

Dismantling Religious Freedoms and Rights Little by Little

By Alan J. Hodak

The Religious Freedom and Restoration Act of 1993 (RFRA) was passed by both houses of Congress and signed into law by then President Clinton. The original bill was introduced to the House of Representatives by Congressman Chuck Shumer (D), NY, and had 120 cosponsors including Rep. Maxine Waters (CA) and Bernie Sanders (I) VT. The bill was introduced into the Senate by Senator Ted Kennedy (D) MA, and passed overwhelmingly 97-3 with then Senator Joseph Biden (D) DE voting in favor of the bill.

RFRA was an effort to create a public law which protected the First Amendment Rights of individual citizens against government intrusion concerning a person's free exercise of religion. For a number of years, the law supported strict scrutiny analysis to all cases related to the free exercise of religion. Later, the Supreme Court struck down RFRA as applying to states, citing Section 5 of the Fourteenth Amendment and Congress responded by reinstating the law, using parliamentary procedure reenacting RFRA to federal law in the year 2000. Twenty-one states have placed RFRA laws on their books and follow it to this day (unfortunately, MN is not one of them).

There was a time, not so long ago, that everyone valued religious freedom in America (97-3!) Some of the same actors who saw great value in people's individual rights regarding religion are now the ones who seem to have changed their minds about the importance of it.

In American law, court decisions set precedent which then governs and influences future cases.

As a result of dozens of cases which put an individual's religious freedom from government intrusion to the test, RFRA became increasingly important to the rights of individuals.



One simple case illustration is Wisconsin v. Yoder (1972). Wisconsin, at that time, had public laws which made education compulsory up through sixteen years of age. All states have similar or expanded requirements today. Three Amish students from three different families did not want to continue their education beyond the 8th grade. It was their deeply held religious belief that their children would continue to live a simple life and had received enough education to be able to read and write well and function in their community. The Amish community would then train these children, in the ways of the Amish, according to their biblical convictions, to work and learn a trade from their family. The state of Wisconsin argued that the state had the responsibility to require additional years of education to prepare their students to function in modern society. The Court disagreed and this became a landmark case referred to as the "Yoder Case." This case set a precedent, under certain conditions, that examined federal overreach into the religious rights of citizens.

In this Issue ...

Feature: Dismantling Freedom.....	1
Educators of the Year.....	3
State Soccer/Volleyball Tourney...	4
MACS 2021-22 Calendar.....	8

As time went on, RFRA became the one piece of federal legislation which protected the religious rights of all Americans. Efforts have been made by liberal legislators and government officials to erode the power of that legislation. We are seeing government attempts to halt religious exemptions regarding vaccinations, eliminate the power of RFRA relating to Civil Rights legislation, and limit the freedom of private business owners to choose to sell or not to sell to individuals or entities when they believe their religious beliefs are being compromised.

With the increase of court cases in recent years, the Trump administration “provided executive agencies with a long list of guidelines on RFRA, free exercise claims, contraception in insurance plans, and other issues. The Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), under President Trump, granted authority for the Office of Civil Rights to conduct RFRA compliance reviews and initiate such other actions as may be necessary to facilitate and ensure compliance with RFRA” (Dorman). In essence, the Department of Health and Human Services was being held accountable by the Office of Civil Rights with regard to enforcement of the RFRA guidelines.

The Biden administration recently released a memo which will dismantle dedicated staff in the Office of Civil Rights who are there to investigate religious freedom complaints. “Revoking the authority of the Office of Civil Rights to enforce RFRA within the HHS is another small step in dismantling safeguards within the federal government for people of faith” (Dorman).

Do you see a plan being enacted here? Do you understand that when we elect a President, we elect an army of thousands who are hired on to enact the President’s agenda? When we elect a liberal Congress, checks and balances disappear. Little by little, we will see the erosion of the freedom of religion and the overreach of government into our lives. But what is not understood by the electorate is that religious freedom guarantees freedom even for those who are not religious.

