

Friend Accused of Assisting Church Shooter Now Out on Bail

A South Carolina man charged with hiding from federal investigators what he knew about a church shooting massacre his friend Dylann Roof is accused of carrying out was freed from jail on Wednesday, a source familiar with the case said.

A judge ordered Joseph Meek's release after he posted a secured bond of \$25,000 in Columbia, said the source, who was not authorized to talk about the proceedings. Meek, 21, is required to live with his grandparents and will be under home detention with electronic monitoring.

He must undergo a mental health evaluation and participate in treatment, according to a court order.

According to newspaper reports, Meek gave Roof a place to stay at his home in Lexington, South Carolina, in the weeks before police say Roof gunned down nine black churchgoers during a June 17 Bible study at the historic Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal church in Charleston.

Meek has said he knew Roof had purchased a handgun, but told reporters he dismissed his friend's racist comments as drunken bluster. Both Meek and Roof are white.

A federal grand jury indicted Meek on charges that he concealed knowledge of a felony crime and made false statements to an FBI agent after the shooting.

In October, a judge reduced Meek's bond to \$25,000 from \$100,000.

Roof, also 21, faces 33 federal hate crime and firearms charges, along with state murder charges. State prosecutors

have said they will seek the death penalty. {eoa}

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A Letter to Israelis: 'We Are With You'

A friend in Israel writes, "Sometimes we feel as though no one in chul (short for *Chutz La'aretz*, which literally means "outside of the land") really understands what is happening here."

She means the daily apprehension, the fear when you see your child walk out of the front door in the morning.

She means the knowledge that any passing car can become a ground missile, any disembarking passenger an avatar of death.

She further fears the knives wielded on streets will bring out the rhetorical knives as well: ones like the words of U.S. State Department Spokesman Adm. John Kirby, talking about how both sides have committed acts of terror.

What can I say to her; what can we say? How do we, who have chosen the buffered safety of life outside the land, respond to those who live in Israel?

These are my words to Rena, to her children, to all of our sisters and brothers who feel alone: Jews across the world wake each morning with prayer and trepidation, the prayer borne of faith and the trepidation of love. The sacred cord ties us from Paris to Miami to Madrid to London to Los Angeles to Buenos Aires to Toronto to Kiev to New York, its origin in

the energy of Jerusalem.

The world may not care to understand what it is to be surrounded by enemies, watchful and fearful, but we do.

Countries that associate with others—the EU or NATO or ASEAN or Latin American States or OPEC—cannot imagine what it is to belong to no club, to stand singular in the family of nations. We remember the opening verse of Lamentations: “How lonely sits the city.” There is one Jewish nation. One.

When people forgive the catastrophic political culture around you, asking what can one expect of people who have never known democracy, believe me—we remember that the founders of Israel came from lands with czars and dictators and tyrannies and still managed to create a democracy. We do not forget Israel’s roots, and we have not ceased to be amazed at them.

When your children are still at an age when girls and boys resist learning about the past, falling asleep in classes featuring dry recitations of dates and events, we know that you are haunting them with history. They learn at 6, 7, 8 years old that the strong arm of Israel has a number tattooed on it that will never disappear.

“If I forget you, O Jerusalem, may my right hand forget [its skill].” (Tehillim, Psalm Chapter 137).

As one of your greatest writers has said, before Israeli children learn the facts of life, they learn the facts of death. We, your sisters and brothers, do not forget.

Your 17-year-olds who patrol the borders may be a symbol to some of brute strength. To us, they are our children, barely discovering what life is, forced to carry a gun and make choices in a split second that will save or doom lives. On the evening they should be on a first date, they listen for sounds of terrorists in the night.

When you read in the Torah of Reuven, Gad and half of Manasseh—the tribes that Moses permitted to dwell outside the land—you may suppose that we no longer heed Moses' admonition that the tribes must help fight for the land to earn the privilege of residing elsewhere. Most of us have not forgotten. We know there is a tax for not living in the land.

