jackson Schoonover, Isaias Covarrubias, Soren Benson, Jake Borders, Ryker Kloeckner, Rylan Boldt (MVP).



1st Team All-Conference Volleyball: Callista Weber, Jordan Horton, Tina Harms, Krystal Wikstrom, Lydia Neubert, Joelle Webster (not pictured: Isabelle Anderson)



All-Tournament Volleyball Team: Callista Weber, Jordan Horton, Tina Harms, Joelle Webster, Gabriela Mendoza, Lydia Neubert, Krystal Wikstrom



2nd Team All-Conference Volleyball: Cassie Garcia, Jerica Dagen, Emily Brink, Maddie Hodak, Katherine Gerdin, Gabriela Mendoza (not pictured: Sarah Ureke).

*All-Conference Awards are voted on by the coaches, and awarded to athletes based on their testimony on and off the field, sportsmanship and skill throughout this entire 2019 season.
Congratulations!*

