

# One Controversial Denomination Just Named New Apostates

The Mormon Church has deemed married same-sex couples to be apostates of the faith and their children ineligible for baptism in a reaffirmation of opposition to gay marriage months after endorsing fair housing and employment on the basis of sexual orientation.

The new policy was approved by Mormon leaders—the Council of the First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve Apostles—to instruct local clergy how to proceed in light of the U.S. Supreme Court’s landmark ruling in June legalizing same-sex marriage and similar moves in other countries.

The Salt Lake City-based Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, as the Mormon faith is formally known, claims more than 15 million members and 85,000 missionaries worldwide.

Mormon officials said church doctrine has long regarded marriage as a union solely reserved for a man and a woman. And while the church has staunchly opposed extending marriage rights to same-sex couples, it has welcomed celibate, single gay men and lesbians to the religion.

Under the policy approved on Thursday, same-sex marriage was added to the list of acts considered to be a renunciation of the Mormon faith and thus subject to church discipline, including excommunication.

The new policy also prohibits natural or adopted children of same-sex married couples from receiving a naming blessing or from being baptized or confirmed in the faith until they turn 18, leave their parents’ home and personally disavow same-sex marriage or cohabitation.

The same conditions would apply to children of same-sex couples recommended for missionary service.

The move seemed at odds with the church earlier this year giving its support to legislation signed into law by Utah Governor Gary Herbert in March barring discrimination in the workplace or housing on the basis of sexual orientation or gender identity.

“This is a difficult event to witness,” the group Affirmation, an organization of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender Mormons, said in a statement. It said its leaders had “received a flood of reactions from LGBT Mormons, and family members and friends including grief, shock, disbelief and spiritual confusion.” {eoa}

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## **This Is the First American City to Elect a Majority Muslim Council**

A Detroit suburb may have elected the nation’s first Muslim-majority city council.

On Tuesday, Hamtramck voters elected Saad Almasmari and re-elected Abu Musa and Anam Miah.

They join Mohammed Hassan, meaning Muslims now hold four of the council’s six seats.

This Michigan city was settled by Germans, became

predominantly Polish in the early 1900s, and now has a slight majority of Muslims from Yemen, Bangladesh and Bosnia-Herzegovina.

The city council in nearby Dearborn has an Arab-American majority, but not all are Muslim.

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## **Where Are We on the End-Time Timetable?**

The recent Russian moves in Syria have many Christians asking, "Where are we in God's end-time timetable?"

CBN Middle East Bureau Chief Chris Mitchell discussed the issue with author and Middle East expert Joel Rosenberg in Jerusalem this week.

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## **US Could Still Close Guantanamo Bay Before Obama's Out of White House**

The Obama administration still has time to close the Guantanamo Bay military prison before the president leaves office, the White House said on Friday, adding that it is continuing to work on transferring detainees from the center.

The United States is working to reach agreement with countries

around the globe to transfer 53 eligible Guantanamo prisoners from the facility in Cuba, White House spokesman Josh Earnest said, adding that some transfers would take place by the end of the year.

“Absolutely it’s still possible. It’s still something that we are working very hard to accomplish,” Earnest said.

A senior U.S. official told Reuters “there is a very real possibility” that the number of inmates at Guantanamo, now at 112, could be reduced to less than a hundred by the end of the year.

“We’re aiming for this,” the official said, but added that there was no guarantee of hitting that milestone by Dec. 31. {eoa}

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## **Reports: ISIS Frees Elderly Assyrian Christians**

Islamic State has released 37 elderly Assyrian Christians who were among about 200 seized by the militants in February in northeastern Syria, two human rights monitoring groups said on Saturday.

Elders from Arab tribes had mediated with the jihadists for their release, the Britain-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said.

The Assyrian Human Rights Network said the captives had been returned to the town of Tel Tamer and that they were in good health. It posted a picture showing several people including

one woman, who was weeping.

The hardline Sunni Muslim militants have now released 88 from the original group, it said in a statement on its Facebook page, and negotiations were continuing to secure the freedom of the remaining 124.