When pundits from all over the world, in the safety of their studios, question how you defend yourself, know that we trust you. Do we ever question? Of course. We all think, argue, doubt, wonder. But in the end, we trust you not only because you have survived the many storms, but because while families fight, they also trust and embrace.

So what do we offer you in your pain?

We will send money to support hospitals and soldiers and the wounded and bereaved and charities and schools. We will speak up when the world assails you, judges and condemns you and dismisses your fears because they themselves do not wish to be afraid. We will visit you and stand next to you.

But most of all, please know that we love you.

We love you not with the distant, easy affection that we give to people who do not impinge on our lives or disturb our sleep. We love you, our Israeli brothers and sisters, with the soul-rocking love that binds our fate and our destiny with yours, the love of family far away that does not forget. We know that you would have us be there and instead we are here. But also, please remember, we are here.

David Wolpe is the Rabbi of Sinai Temple in Los Angeles, California. Rabbi Wolpe was named the most influential Rabbi in America by Newsweek and one of the 50 most influential Jews in the world by the Jerusalem Post. His work has been profiled in the New York Times, and he is a columnist for Time and a number of other influential publications. He is the author of eight books, including the national best-seller Making Loss

Matter: Creating Meaning in Difficult Times *and his newest book, David, the Divided Heart (which was a finalist for the National Jewish book award and has been optioned for a movie by Warner Bros).*

For the original article, visit .

LGBT Bullies Lose in Bathroom Brawl

The bullies lost.

After a nearly 18-month slugfest, Houston's LGBT nondiscrimination ordinance was crushed in a landslide defeat Tuesday—rejected by 61 percent of voters.

“The people of the city have spoken and they have spoken loudly,” Houston pastor Steve Riggle told me.

The nation's fourth largest city sent a clear message to City Hall: men who identify as women are not welcome in the ladies room.

“Their message was clear and strong for religious liberty and for the dignity of each unique human being made in the image of God,” Southern Baptist Convention President Ronnie Floyd told me.

While it was a good night for religious liberty, it turned out to be a bad night for the city's openly lesbian mayor.

Democratic Mayor Annise Parker and her administration had bullied and intimidated the city's Christian community for months. Her administration went so far as to issue subpoenas

against five pastors, demanding they turn over their sermons to the government.

The pastors came to be known as the "Houston 5," and their plight generated a massive outpouring of support from around the nation.

Riggle, the pastor of Grace Church, was one of the pastors ordered to turn over his sermons—a demand he ignored.

"If we had to go to jail over that, we would have," he told me. "We didn't have any problem with the mayor having our sermons, but we were not going to do it under the mandate of the court."

In spite of the loss, Mayor Parker remained defiant and blamed the defeat on a "small, very determined group of right-wing ideologues and the religious right."

"They only know how to destroy and not how to build up," she said in remarks reported by Associated Press.

Riggle said the landslide victory should send a message to the rest of the nation.

"People are fed up," he told me. "We're fed up with being threatened and intimidated. It's time for people across the nation to stand up and say we're not taking this anymore."

The head of the nation's largest Protestant denomination echoed that call.

"Religious liberty and social issues matter to the people of America," Floyd said. "I encouraged all politicians and both major political parties to take notice."

We the People are tired of having a radical agenda forced upon our families. We the People are tired of the bullying and the harassment. We the People are tired of being marginalized.

Just because you believe in the traditional definition of marriage does not make you a right-wing, homophobic bigot. Enough is enough.

What happened in Houston proves a point I made in my book—*God Less America*. When people of faith stand together with one voice, they can facilitate change.

That's a lesson worth remembering in 2016.

Christian Prison Worker Forced to Quit After Quoting What Bible Says About Homosexuality

A Christian prison worker felt compelled to resign after Bible verses he quoted during a chapel service provoked an aggressive response from prison authorities. An employment tribunal will hear this week.