We live in a country that historically allows for the freedom to believe and live as we choose. Religious freedom guarantees that by having safeguards in place for the religious, the non-religious also are protected. While this seems like a difficult

concept, it is not meant to be. Because our country has religious freedom and protections in place, I can take my children to the public school or any one of ten other private schools in the Plymouth area alone. Those private schools may be Christian, Catholic, Lutheran, Jewish, Montessori, or schools founded upon the arts, language, or any multiple of philosophical charters of all kinds, whether religious or not. I can have my children educated based on any philosophy I choose. That may not be present in a society that only allows for a government-run socialistic philosophy of education where there are no religious freedoms. By eliminating any accountability with regard to religious freedom in the United States, there will be no place to go to call into question whether or not the government can overstep their authority, upon the beliefs of its citizenry.

“When we elect a liberal Congress, checks and balances disappear. Little by little, we will see the erosion of the freedom of religion and the overreach of government into our lives.”

How do we stop the madness? We must pray first of all. Pray that God will continue to protect the religious freedoms we have enjoyed and that state and federal overreach will not be imposed upon our private religious schools. Second, start becoming active in the political process. I know what you are thinking and I am thinking the same. Who has time? But the truth is that if either of the houses of Congress were not controlled by the same political party, the President’s agenda would be halted. We must make changes at the upcoming mid-term elections, and we must overturn many policies that will be passed by this Congress and

President.

For now, we will continue to watch and inform you of things that we become aware of. May God continue to protect and provide for what we have here in our MACS schools. We are so blessed.

Please don’t take your religious liberties for granted. We may wake up one day and find that they are gone...



Sam Dorman, Fox News article published November 17, 2021, <https://www.foxnews.com/politics/hhs-ocr-rfra-trump-religious-liberty>.

Honor to Whom Honor is Due

The Minnesota Association of Christian Schools was pleased to honor two faithful servants of the Lord this year at our annual Teacher's Convention—Pastor Dan Mohler of Victory Christian Academy in Rochester, and Mr. Loren Isaacs of Woodcrest Baptist Academy in Fridley, MN.

Pastor Dan Mohler began his 48 years in Christian Education by joining the ranks of champions at Fourth Baptist Church and School in 1973. He labored joyfully there for a number of years and built many deep bonds with students and fellow teachers. Eventually, he took the pastorate at Elmyra Baptist Church in southeastern Minnesota—but even at Elmyra, he remained active in teaching the next generation by leading at Rochester Christian School. Pastor Dan began his present work on June 1st, 1985, and for the past 36 years, he has served in the dual roles of Assistant Pastor at Victory Baptist Church and Principal of Victory Christian Academy.

When people are asked to describe Pastor Dan in one word, without hesitation, they almost always call him “faithful.” He is tireless in his work, laboring with the energy of multiple staff members, giving early mornings and late nights, exhibiting steadfast devotion for the reward of hearing Jesus say, “well done.” Dan is a visionary—he implemented positive behavior reinforcement before it was a popular concept. But what everyone will long remember most about him is that Dan is a wonderful example of what it means to love God's Word. Over the years, Pastor Dan has devoted an extensive amount of time and an expansive amount of memory just to memorizing God's Word. Dan is an unsung hero for the ages—someone the Lord has given to inspire us all. Thank you, Pastor Dan.

~Written Tribute by Pastor Brandon Black



Loren Isaacs comes from an educator's family, in which his father instilled a love for education by his own involvement as a teacher, professor, college president, and superintendent of schools. Loren earned a teaching degree in math and science from Maranatha Baptist Bible College; and after student teaching in Longmont, Colorado, he accepted a teaching position at Woodcrest Baptist Academy in Fridley, MN, in 1981, which would become his home for the next forty years. During this time he also received his Master's Degree in Christian Education from Tri-City Bible College.

In 1988, when the position of administrator became available, Pastor Clarke Poorman and the School Board asked Loren to temporarily act as school principal. He served in this position in such a competent way that the “temporary” became “permanent” a year later.