They were captured during battles with the Syrian Kurdish YPG militia when Islamic State fighters overran more than a dozen villages inhabited by the ancient Christian minority near the Syrian city of Hasaka, close to the Iraqi border.

Islamic State fighters killed three of the Assyrians last month, according to the two monitoring groups. {eoa}

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## **Duggar Family Welcomes Baby Seewald!**

Jessa Duggar and Ben Seewald welcomed their son into the world Thursday night.

“Our sweet baby boy was born last night,” Ben Seewald posted on the family blog. The blog also contains several precious photos of the latest addition. “He weighed 9 lbs and 11 ounces and is 21 1/4 inches long! He’s precious and both he and Jessa are doing great. Stay tuned—we will share his name soon!”

TLC chronicled Jessa’s pregnancy in their new special, *Jill and Jessa: Counting On*, which will premiere in December.

The family endured drama earlier this summer when news hit that Jessa was one of four victims molested by her older

brother, Josh.

Later, Josh admitted to cheating on his wife, Anna, with an Ashley Madison account.

Despite the family struggles, the Duggars are thrilled with Jessa and Ben's new arrival, as are fans.

"He is a big baby! but congratulations to Jessa and Ben, and family. Very happy that both Mum and baby are healthy and happy! I was convinced Jessa was having twins, but all that matters is that baby is healthy! And beautiful!!" posted one fan.

Baby Seewald was due on the couple's first anniversary earlier this month.

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## **Pastor Loses His Leg After Hit-And-Run**

Hospital workers amputated a pastor's leg after he was struck during a hit-and-run.

According to local reports, Redemption Christian Ministries Leroy Dunlap had stopped to assist a stranded driver when another hit him, and the driver fled the scene.

Dunlap is also reportedly a "Black Lives Matter" activist.

The church Facebook page shared photos in support of Nation of Islam's Louis Farrakhan and the Million Man March.

Dunlap founded the Charlotte-area RCM in 2000, according to the church website.

“Dunlap began his walk with God on a tour of duty with the United States Naval Service in 1976,” the website reads. “With his salvation, came a hunger and a thirst (sic) for knowledge. This zeal for God’s Word led him to East Coast Bible College where he received his associate and bachelor degrees in Theology.”

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## **Middle-Schoolers Asked to Write About Alcohol, STDs and Sexual Encounters**

A New Jersey school district is facing scrutiny for a provocative eighth-grade homework assignment that reads more like a chapter from *Fifty Shades of Gray*.

The boys and girls at Myron L. Powell Elementary School in Cedarville were instructed to write a “reactive response” to a given situation.

They wanted to know what the students would do if they went to a party, got drunk, had sex with a stranger and then contracted herpes.

I was first alerted to the story by WPG, my radio affiliate in Atlantic City, N.J.

The homework assignment was for a language arts class. Back when I was in school, language arts was more about dangling participles, not sexually transmitted diseases.

Amy Loper told me she was shocked when she discovered her son’s homework assignment. And I mean she was shocked!

"It's insane," she said. "There is no reason whatsoever to discuss that kind of stuff with a kid. It's not sex education class. It's language arts."

Mrs. Loper made several telephone calls to the school and demanded some answers. It turns out—the assignment is part of the district's (wait for it) core curriculum.

The homework is part of a book the students were given titled, *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective Teens*.

Let's hope underage drinking, partying and unprotected sex are not among the habits.

Here's the verbatim assignment:

*"You had a really rotten day, but lucky for you your best friend is having an awesome party later. You go to the party and start drinking. You have a little too much to drink and start talking to this girl/guy you've never seen before. You head upstairs to better acquainted despite several friends telling you that you don't even know this person. You end up having sex with this person. The next day you really can't remember everything that happened and rely on your best friend to fill you in. A week later you find out that you contracted herpes from your one-night stand and that this is a disease you will have all your life and never know when an outbreak will occur."*

Mrs. Loper called her son's teacher to get an explanation. When she failed to get a satisfactory answer from the teacher, she contacted the superintendent.

"The superintendent told me that we could opt out of the sex-education class," she said. "But that's not the point."

And that's because the material was not taught in sex ed. It was taught in language arts.

