

Titus House Newsletter

Titus House Ministries, PO Box 2376, Tijeras, NM 87059

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JANICE'S JOURNAL: CHURCH GUIDELINES REPEAT MYTHS, SPREAD FEAR

By: Alliance for Constitutional Sex Offense Laws



JANICE'S JOURNAL

November 15, 2018

It is essential that registrants have access to church services because for some registrants the ability to worship at a church is more important than food, shelter and clothing.

In the words of North Carolina attorney Glenn Gerding, "Given....residency and employment restrictions, as well as societal discrimination against and vilification of sex offenders, churches are often the last hope for many sex offenders who need the stability and guidance a church pastor and church family can provide."

Why is it then that some churches place outright bans on registrants who wish to worship there while others restrict registrants' activities to such an extent that registrants choose not to worship at all?

One answer may be the publication, "Sex Offenders in the Church", recently issued by

ChurchLawAndTax.com which provides erroneous statements and inhumane guidelines regarding registrants. This publication harms registrants' ability to worship because it repeats many myths about registrants as well as spreads fear to both the churches they serve as well as to church leaders.

The publication includes a few accurate facts about registrants such as that the number of registrants in America is both staggering

and rising. In addition, the publication accurately states that the growing number of registrants includes many who want to attend church. Further, the publication accurately states that registrants have been convicted of a wide range of offenses including those that are not violent and do involve physical contact.

The report takes a wrong turn, however, when it states that although there are registrants who attend church because they have a "genuine desire to meet spiritual needs," there are also registrants who attend church because their motivation is "a desire to have access to potential victims." The report continues down the path of misinformation by repeating myths such as that some registrants "will always pose an elevated risk" to a church that elects to allow them to have access to church services and activities.

The publication takes another wrong turn when it focuses upon pedophilia, a medical diagnosis and not a crime, and states the following myths: pedophilia is incurable and very difficult to control. The publication goes on to falsely state that pedophiles have a high recidivism rate, that is, more than half of pedophiles who are convicted of a sex offense are re-arrested for a new offense.

The publication continues down the wrong path when it spreads fear by warning churches that they could be found liable if it becomes

known that a registrant is worshipping there. It then adds another fear by warning church leaders that they could become personally liable for a registrant's behavior.

The greatest harm done by this publication, however, is the shame it projects on to church leaders who are compassionate and understand the spiritual needs of registrants. Specifically, first the publication recognizes that "there will always be those in church leadership who will urge mercy and restoration" for registrants. Then, the publication issues a false warning that such feelings are contrary to an unknown Bible commandment that "speaks to....protection of the innocent." The publication continues shaming in its question: "How can church leaders even begin to think they are taking this commandment seriously if they allow a convicted sex offender to have unrestricted access to the church?"

The false statements in this publication are compounded by the inhumane recommendation that registrants should only be allowed in church if they enter into a "conditional attendance agreement." One term of such an agreement is that a registrant "must always be in the presence of a designated chaperone while on church property for any reasons, including....restroom breaks." In addition, the chaperone must "meet the offender at the entrance of the church, and accompany him or her on

church premises until returned to his or her vehicle." Given that no one else in the congregation must be accompanied by a chaperone, this restriction alone brands registrants who worship in a church with a Scarlet letter.

Because this publication is provided to both churches and church leaders, it is imperative that this organization devote resources to the education of those who have published it. That is, ACSOL will provide that organization with truthful data from both government and academic sources.

ACSOL will provide that data with a hope and a prayer that the organization and its members will educate themselves about the real facts regarding registrants. However, if they choose to ignore those facts, it may be necessary to educate the organization and its members utilizing a different method – a lawsuit in a federal court.

In order to succeed in court, ACSOL needs to learn about the experiences of registrants who have attempted to worship at a church and been denied that opportunity. Please send a brief description of your experience to service@all4consolaws.org. Thank you.

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COLUMN: Georgia City Wrong to Target Sex Offenders in New 'Homelessness Ordinance' By Jessica Szilagyi

The City of Ringgold in northwest Georgia has enacted an emergency ordinance to address sex offenders living under a bridge in the community.