Of course, being hired as a teacher at a Christian school comes with wearing many extracurricular hats. Over the last forty years, Loren has worn many of these hats (many at the same time), including Administrator, Athletic Director, Soccer Coach, Basketball coach, Volleyball Coach, Pandemic Cleaner Extraordinaire, IT Guy, Bus Guy, Handyman, fundraiser guy, and also the Please-Solve-12-Problems-At-Once Guy. And somehow, he still finds time to enter and win an Ugly Sweater Contest with a cat sweater some students had purchased for him.

Loren might say that his greatest personal accomplishment would be to have raised his two precious daughters in the light of God's love with his wife Debbie and being able to see his four grandchildren on a yearly basis.

1. He has worked extremely hard to keep Christian Education affordable for parents and to maintain a high level of academics while modernizing the school's digital capabilities.

2. For forty years now, he has been a faithful leader through many seasons of change, and he meets each new day with the same consistency. He is a supporter, a listener, and an encourager.

Loren Isaacs is a man who is greatly loved by his family, his church, school families, and his faculty. Thank you, Mr. Isaacs, for your continued love for Christian Education.

Every pastor knows the incredible value that a faithful, firm, and fair school Administrator is to the ministry. And so it is with great pleasure that I have the privilege of presenting this Teacher of the Year award to my school Administrator, Mr. Loren Isaacs.

- Written Tribute by Pastor Mark Poorman





2021 MACS State Soccer & Volleyball Tourney Results

Boys' Soccer

Champions: First Baptist Crusaders

Second Place: Lake Region Hornets

Third Place: Owatonna/Mankato Sabres

Consolation: Woodcrest Warriors



Girls' Volleyball

Champions: Fourth Baptist Warriors

Second Place: First Baptist Crusaders

Third Place: Lake Region Hornets

Consolation: Foundation Redstorm



All Tournament Teams

Boys Soccer All-Tournament Team:

1. Naftal Morara—Rosemount—MVP
2. Landon Brahs—St. Francis
3. Travis Poe—Owatonna/Mankato
4. Ryan Borner—Rosemount
5. John Paul Fitzpatrick—Lake Region
6. Trey Ogren—Lake Region
7. Abram Terrazas—Rosemount
8. Phil Imdieke—Lake Region
9. Trevor Poe—Owatonna/Mankato
10. Josh Anderson—Rosemount
11. Albert Sharkevich—Woodcrest

Girls Volleyball All-Tournament Team:

1. Kayla Stephens—Fourth—Co-MVP
2. Callista Weber—Rosemount—Co-MVP
3. Sarah Ureke—Woodcrest
4. Annika Freshour—Foundation
5. Amber Neubert—Lake Region
6. Clara Rieschl—Fourth
7. Nevaeh Carlson—Fourth



You did it!
Congratulations



At Left:
Rosemount Crusaders
Soccer Champions

Below:
Lake Region Hornets
2nd place



At Left:
Fourth Baptist Lady Warriors
Volleyball Champions

Below:
Rosemount Lady Crusaders
2nd place



All-Conference Soccer



First Team - Soccer

1. Joe Bostrom—Lake Region
2. Trey Ogren—Lake Region
3. John Paul Fitzpatrick—Lake Region
4. Soren Benson—Lake Region
5. Landon Brahs—St. Francis
6. Micah Horner—St. Francis
7. Naftal Morara—Rosemount
8. Ryan Borner—Rosemount
9. Travis Poe—Owatonna/Mankato
10. Landon Broere—Fourth Baptist
11. Albert Sharkevich—Woodcrest

Second Team - Soccer

1. Phil Imdieke—Lake Region
2. Isaac Tong—St. Francis
3. Matthew Kloeckner—St. Francis
4. Levi Barth—St. Francis
5. Joel Granados—Rosemount
6. Ethan Cowell—Owatonna/Mankato
7. Sam Roman—Fourth Baptist
8. Amos Glover—Chisago
9. Carter Antoine—Chisago
10. Roman Sharkevich—Woodcrest
11. Chris Thrun—Woodcrest

