

Prayer Banned? A Controversial Move by This City Council

The city council of Tulsa, Oklahoma, is pulling prayer from its meetings after a pagan priestess dedicated an [invocation to Medusa](#) last fall.

On Wednesday, councilors voted 8-1 to replace the opening prayer with a moment of silence or personal reflection, according to Public Radio Tulsa. It was noted in the report residents who previously signed up to give invocations at meetings will still be allowed to do so.

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One councilor, Christian Bengel, abstained from the vote, arguing the spirit of the First Amendment of the Constitution centers on listening to things—including prayers—with which you might not agree.

Fellow Councilor Laura Bellis said she didn't want the invocation to make any residents feel like their government [did not represent them.](#)

She said, "Of course, we have invocations where anyone can sign up of any faith for, but the one time they may be there, it usually is a Christian prayer, and may send the message that their government is not for them or they don't belong."

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The impetus for the rule change arose in late November of last year, when then-Councilor Crista Patrick's pagan priestess,

Amy McAdams, delivered the opening invocation, during which she invoked Medusa, whom she described as the “monstrous hero of the oppressed and abused,” as well as “the Gorgonea, champions of equality and sacred [rage](#).”

To read the full story, [visit our content partners at Faithwire](#).

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7 Types of Cancer with Dark Ties to Alcohol

A new advisory from the U.S. surgeon general categorizes [alcohol consumption](#) as the “third leading preventable cause of cancer” in the country.

Dr. Vivek Murthy issued the guidance Friday, stating new findings link alcohol to the chances of contracting at least seven different kinds of cancer: throat, liver, esophageal, mouth, larynx, colon and rectal cancers.

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[Alcohol consumption](#), it should be noted, had already been tied to an increased susceptibility to breast cancer. Earlier data found some 16.4% of breast cancer diagnoses in the U.S. are attributable to alcohol.

The surgeon general shared details from the nascent research in a post published to X:

*Consuming any type of alcohol – beer, wine, or spirits – increases the risk for at least seven types of cancer, including cancers of the breast for women, colorectum, esophagus, liver, mouth, throat, and voice box (larynx).
pic.twitter.com/YWK5kK0aCL*

*– Dr. Vivek Murthy, U.S. Surgeon General (@Surgeon_General)
[January 3, 2025](#)*

“Alcohol is a well-established, preventable cause of cancer responsible for about 100,000 cases of cancer and 20,000 cancer deaths annually in the United States—greater than the 13,500 alcohol-associated traffic crash fatalities per year in the U.S.—yet the majority of Americans are unaware of this risk,” Murthy said in a statement. “This advisory lays out steps we can all take to increase awareness of alcohol’s cancer risk and minimize harm.”

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New data found that, in 2019 alone, an estimated 96,730 were tied to alcohol consumption, including 42,400 in men and 54,330 in women.

The report summarized, in part, “Alcohol use is very common—in 2019-2020, 72% of U.S. adults reported they consumed one or more drinks per week, but less than half of U.S. adults are aware of the relationship between alcohol consumption and cancer risk.”

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Netflix Christmas Film Mocks Nativity, Jokes About Aborting Baby Jesus

Netflix's latest offering, "That Christmas," an animated Christmas movie geared toward families, makes a mockery of the nativity story in one scene garnering a lot of attention.

The movie centers on a ragtag group of kids, all led by a rebellious teenager named Bernadette. At one point in the film, the children come together to put on a school Christmas production written by a couple students who feel the [biblical nativity](#) story is too antiquated for modern culture.

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When Bernadette introduces the program, she describes Jesus as "a cool dude" with a beard and long hair and "into woodwork," calling him "a hipster basically."

As the program unfolds, viewers see the shepherds herding vegetables rather than sheep, and the wise men from the scriptural narrative are replaced with three wise women.

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The [most egregious part](#) of the production, though, comes when the young girl playing the role of Mary, Jesus' mother, sings, "Papa Don't Preach," a 1986 Madonna song about deciding whether to have an abortion. The girl sings as she's hoisting a watermelon with a face carved into it, intended to represent baby Jesus. At one point, another student accidentally knocks the watermelon out of the girl's hands and it falls to the ground, splattering onto the audience.