The council adopted an "urban camping" ordinance Monday night which, according to The Times Free Press, bans "tents, 'other temporary structures,' clothes, sleeping bags, cookware or luggage from public property." The ordinance deals with homelessness generally, but is directed at those with criminal pasts.

Councilman Larry Black brought the idea forward after he learned that five men living under a bridge were sex offenders recently released from prison. "We have no way of knowing what that person is doing, as far as our safety concerns of our children, at 3, 4 o'clock in the morning, when we're very vulnerable," he's quoted saying in the paper. A citizen was quoted voicing concerns over fishing safety near the bridge with the homeless using the restroom in such close proximity.

The new ordinance comes with a written warning to vacate within 24 hours and is then followed by tickets with \$1,000 fines, 60 days in jail, and orders for community service.

Before we go any further, let's first be clear that 99.9% of people who are homeless cannot afford to pay a \$1,000 fine and many homeless people would prefer to spend a night in jail, especially as the winter months approach.

Now, to the merits of the ordinance....

The emergency ordinance was put in place to allow the council time to properly advertise and pass a more permanent ordinance. As an advocate for transparency and accountability in government, I can't say that I'm a fan of this practice. Usually, emergency ordinances are reserved for natural disasters or extenuating circumstances of a manmade disaster. Five men under a bridge is neither an emergency nor a disaster, and it isn't something that can't wait 30 days to be done correctly. But there is more substance to discuss than the 'how.'

Why are these men living under a bridge?

Arguably, it is because laws on the books restrict where sex offenders can live and a

criminal background that can often be a hurdle for employment.

This is a conversation that partially reared its ugly head when reports of cities and counties requiring sex offenders to report to a secure location on Halloween came to light. "What to do" with sex offenders is understandably an emotional topic, and while there are a number of people who would love to see those who commit sexual offenses be locked away forever, our current system doesn't allow for that. So as long as these offenders are being released into society, we have to discuss what to do with them.

Since 2008, state law has prohibited convicted sex offenders from working or living within 1,000 feet of a church, school, park, or other place where children gather. It doesn't seem outrageous until you consider places like Catoosa County where only two apartment complexes meet the standard. In metro areas, more housing is available, but if you concentrate so many offenders to metro areas, you'll eventually run into the same problem — not enough housing.

Whether you are talking about a metro area or a rural area, not enough housing will always lead to homelessness. Find me a community where there isn't homelessness, while we're on the topic.

So, back to the ordinance.

Do we want these convicts living under a bridge or do we want them gainfully employed somewhere and contributing to society? Do we want them focused on rebuilding and re-entering regular life or do we want them bored, living outdoors, and willing to do whatever it takes to survive? Is the end goal to eradicate sex offenders from a city, or county, or state as a whole? Does anyone think that's financially or practically possible, short of literally rounding them up and taking them elsewhere?

When we are talking about issues as serious as this, we can't talk in wide platitudes of what should happen in a perfect world or if you were ruling on the bench. We have to talk about practicality of what makes sense and what can actually be enforced. Does this ordinance meet that threshold?

And just like every other law, this one has unintended consequences.

The city is criminalizing homelessness. The wide net will capture those who aren't sex offenders, or even convicts at all, and put them in a position to have a criminal background when they otherwise would not. With regard to the homeless who don't have a criminal past — is the goal to tell them to pull themselves up by their bootstraps and get back on their feet as long as they do it somewhere else?

By criminalizing homelessness, those who are out on parole or probation will be reincarcerated if they are arrested. If that is the end goal, the City of Ringgold should just acknowledge that the method is simply to make an offender 'someone else's problem.'

Another thing to consider is whether or not something like this can hold up in court. The same ordinance passed in Grants Pass, Oregon as is working its way through the courts right now under constitutional right violations — specifically the 8th and 14th Amendments. In September, a federal court of appeals ruled that the Constitution forbids cities from prosecuting homeless persons for sleeping in public places when they have no alternative.

I won't claim to know the proximity of this bridge in Ringgold to children and I won't even claim to have all the answers. But I can assert that this type of ordinance is NOT the answer. One of the men under the bridge has reportedly lived there for decades, without incident. Pretending to be 'tough on crime,' pro-children, and anti-sex offender when you're really just 'pro-cycle of poverty' is disingenuous, especially when courts have already ruled on the matter.