"It's not the school's job to make these points to the kids,"

she said.

Mrs. Loper said she was blown away with the soft-core content of the assignment.

“Society is in such a downward spiral and everyone is willing to go along on the ride instead of trying to bring up their kids and actually parent,” she said.

I reached out to the school, but no one returned my calls.

Anybody miss the days of *Old Yeller*?

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## **Pope Francis Reveals Childhood Dream**

Pope Francis, who has vowed to reform the Roman Catholic Church, making it leaner and simpler, has disclosed that as a little boy he wanted to become a butcher.

He made the comment in an interview with *Straatnieuws*, a Dutch newspaper written by and for homeless people.

Asked if he ever dreamed of becoming pope when he was young, Francis recalled that he often went with his mother and grandmother to shop at a local market because there were no stores in the Argentine neighborhood where he grew up.

“I’ll tell you a secret,” he said. “I was very little. I was four years old. One time they asked me what I wanted to be when I grew up and I said: ‘a butcher,’” he said.

Since his election in 2013 as the first non-European pope in 1,300 years, the pope has stressed that he wants a Church that

is poor and for the poor.

He has urged Church leaders to live simpler lives and set the example himself by relinquishing the spacious papal apartments for a small suite in the Vatican guest house.

Francis told the paper that he would not have been able to live in the papal apartments, which he called big but not luxurious, "simply for mental reasons".

"It would have meant being isolated ... this place does me good because I feel free," he said, adding that his current lifestyle made the Vatican feel "less of a gilded cage."

"I miss the street," he told the interviewers but declined their offer to step out of the Vatican for a pizza, something he said in a previous interview that he missed being able to do.

"I would love to but we would not be able to do it. The moment I step outside, people would mob me," he said.

Asked if he ever felt pressure to sell some of the treasures of the Church, such as artistic treasures like Michelangelo's Pieta, which is in St. Peter's Basilica, he said he could not because they belonged to the whole world.

"I cannot put it (the Pieta) up for auction because it is not the property of the Church. It is in a church but it belongs to humanity. That is true for all the treasures of the Church," he said, repeating what Church leaders have said about many of its artistic treasures.

The Vatican has auctioned off gifts given to the pope in lotteries and give the proceeds to the poor. {eoa}

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# 'God's Not Dead 2' Puts Faith on Trial

Does it ever seem like the speaking voices of the church have become vanquished because of how prejudiced most of the world is? It has become a pressing issue in America within the past century; people get beaten, raped, murdered, arrested and abandoned due to issues on freedom of speech and religion. Now director Harold Cronk asks the world, "What's really at risk here?"

In 2014, *God's Not Dead* made a successful run in theaters, earning over \$60 million at the box office. This movie finally offered the needed inspiration and hope to all those who felt like they didn't have the voice nor the courage to stand up against the seemingly more powerful authority. It gave that little push forward that the public needed, as told through a seemingly ordinary college student who was not afraid to take a stand for Christ against the educational system.

Now in Cronk's sequel, *God's Not Dead 2*, he transports the matter from the classroom to the courtroom, a move that Newsboy Duncan Phillips says, "was a very natural progression in that sense."

In this sequel, a high school teacher compares the teachings of Gandhi and Martin Luther King Jr. to those of Jesus, an association that quickly causes the nation to erupt from hearing the Lord's name muttered in an educational setting.

The actress portraying this teacher, Melissa Joan Hart, compares this role to that of a great skin care line that she wanted to share with everyone, and ultimately argues, "Why wouldn't I do that with something that I found that brings me

joy and comfort and peace?”

Much like Pure Flix Production’s previous hit, *God’s Not Dead 2* asks further complicated questions that challenge one’s faith in Christ our Father, such as: “Would you be willing to put God above the law and risk losing everything for His sake?”

The most common answer would probably be no, but Jesus never accepted that answer, even though it meant execution on a cross. It is a tough thing, which is why *God’s Not Dead 2* is going to be exactly the push that everyone needs to pursue shining the light of Christ towards all tribes and nations. *God’s Not Dead 2* opens everywhere on April 1, 2016.

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