Rev. Barry Trayhorn, an ordained Pentecostal minister, started work as a gardener at HMP Littlehey in May 2011. He also helped on a voluntary basis with chapel services at the sex offenders' prison, at the invitation of the chaplain.

Whilst leading worship at a chapel service in May 2014, Trayhorn spoke about the wonder of God's forgiveness for those who repent, quoting 1 Cor. 6:9-11 from memory. The verses mention a number of sins, including adultery, homosexual practice, greed and drunkenness.

Four days after the service, a complaint was made. Trayhorn

was immediately barred from helping with chapel services. He was later told that his comments during the service were “*homophobic*” and breached national prison policy. He was notified that there would be a disciplinary hearing.

In August, Trayhorn was signed off work with stress-related illness.

Then, on Nov. 4, 2014, Trayhorn resigned from his job as a gardener, saying that he had been harassed because of his Christian faith and that it was impossible for him to return to work, given the way he had been treated.

Two days later, a disciplinary hearing was held in his absence. Trayhorn was given a final written warning.

Trayhorn is convinced that his involvement in chapel services provoked a hostile response from prison officials, leading to a series of issues being raised with him.

A hearing in Trayhorn’s case begins today at Bedford Employment Tribunal and is expected to last until November 10.

Trayhorn is being supported by the Christian Legal Centre and will be represented by Standing Counsel Paul Diamond.

‘Daring to say what the Bible says’

Trayhorn explains: “I simply said what the Bible says. Prisoners need to hear God’s word just as much as anyone else. If people come to a Christian chapel service, we cannot hold back the gospel truth that God forgives those who repent.

“As I led the worship, I spoke about the wonder of God’s love and the forgiveness that comes through Jesus Christ to those who recognize their sin and repent. I said that I am the worst sinner I know.

“But that wasn’t politically correct. The mere mention of

homosexual behavior in the Bible verses that I quoted provoked complaint. I was barred from taking part in chapel services and trouble came my way. I was put under enormous pressure for daring to say what the Bible says.”

‘Gospel witness in prisons’

Commenting on Trayhorn’s case, Andrea Williams, chief executive of the Christian Legal Centre, said, “It is astonishing that Barry was forced out of a sex offenders’ prison for repeating what the Bible says about sexual behavior—during a chapel service—as he spoke about repentance and forgiveness. This is an important case. Freedom to maintain a clear gospel witness in prisons needs to be protected.

“No one should be denied an opportunity to hear what God has to say about the way to restoration, least of all those in prison for sexual offenses. We’re delighted that Barry came to us and grateful to all those who enable us to support him and other Christians like him.”

Facebook Photo of Praying Footballers Sparks Controversy

A Facebook photo of North Dakota high school football players praying on field is creating a controversy.

The post by a local Bismarck resident says the North Dakota State Activities Association said there can be “no prayers before the game.” The post has been shared more than 2,000

times.

The association says it has not issued a new rule banning prayer at sports games.

Executive Director Matt Fetsch said opening prayers haven't been held since the Supreme Court ruled them unconstitutional 15 years ago.

He also said prayers can't be broadcast over loudspeakers at postseason games because those games are sponsored by the association and not the home team.

Megachurch Leaves This Denomination Over Apostasy

A Texas megachurch withdrew from the Presbyterian Church (.) over theological concerns and the denomination's shift to valuing political ideology over Scriptural truth.

"We believe our denomination is not what it once was, and it has wandered from its biblical and confessional moorings," Session leader N.A. Stuart writes First Presbyterian Church San Antonio's decision packet. "... Even the Moderator of the PC(USA), Heath Rada, recently acknowledged that conservative churches are considering leaving the denomination because of the theological drift of the past 10 years; concerns over how the PC(USA) will find pastoral candidates who support the orthodox interpretation of Scripture; the denomination's expenditure of funds; and the decline of membership."

FPC plans to join ECO: A Covenant Order of Evangelical Presbyterians—a rapidly growing Reformed Presbyterian

denomination.