Honorable Mention – Soccer

1. Ezra House—Lake Region
2. Edwin Terrazas—Rosemount
3. Silas Tolosa—Owatonna/Mankato
4. Isaac Caasi—Fourth Baptist
5. Joey Naulty—Woodcrest
6. Zachary Choi—Prior Lake



2nd Team All-Conference Soccer: Chris Thrun, Phil Imdieke, Isaac Tong, Levi Barth, Matthew Kloeckner, Joel Granados, Ethan Cowell, Sam Roman, Roman Sharkovich
(not pictured: Amos Glover, Carter Antoine)

All-Conference Volleyball

First Team – Volleyball

1. Gabriela Mendoza—Fourth Baptist
2. Kayla Stephens—Fourth Baptist
3. Callista Weber—Rosemount
4. Josie Hutchison—Rosemount
5. Julia Ureke—Woodcrest
6. Sarah Ureke—Woodcrest
7. Amber Neubert—Lake Region
8. Grace Brower—St. Francis

Second Team – Volleyball

1. Clara Rieschl—Fourth Baptist
2. JoJo Rieschl—Fourth Baptist
3. Eryn Friese—St. Francis
4. Grace Borders—Lake Region
5. Mariah Cave—Chisago
6. Olivia Braaten—Foundation
7. Savannah Johnson-Skadsem—Heritage
8. Amber Dudek—Rosemount

Honorable Mention – Volleyball

1. Renata Echebengu—Woodcrest
2. Emma Boldt—St. Francis
3. Sarah Anderson—Rosemount
4. Adrienne Olson—Heritage
5. Grace Kargel—Lake Region
6. Ellie Shafer—Lake Region
7. Anita Freshour—Foundation
8. Elliana Wolters—Foundation
9. Nevaeh Carlson—Fourth Baptist



2nd Team All-Conference Volleyball: Amber Dudek, Clara Rieschl, JoJo Rieschl, Eryn Friese, Grace Borders, Olivia Braaten, Savannah Johnson-Skadsem
(not pictured: Mariah Cave)



1st Team All-Conference: Albert Sharkevich, Joe Bostrom, Trey Ogren, John Paul Fitzpatrick, Soren Benson, Landon Brahs, Micah Horner, Naftal Morara, Ryan Borner, Travis Poe, Landon Broere



All-Tournament Soccer Team: Abram Terrazas, Albert Sharkevich, Josh Anderson, Trevor Poe, Phil Imdieke, Naftal Morara, Trey Ogren, John Paul Fitzpatrick, Ryan Borner, Landon Brahs, Travis Poe



1st Team All-Conference Volleyball: Gabriela Mendoza, Kayla Stephens, Callista Weber, Josie Hutchison, Julia Ureke, Sarah Ureke, Amber Neubert, Grace Brower



All-Tournament Volleyball Team: Kayla Stephens & Callista Weber (Co-MVP's), Sarah Ureke, Annika Freshour, Amber Neubert, Clara Rieschl, Nevaeh Carlson

All-Conference Awards are voted on by the coaches.





Minnesota Association of Christian Schools

2021-22 MACS Events Calendar

August 9-13—Volleyball/Soccer Camps @ Fourth Baptist
(all MACS schools are invited)

August 16—First day of team practices for Soccer/Volleyball

August 27—Rosemount Jamboree

October 7-8—MACS/WACS Regional Teacher's Convention @ WI Dells

October 28-30—MACS State Volleyball and Soccer Tournament
@ Lake Region, Baxter

November 12—MACS Band Festival @ Fourth Baptist

November 15—First day of team practices for Basketball

February 10—MACS Speech and Bible Festival @ Woodcrest

February 11-12—JH Basketball Tournament @ Rosemount

February 24-26—MACS Basketball Tournament @ Fourth Baptist
& Woodcrest

March 4—MACS JH Fine Arts Festival @ Rosemount

April 8—MACS SH Fine Arts Festival @ Fourth Baptist
& MACS Annual Meeting for Administrators

TBD in May—MACS Track Meet @ Granite City Baptist, St. Cloud
(all MACS schools are invited to participate)

