

Network Behind Scientology Expose Announces New Faith-Healing Doc

If a child comes down with pneumonia, strep throat or a dozen other treatable illnesses, many parents head straight to the doctor.

In the faith-healing movement, these parents turn to prayer. They believe that if it's God's will for the child to be healed, he or she will be. Often, the child succumbs to the illness.

The faith-healing movement draws speculation from around the country and is now the subject of a documentary commissioned by A&E Indie Films. A&E network is also behind other religious exposés, including *Leah Remini's Scientology and the Aftermath*.

According to *The Hollywood Reporter*, the untitled faith-healing project will investigate 10 child deaths in Idaho's Followers of Christ movement. Tom Dunican of Pulse films will direct.

"This film raises fascinating issues on the very fabric of our country—such as the separation of church and state and what the role of government is in protecting its citizens," said Molly Thompson, senior vice president of feature films at A+E Networks. "We're very excited about the work Pulse is doing."

THP reports the film will take a look at Dan Sevy and his family, who look to the state legislature to defend their right to reject medical treatment for their children under Idaho's religious shield laws. Sevy is a member of the Followers of Christ and has become the public face of faith healing in Idaho. He and his wife lost two sons, Gabriel in

2008 and Rockwell in 2011.

Idaho lawmakers are reportedly crafting a bill that would prohibit exclusive faith healing if the child's life is in danger.

"The goal is, it's not to punish the parents but to protect the children," Senate President Pro Tem Brent Hill said.

The legislation would reportedly alter the state code to include an imminent death caveat.

Currently, the code reads "The practice of a parent or guardian who chooses for his child treatment by prayer or spiritual means alone shall not for that reason alone be construed to have violated the duty of care to such child."

Democrat Rep. John Gannon crafted a bill to amend the section to read: "unless such practice creates an imminent risk or permanent physical harm or death."

According to the *Boise Weekly*, many of the child deaths from the last century stem from the group Followers of Christ.

"They believe that medicine is a temptation from Satan, and to give in is to give in to that temptation," former member Linda Martin said. "They also believe to give in is for people of weak faith or no faith. People of the world are seen as tempted."

The *BW* reports child death numbers are difficult to track because the group doesn't report when a child dies.

However, Children's Healthcare Is a Legal Duty maintains a database of more than 200 child graves in Followers of Christ cemeteries. In the largest, Peaceful Valley Cemetery, 204 of the 592 graves belong to minor children. Of the graves dating from 2002 to 2013, 35 percent belong to minor children of stillbirths—that's more than 10 times the number of deaths among minor children and stillbirths statewide, *BW* reports.

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