

Kentucky Bars Pastor from Prison Ministry for Believing Homosexuality is a Sin

The Kentucky Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ) revoked the volunteer credentials of an ordained minister because he was unable to sign a statement promising to refrain from ever telling juvenile inmates that homosexuality was “sinful.” In a letter to the commissioner, Liberty Counsel has given the Department until July 31 to reinstate David Wells’ volunteer visitor credentials. Evangelist David Wells has served as a volunteer for more than 10 years, faithfully visiting and mentoring juveniles at the Warren County Regional Juvenile Detention Center, under the prison ministry of Pleasant View Baptist Church in McQuady. “Many juveniles are in DJJ custody because of sexual crimes,” said Mat Staver, the founder and chairman of Liberty Counsel, a non-profit legal organization dedicated to advancing religious liberty. “David Wells must be able to discuss what the Bible says about matters of sexuality with the juveniles he is trying to help. To remove the Bible from a pastor’s hands is like removing a scalpel from a surgeon’s hands,” Staver said. “Without it, they cannot provide healing.” Wells was barred from visiting, counseling, or leading worship services for juveniles based on DJJ Policy 912 IV(H) “Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity,” which states that volunteers:

[S]hall not refer to juveniles by using derogatory language in a manner that conveys bias towards or hatred of the LGBTQI community. DJJ staff, volunteers, interns, and contractors shall not imply or tell LGBTQI juveniles that they are abnormal, deviant, sinful, or that they can or should change their sexual orientation or gender identity.

"DJJ 912 equates the teaching of Biblical morality with 'derogatory,' 'biased,' and 'hateful' speech," Staver pointed out. "In so doing, the DJJ policy creates an unconstitutional, religious litmus test for DJJ access." Staver continued, "The First Amendment prohibits the government from viewpoint discrimination. This detention center may not prohibit the expression of Biblical morality simply because a few DJJ policymakers object to the Bible and its teaching," Staver concluded.