The City of Ringgold doesn't know what the answer is, either. As evidenced by those voicing concerns over the ability to track homeless sex offenders, the cleanliness of fishing sources, the dangers of cooking under a bridge, and any of the other reasons mustered to try to tip the scales of public opinion to fear, it appears that council members and the community in Ringgold may not even know the question.





Can God use a Sex Offender? By James

I believe that God can use anyone for any reason. And yet, we all have a story to tell. Mine isn't much different from others, with a few exceptions. I was born Oops, I don't think you want to hear all of that. Let's begin from my arrest. And, you might want to know who I am.

My name is James and I currently live in Rio Rancho with my wife Dena, whom you all met last month when she gave her story on this newsletter. November 1987, I was arrested for Criminal Sexual Contact of a minor, (my daughter). I was placed into custody at BCDC (Bernalillo County Detention Center) in Albuquerque, NM. This was something I had never experienced before and very honestly, I was scared to death.

Because of my crimes I was placed in segregation. Within my first 3 days in solitaire a resident from a few cells away from mine passed me a book and told me, "You need to read this." The book was *The Catch Me Killer* by Bob Erler. I was not a reader at that time, but this book drew me into the life of a very bad man who turned his life around because of a person named Jesus.

When I was given my first opportunity to leave my cell into the dayroom, I found a book shelf that had a Gideon Bible on it. I asked the C.O. if it was alright for me to take it and read it. He said go ahead and he even told me that I could keep it. I took that book back to my cell and began to try and read its words. I was very confused and didn't understand what it was saying.

I remembered parts from the book *The Catch Me Killer* that Bob Erler had mentioned many times about praying to God for understanding. So, I started asking God for understanding.

God began to open my eyes to see His Word and understand the meanings of His writings. Time carried on and I became a student of God's Word. As God's hand moved within my life and within BCDC I began to see a God that I wanted to know, love and understand. For instance; when I went for my arraignment, I had no defense counselor and when I stepped in front of the Judge, he asked me how I wanted to

plea. In my mind I knew I was guilty and deserved whatever was to happen. When I told him my plea of "guilty" the Judge told me to sit back down and he sent a Public Defender over to talk with me. The PD told me to plea "Not Guilty". I asked him why? He told me that was the way it was done. Not knowing any better I stepped before the Judge and made my plea "Not Guilty". Just a little over a month later, I knelt at my concrete bed and poured my heart out to a Savior that I hadn't known and yet He was watching over me and loved me in a way I had never known. On December 21st, 1987 I surrendered my life to Jesus Christ. That was when I began to see and feel His work and His miracles. I witnessed more miracles in that jail than this writing can handle; attitudes changing, hardened hearts becoming Christlike, men accepting Jesus, Bible studies being given within segregation with open cells. It was amazing.

None of this was happening because of me. It was happening because of Him and His love for US.

After 9 months in Seg, I was given a court hearing that would determine my future.

My PD came and let me know that the Assistant District Attorney wanted my sentence to be the full amount of 54 years. At my present age (37) I knew that with that sentence I was going to die in prison.

During my time in jail I had acquired a small Gideons New Testament, so on the day of my hearing I took that little book in with me to the courtroom. As I stood there before the Judge, he listened to the arguments of the ADA and the PD.

The Judge then looked at me and made a statement that I will never forget. He said, "Mr. Foust, I don't know why I am doing this, but I am placing you on 5 years' probation." For a moment I was paralyzed, I didn't totally understand what had just happened and then my next words were, "Thank you Jesus!" I knew what had happened.

Can God use a sex offender? I am sure there are going to be some of you out there that will say this next miracle of God could not have happened. Well, I

promise you it did. Within 3 months of my release from BCDC I (a convicted felon, on probation) was going back into that facility as the Assistant Chaplain with Light & Liberty Jail Ministry, who supplied BCDC with the chaplaincy for the jail. I worked in that facility for the next 7 years as the assistant chaplain and then my last 2 years as the chaplain of BCDC.

When I left there, I went out and started my own business that I developed into a very successful business in New Mexico. It was a family business I owned that had 3 employees and 10 contractors working for me.

Many ups and downs came into my life but the one thing I have no doubt about is how much God loved me and wanted His best for me.

To know more about me is to come and talk to me. I have a very transparent life that God has given me to share.