To read the full story, [visit our content partners at Faithwire.](#)

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How Many Americans Actually Go to Church During Christmas?

At Christmastime, churches plan for larger crowds—but those preparations might not pan out this year, at least for some congregations across the country.

A just-released survey from Lifeway Research found just under half of Americans (47%) say they typically attend church services during the [Christmas season](#), with 48% saying they don't, and 5% saying they are unsure of their holiday plans.

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“The very name ‘Christmas’ originates in the church’s celebration of Jesus Christ’s birth,” explained Lifeway Research Executive Director Scott McConnell. “In the mid-14th century, the words ‘Christ’s Mass’ were first merged as a single term for [this celebration.](#)”

He went on to state that, while 90% of Americans do something to celebrate Christmas, fewer than half usually attend church at Christmastime today.

Like with many things, the U.S. is sharply divided on holiday church attendance.

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Protestants (57%), Catholics (56%) and those from other religions (53%) are much more likely than the religiously unaffiliated (21%) to report usually attending a church service. The last group—those who hold to no religious conviction whatsoever—are most likely to say “no” (71%) to attending a church service [during Christmastime.](#)

Christians who already attend church services occasionally are, unsurprisingly, more likely to show up for services around this time of year. Believers who attend roughly once a week (76%) and those who attend once or twice a month (69%) are more inclined than those who rarely or never attend church services (52%) to come during Christmastime.

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Greg Laurie Gives Powerful Gospel Message to Jordan Peterson

Christian megachurch leader [Greg Laurie](#) recently appeared on psychologist Jordan Peterson's podcast, where he gave the professor-turned-cultural commentator a powerful presentation of the Gospel.

"When everything's said and done, what's more important than the afterlife?" the California-based pastor asked Peterson. "What's more important than where we spend it? According to the Bible, I believe there's a literal heaven, a literal hell, and I believe we choose in this life where we will spend the afterlife."

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Laurie added he's going to spend eternity in heaven "not because I've lived a good life – because I failed in many ways – but because Christ laid His life down for me on the cross."



[To order Joakim Lundqvist's new book, "Shine Your Light," visit Amazon.com.](#)

"Coming back to Abraham, and what a picture, the son was willing to go and be sacrificed by the father," the pastor

continued, referring to the Old Testament story of Genesis 22. “[Isaac] knew what was going on: ‘Hey, Dad, where’s the sacrifice?’ ‘My son, God will provide for Himself a sacrifice.’ But Isaac made that sacrifice, too. The Son Jesus made that sacrifice for us, because He knew there was no other way that we could reach God, no other way we could satisfy the righteous demands of God. So Heaven isn’t for good people, as it’s often said; heaven is for [forgiven people](#).”

The conversation between Peterson and Laurie stemmed from the 71-year-old minister opening up about the death of his son, Christopher, who passed away in 2008 as a result of a tragic car accident.

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He described that day in July of 2008 as the “worst” day in his life. Nevertheless, Laurie said he is not without hope – because of his faith in the redemptive work of Jesus.

“I believe I’ll see my son again, because he believed in Jesus,” Laurie explained. “He won’t be in heaven because I’m his dad; he’ll be in heaven because he put his faith in Christ and [he had that relationship](#). He’s a part of my future as well, so that gives me hope. But, also, I realize that God can allow these things in our life. I don’t know why. I can’t explain it. I don’t even try to explain it.”

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Retailer Faces Major Backlash for 'Gay in a Manger' Sweatshirt

Facing backlash, the European retailer Debenhams has discontinued selling a [Christmas-themed](#) sweater bearing an inflammatory, pro-LGBTQ+ message.

The purple sweater features a manger, is adorned with a rainbow, and is emblazoned with the message, "A gay in a manger" – a play on the 1800s hymn, "Away in a Manger." The controversial shirt was listed on the [retailer's website](#) for £38.99, or about \$50. A mug with the same design was also for sale.