According to the ECO website, pastoral founders of the denomination worried the PCUSA's growing denominational disputes over theology and bureaucracy stole focus from their pastoral calling of sharing the gospel of Jesus Christ and equipping a new generation to lead.

Earlier this year, 34,000 black churches broke ties with the PCUSA denomination for its affirmation of gay marriage.

Charisma News previously reported how PCUSA is dying on the vine: Total membership at the end of 2014 was 1,667,767. That's compared to 1,760,200 at the end of 2013 and 1,849,496 at the end of 2012.

Now, FPC is breaking ties with the PCUSA.

The decision packet to leave the church maintains the secession is about more than gay marriage, and acknowledges they have many LGBT members.

"We confess that we have not done what we should have done in ministering to our own members and families on this issue," the packet reads. "Our humble understanding of God's intention for sexual intimacy, as expressed through Scripture, however, is that sexual intimacy is to be expressed in a permanent covenant relationship between a husband and wife. While churches differ on this issue and people within our congregational family differ on this issue, we ask that persons who have different views remain in community, honor each other with respect and love, and stay centered on Jesus."

The Truth Behind Robin Williams' Suicide

Comedian Robin Williams had been planning to undergo neurological testing the week before he committed suicide last year, and likely only had three years to live, his widow said on Tuesday.

In her first interview since Williams hanged himself with a belt at their California home, Susan Williams described how the "Good Morning, Vietnam" Oscar winner was "just disintegrating" physically and mentally in the months before his death.

Williams died in August 2014 at age 63 and had been diagnosed with Parkinson's Disease three months prior. He was showing symptoms including stiffness, slumping gait and confusion, she told ABC television's "Good Morning America."

An autopsy found Williams also had Lewy body dementia, which causes a progressive decline in mental abilities, his widow said.

"If Robin was lucky, he would've had maybe three years left. And they would've been hard years. And it's a good chance he would've been locked up," she said, referring to a doctor's prognosis for the comedian.

After a lifetime of struggles with addiction, Williams had been "completely clean and sober" in the eight years before his death, but his chronic depression had returned along with paranoia, she added.

The beloved actor was aware he was losing his mind and although he was keeping it together "in the last month he could not. It was like the dam broke," his widow told ABC. The last week of his life doctors were planning to check him into

a facility for neurocognitive testing, she said.

Yet he never talked about taking his own life, she said.

In the tearful interview, Susan Williams recalled their last affectionate conversation the night before the actor took his own life, and how she raced home from work after he was discovered by an assistant the following morning.

“I just wanted to see my husband. And I got to see him ... and I got to pray with him. And I got to tell him, ‘I forgive you 50 billion percent, with all my heart. You’re the bravest man I’ve ever known.’ You know, we were living a nightmare,” she said.

The actor’s third wife was speaking out after reaching a settlement last month with his three children from previous relationships that ended a bitter dispute over his estate and the dividing up of his personal belongings. {eoa}

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Billy Graham Gets His Place in History

From Nov. 6, 2015, through July 2016, the North Carolina Museum of History in Raleigh will feature a special exhibit honoring Billy Graham as “North Carolina’s Favorite Son.”

For decades, Billy Graham has been touted as one of the nation’s—and the world’s—most revered people. Last year marked the 58th time he was voted one of the “Ten Most Admired Men in the World” through a Gallup poll.

He has also been known unofficially as “America’s Pastor” and “Pastor to Presidents.”

When North Carolina Governor Pat McCrory visited Billy Graham at his home in 2013, he presented him with his latest title: “North Carolina’s Favorite Son.”

The state’s House and Senate each passed subsequent resolutions to officially declare this distinction, as well as to memorialize Mr. Graham’s late wife, Ruth Bell Graham.

Now, North Carolina Museum of History visitors will get a chance to learn more about the life and ministry of the Tarheel State’s iconic native.

From November 2015 through July 2016, a special exhibit, “North Carolina’s Favorite Son: Billy Graham and His Remarkable Journey of Faith,” will be displayed at the museum in Raleigh.

