

Muzzled, Fired and Reported as a Terrorist: Chaplain Loses Case in LGBTQ Dispute

An ordained Church of England (CofE) chaplain, who was fired from his job and secretly reported to the UK government's terrorist watchdog for a moderate sermon in a school chapel on identity politics, will appeal an employment tribunal ruling handed down this week.

After being fired, Rev. Dr. Bernard Randall had taken his employer, Trent College in Nottingham, to court for discrimination, harassment, victimization and unfair dismissal. He's being represented by the Christian Legal Centre, the legal ministry of the religious freedom watchdog Christian Concern.

Randall described the latest ruling against him as a "blow for free speech and Christian freedoms."

"I am extremely disappointed at this result. It is a personal blow, but more importantly, it is a blow for all those who believe in freedom of speech, in freedom of religion and in an educational system which opens the minds of young people rather than narrowing them or imposing an ideology that many or most in our society find troubling," he said in a statement.

"It is a foundational principle of a truly democratic society that the free exchange of ideas is good for everyone," Randall said.

"In this case, mainstream Christian beliefs about marriage are held by a minority in society, albeit a substantial one. They are hardly extreme: they arise out of God's deep love for all people, and his desire for full human flourishing. They

deserve to be taken seriously,” he noted.

“On the other hand, the beliefs of gender identity ideology are themselves held by a minority and are controversial, to say the least. They also deserve to be taken seriously. However, it cannot be right for a school to teach them as if they are undisputable facts, and to shut down those who wish to take an open thoughtful approach to the well-being of young people,” Randall explained.

“The Tribunal’s ruling makes the free exchange of ideas in schools, and in wider society much harder. I understood that the whole point of the Equality Act is to protect minorities. It feels today as if Christians are one minority who are not afforded that protection, and I believe that is wrong on every level,” he concluded.

Randall, 50, from Derbyshire, was ordained by the Church of England in 2006. He had been employed by the school for four years until he was dismissed in 2019.

As CBN News reported in September of 2022, he told the East Midlands Employment Tribunal that the school had shown “absolutely no regard for the concern [he] had for those upset or confused by the implementation of Educate and Celebrate”—a group that provides training “to embed gender, gender identity and sexual orientation into the fabric” of their organizations.

According to The Daily Mail, Randall told the tribunal in a written statement, that it was clear that the charity’s stated objective was to promote LGBT inclusion in schools. However, he said E&C went beyond “a natural stance of inclusivity into the active promotion of ideas which he believed amounted to identity politics.”

He also claimed much of E&C’s program appeared to him to be “contrary to Christian teaching.”

Randall told the tribunal about a September 2018 meeting at the school when representatives of E&C urged staff to chant “smash heteronormativity”—the concept that heterosexuality is the normal form of sexual orientation—the BBC reported.

Randall said he did not participate in the chanting.

He was told by his supervisors at the school that they “would not simply implement the entire Educate and Celebrate program as presented, but would make selective use of whatever fitted with the Trent ethos.”

He later discovered that the school intended to implement the entire program.

The chaplain said there were several concerns among the school’s community that were brought to his attention about the program.

“Some objected to elements on religious grounds; others found the aggressively political approach concerning, feeling that beliefs were being forced on them; others were simply confused about what they could, or could not, believe,” he said.

According to Randall, when one child asked “How come we are told we have to accept all this LGBT stuff in a Christian school?” he decided to respond by carefully writing an explanatory, moderate sermon giving the Christian viewpoint and emphasizing the importance of “respecting those with whom we disagree.”

He gave the sermon twice during chapel, once with minor alterations, and spoke to various staff and pupils ages 11 to 17, according to the Christian Legal Centre.

In his sermon, Randall said, “You do not have to accept the ideas of LGBT activists.”

Even though he knew it might “ruffle a few feathers,” he told the tribunal he didn’t expect any complaints about it, the BBC

reported.

The attorney representing the school asked Randall if he was being deliberately provocative and undermining the program the school was implementing.

“The school has no place telling pupils they have to accept an ideology. I would say that even applies to Christianity,” he replied.

“I don’t think it ever occurred to me that anyone would think that was offensive,” Randall added.

Reported as a Terrorist to Government Watchdog

However, within weeks of presenting the sermon, the school told Randall he had violated the school’s LGBT agenda. He was first told that the school contended that gender identity was a protected characteristic. Second, they claimed that psychology textbooks say there are three genders. But the real problem, according to school officials, was not what Randall had said but how the sermon made people feel.

During his disciplinary meeting, Randall was given notes that showed he had been reported to Prevent, the U.K. government’s counter-terrorism watchdog, as a religious extremist. He was later told the watchdog had returned the school’s report, declining to investigate. {eoa}

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