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The product in question was produced by the alternative brand Grindstore, a U.K.-based company providing myriad products to British retailers.

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Christian Concern, an advocacy organization, condemned Debenhams for [selling the sweatshirt](#), which it called "disgraceful," urging followers to boycott both companies.

Great work from [@realrikkidoolan](#) and [@ChristSavesUK](#) on this.

Will [@Debenhams](#) publicly apologise though?

*Pastor Rikki said: "It is important for businesses and the British public to see that Christians are not passive and that we will not put up with Jesus being mocked so...
<https://t.co/nNfbjABceB> pic.twitter.com/CqnhLLPJRe*

– Christian Concern (@CConcern) [November 11, 2024](#)

Former U.K. Parliament Member Jacob Rees-Mogg said, "Debenhams would not mock Islam in this way."

Pastor Rikki Doolan of Spirit Embassy Church in London also criticized the treatment of Christians as opposed to those of other faiths, who are often treated much more respectfully.

In response to the condemnation, Grindstore removed the inflammatory products from its website.

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**Rick Warren Reports
'Intentional' Brushfire**

Reaches Saddleback Church

Pastor and author [Rick Warren](#) asked for prayers Sunday evening as an “intentional” brushfire spread toward Saddleback Church’s main campus in Lake Forest, California.

[Breaking News](#). [Spirit-Filled Stories](#). *Subscribe to Charisma on YouTube now!*

“Please pray,” wrote Warren, who retired from the pastorate in 2022. “[Two] acres of Saddleback Church have already been consumed by wildfire as of this moment. It’s our main campus (out of 20) in Lake Forest. A few weeks ago, we had a week of wildfires in our backyard, now this. So far, no buildings have been in danger. The Lake Forest campus is 120 acres – about half is our parking lots.”



[View this post on Instagram](#)

A post shared by Rick Warren (@pastorrickwarren)

It appears the fire began around 1 p.m. local time somewhere near the Portola and Rancho Parkways and quickly spread to nearby areas. Thankfully, the Orange County Fire Authority acted quickly to contain the fire within about 45 minutes, according to video from SoCal PD Media.

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It's important to note the scope of the fire is not exactly clear. While Warren said the fire "consumed" two acres of [Saddleback's property](#), the OCFA described the two-acre blaze as "near" the church. CBN News reached out to Warren for a statement.

To read the full story, [visit our content partners at CBN News.](#)

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Survivalist Bear Grylls Launching New Show With 'The Chosen' Cast, Creator

British-born adventurer Bear Grylls is known for toughing it out in the wildest of landscapes, and now he's bringing his survival expertise to the cast of "[The Chosen.](#)"

[Breaking News.](#) [Spirit-Filled Stories.](#) *Subscribe to Charisma on YouTube now!*****

Grylls, 50, spoke with CBN News at ChosenCon in Orlando, where he announced his upcoming series, "The Chosen in the Wild," a partnership with Dallas Jenkins, the creator of "The Chosen," which is entering its fifth season.

In the upcoming survival show, [Grylls](#), who compared the series to his popular reality TV show, "Running Wild," will journey out into the wilderness with various members of the Bible-based series' cast. Four episodes of the show have already been filmed, with two remaining. The outstanding episodes, the survivalist said, will feature Jenkins and Jonathan Roumie, who plays Jesus in "[The Chosen.](#)"

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"I'm really proud to announce a partnership with 'The Chosen,'" Grylls said. "We're doing a show called 'The Chosen in the Wild,' where I get to take cast members away on many

‘Running Wild’-type adventures, get to know their stories, see the real people, what they’re like, their background[s], and their journey through ‘The Chosen,’ their faith, and kind of how it’s changed them.”

Filming episodes with Jenkins and Roumie, he added, should be “good fun,” calling the episodes completed so far “amazing.”

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Lisa Bevere: How Christians ‘Fight’ the ‘Luciferian’ Culture

In the face of worldly chaos, Christians should flourish.