The 5,000 square foot exhibit, which is not publicly funded, opens on November 6—the day before Billy Graham’s 97th birthday. It will include memorabilia, displays and multimedia that document his early days as a farm boy in Charlotte, his family life, his friendships with dignitaries and his leadership through national and international crises like 9/11.

“It seemed appropriate to pay homage while he is still living,” said David Bruce, assistant to Billy Graham. “And now, anyone who visits the North Carolina Museum of History will have a chance to see the influence this man from our state has had worldwide.”

After the “Favorite Son” designation became official, it became obvious to several state leaders in Raleigh, North Carolina’s capital, that there was little in the way of public recognition for Graham. This group went before the museum directors and petitioned to have a display to honor their

special native.

“They realized there was not very much reflection of our state’s faith element, and that a display about the life of Billy Graham would satisfy much of that,” Bruce explained. “There are definitely reflections of notable people like politicians, but this adds a missing and very important piece.”

Bruce is also quick to point out that the honor bestowed upon Mr. Graham is ultimately not to draw attention to the famous preacher, but to make the name of Jesus more famous: “Any great honor Billy Graham receives points to his message, his integrity and his faithfulness. It’s really a testimony of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.”

Each year, thousands travel to Raleigh to visit various historical sites and important landmarks, including large numbers of students.

The North Carolina Museum of History is usually one of their stops.

“It will have a great impact,” Bruce said. “As part of the exhibit we can point people toward the permanent exhibit—the Billy Graham Library.”

Tom Phillips, vice president of the Billy Graham Library, sees this exhibit as an extension of the Library’s ministry.

“A lot of people go to an historic museum to look at the whole picture of a state’s history. In doing so, North Carolina Museum of History visitors will discover the spiritual history of our state through the lives of Billy and Ruth Graham,” he said.

“My hope is that this will create an awareness of the Billy Graham Library, and serve as an invitation to come visit us.”

Like Bruce, Phillips is counting on this exhibit to inspire

the next generation of North Carolinians.

“I believe this exhibit will encourage all young people that God has a plan for their lives, and that He can call them to do great things, like He did with Billy Graham,” he said.

“My prayer is that they will walk away with the understanding that they don’t have to be pastors, missionaries, or world famous evangelists to fulfill God’s call. They can do that wherever God places them.”

Like with anything that has Billy Graham’s name attached to it, the most important thing that can come from this exhibit is a changed heart and a redeemed life.

“We always want something like this to cause a person to consider his or her own relationship with the Creator. You want it to touch hearts and draw attention to spiritual things,” Phillips said. “People are so busy these days; they don’t stop for much. My prayer is that each visitor can ‘be still’ as they tour the exhibit and that God’s Spirit will break through and change lives.”

Baby Jesus Jingles Bells of Unbelievers Attacking Christmas Display

Jeremy Morris, of Hayden, Idaho, loves to go all out for Christmas.

Think Clark Griswold on steroids.

His annual Christmas display includes tens of thousands of

lights, a Living Nativity, a 22-voice choir and a camel named Dolly.

Folks travel from all over town to experience the larger-than-life Christmas display—and spectators say it is indeed something to behold.

But the West Hayden Estates First Addition Homeowners Association does not share Jeremy's yuletide cheer.

Last year, he purchased a home in their neighborhood—with hopes of making his annual holiday event bigger and better.

It takes about three months to install all the lights and the decorations—so the Morrises are already hauling out the holly and reindeer and other holiday accessories.

Hence, the war on Christmas in autumn.

The homeowners association objected to the lavish display and put Jeremy on their naughty list.

They were especially upset about the religious nature of Jeremy's display—as noted in a certified letter he said he received from the homeowner's association board.

"I am somewhat hesitant in bringing up the fact that some of our residents are non-Christians or of another faith and I don't even want to think of the problems that could bring up," the letter read.