I am in my fourth marriage with Dena and my vow to God is "This is the last one." I confess that my previous 3 were my own problems but this is the marriage that the vows I took in the oath of the marriage are going to stand the test of time.

Currently, I own another business that is just getting started. I am a member of The Gideons International and serve as the Southwest Association East Regional Director. A position that allows me to work with all of the Gideons in the state of New Mexico.

I am a member of the Board of Directors of Titus House and attend most of the Circle of Concern meetings. Only missing a meeting when my wife and I are out of town.

I invite those of you who get this newsletter, whether you are SO's, family members of SO's or friends of SO's, please come to the Circle Of Concern meetings and enjoy being with like minded people who know where you've been and understand where you are.

We are here to be of help because Jesus instructed us to Love One Another.

We will, and we do. God's blessing to you all.

Merry Christmas



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Hebrew 13:3 - Continue to remember those in prison as if you were together with them in prison, and those who are mistreated as if you yourselves were suffering.

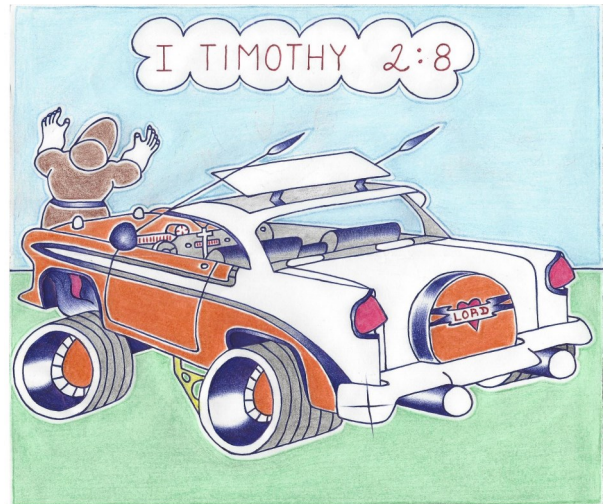
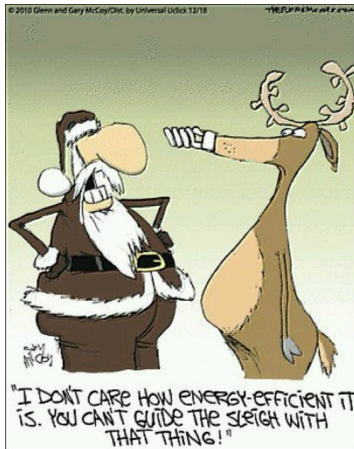
Remember if you change your address you need to let us know if you want to continue to receive this newsletter



Titus House annual Christmas/winter party will be held again at Furr's Buffet/Restaurant at 2004 Wyoming NE. It will take place on Saturday, December 22, 2018, from 12:00 PM to 3PM. We will have live Christmas music by Art and a magic show by Don, we will also have a door prize and an auction. Come join us for a fun filled time and great fellowship. Titus house is picking up the bill. Please invite your family and friends. Please RSVP and let us know you are coming so we can get an idea how many will attend. Call (505) 286-8807. We hope to see you.

We would like to invite you to a Free Conference call. We are having a morning devotion from "Our Daily Bread". If you would like to join us please call this number (605) 475-4092, the access code is 278954#. It lasts for about 15 minutes and starts at 7:00 AM, mountains standard time. If you have trouble logging in call me Don (505) 315-7940. Start the New Year off right.

I asked God,
"Why are you taking me
through the water?"
He replied,
"Because your enemies
can't swim."



Circle of Concern is **Cancelled** this month due to Christmas party

Circle of Concern is aimed at breaking down isolation and fear by providing a safe place for registrants and their loved ones to get together, build community, and learn ways to step out and take charge of their lives and overcome the stigma

they face. The Circle of Concern is a group of concerned registered offenders, family and friends that meet together on the 3rd Sunday of each month. We will **NOT** be meeting this month due to us having our annual Christmas party. We meet at Foothills Fellowship

Church, corner of Tramway and Candelaria on the far east side of Albuquerque. We encourage and try to help each other. It is a safe place to share our strengths and struggles. We hope you will join us. If you are planning to attend call Don at (505) 315-7940.