Christian author and speaker [Lisa Bevere](#) isn’t dismissing the complexities and difficulties of this current cultural moment. Rather, during a recent appearance on CBN’s “Faith vs. Culture,” the “Fight for Female” author said believers should set themselves apart from the disorder of this “Luciferian” age.

“In chaos, the opposite force is order,” she said. “In chaos, when everything is destructive, the opposite force is flourishing. So how we actually combat something in the Spirit

is we fight by flourishing. I believe, first and foremost, we renounce any alliance or agreement we've had with [chaos], then we operate in the opposite Spirit."

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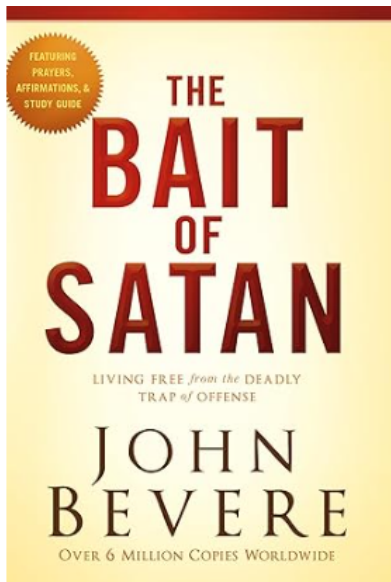
"So, if the family is being torn down by culture, we build the family," Bevere continued. "If the educational system is indoctrination, we go into the educational system and we find out how to improve that."

The 64-year-old minister warned Christians against withdrawing completely from the mainstream world. There is "danger," she explained, "in hiding rather than equipping." She added, "We want to shelter, not imprison."

Part of that "equipping" is [understanding Scripture](#) and knowing how to apply the Bible to everyday life. Bevere encouraged pastors to speak into the hot-button issues punctuating modern culture, like sexuality, justice, ethnicity, abortion and the family structure.

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"I do think pastors have been pushed into corners, where they're told, 'Hey, you can't speak about this,'" she observed. "That's a lie; Jesus spoke about every single thing and so, if you're a minister, you should have a voice in every single area – not be relegated to just Sunday sermons."



[To order John Bevere's "The Bait of Satan," visit Amazon.com.](#)

Some of the chaos of the world [is creeping into the church](#), too.

A YouGov survey from late 2022 found the vast majority of Americans (87%) subscribe to at least one belief loosely categorized as a tenet of "new-age spiritualism," such as karma, hypnosis, the existence of extraterrestrials, or the "law of attraction," more commonly known as "manifesting."

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Megachurch Pastor Claps Back at Critics of Large Churches

Texas-based Pastor [Ed Young](#) believes those who think megachurches are “just too big” are hypocrites.

The founder and senior pastor of the multi-site Fellowship Church in Grapevine issued the bold statement in [a video](#) shared to his Facebook page. Young’s church, for context, reported a weekly attendance of 24,000 in 2020. The preacher noted in his video many have told him his congregation “is just too big,” but asserted it’s unfair to criticize the sizes of churches in places with large populations.

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“‘Your church is just too big,’” Young said, quoting what he’s heard from critics of Fellowship Church. “I’ve heard people tell me that a lot: ‘It’s too big. [It’s a megachurch.](#)’ Well, that’s got to be one of the most hypocritical statements someone can make, because the person making the statement goes to massive concerts. They would go to a game – a football game. They would go to a massive mall, and they never really say that about those entities.”

According to the Hartford Institute for Religion Research, a megachurch is a church averaging 2,000 or more weekly attenders. There were roughly 1,170 megachurches in the U.S. in 2023, a decrease from the 1,750 megachurches reported by the Hartford Institute in 2020.

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Young went on to boldly assert, “Hey, if you think the church is too big, then you’re not going to like Heaven, because Heaven is going to be a big place. If a church is around a lot of people, it should be big in the context of being big.”



[To order Phil Hotsenpiller's "It's Midnight in America," visit Amazon.com.](#)

In 2020, a Lifeway Research study found the average church in the U.S. seats roughly 200 people, but the median weekly attendance is 65 worshipers. Megachurches, it should be noted, only make up about 0.5% of churches across the country, serving about 4 million weekly congregants.

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