The homeowners association did not return my telephone calls, but it seems like the baby Jesus really jingled their bells.

Attorney Scott Poorman fired off another letter on Oct. 26 demanding that Jeremy and his wife take down their display or else face the wrath of a lawsuit.

His letter did not mention folks who might take offense at the Christians—but he did claim the family violated a number of

other rules and regulations.

“Your event will be offensive to the senses and will interfere with the comfortable enjoyment of your neighbors’ private property rights,” Poorman wrote.

The attorney feared the bright lights, loud music, choirs, zoo animals and Santa Claus would cause all sorts of helter-skelter in the neighborhood.

“Your planned event will be a nuisance to the entire neighborhood,” he wrote.

Santa Claus—a nuisance? Whoever would have thought?

“Simply put, the quiet residential neighborhood of West Hayden Estates First Addition is not an appropriate location for such activities,” he wrote.

And the board really took issue with Dolly the Camel.

“Dolly the Camel is not an ordinary household pet and is not allowed to be kept on your property for any period of time,” the attorney wrote.

To be fair, the Bible does not mention a cat or hamster being present at the nativity.

Jeremy tells me he has no intention of taking down a single piece of tinsel.

“Their real agenda is to attack Christians,” he said. “This is about hostility towards people of faith. I have certain religious beliefs that I hold dear to my heart. We wanted to help people in the community and promote Christmas as the Christian holiday it’s always been.”

He also uses the Christmas display to raise money for the families of cancer patients as well as a local organization that helps homeless children.

It seems to me the homeowners association has a legitimate concern about crowds and traffic and livestock. But I suspect this has more to do with Christianity than camels.

I live in the United States," he said. "I live in the state of Idaho—where we are supposed to still have some religious freedom. And if I want to witness to people on my driveway or on my lawn, that's my right."

Folks, I love Christmas as much as the next guy—but I'm not too sure I'd have much holiday cheer if there was a camel munching on my mistletoe.

Houstonians Drop a Plumb Line in America, Flush LGBT Bathroom Bill

Voters in Houston, Texas, overwhelmingly rejected the city's Proposition 1, which would have allowed any man or woman to use any bathroom based on a chosen "gender identity." The measure raised serious privacy concerns and threatened Houstonians with punishing fines for following their deeply held religious beliefs regarding sexuality.

A digital ad campaign by FRC Action's Super PAC, the Faith Family Freedom Fund, was seen by nearly 300,000 Houston residents in recent weeks. Last year, Family Research Council (FRC) organized "I Stand Sunday," a live simulcast featuring Christian leaders including FRC President Tony Perkins, Mike Huckabee, Ronnie Floyd, Dr. Rick Scarborough, and the Houston pastors whose sermons were subpoenaed by the city's mayor.

Nearly 7,000 people were in attendance at the host church, Grace Community Church in Houston. Additionally, 765 churches and nearly 3,000 home groups tuned into the event in all 50 states.

On the defeat of Houston's Prop 1, Family Research Council Action President Tony Perkins commented:

"Houston has become a rallying cry for Americans tired of seeing their freedoms trampled in a politically correct stampede to redefine marriage and sexuality. Houstonians sent a message heard across the country: They will not allow the government to flush away their money, and more importantly, their values and religious liberties.

"While much of the debate focused on biological males using a woman's bathroom, many voters told us they understood this involved a lot more than bathrooms. The mayor's efforts to disenfranchise voters and subpoena pastors' sermons and private communications demonstrated this law was ultimately about silencing and even stripping away the livelihood of those who refused to yield their beliefs to this new morality. Government officials should carefully consider these election results before engaging in Mayor Parker's intimidation tactics.

"Houstonians' religious freedom, freedom of speech, and the right to petition their government have won the day, but much more work remains to be done to safeguard these freedoms across the nation. No person should be punished by the government because of their beliefs.

"We commend Houstonians for courageously standing up to political intimidation to defend their freedom to believe and the freedom to live according to those beliefs," Perkins concluded.