

Uncompromising Christian Clerk Jailed for Refusing to Issue Same-Sex Marriage Licenses

A county clerk in Kentucky who refuses to issue marriage licenses to same-sex couples on religious grounds was held in contempt of court by a U.S. federal judge on Thursday and sent to jail.

Rowan County Clerk Kim Davis, 49, was led away by U.S. marshals who confirmed she was under arrest.

"The court doesn't do this lightly," District Court Judge David Bunning said in ordering that she be taken into custody.

Bunning said his earlier injunction ordering Davis to issue marriage licenses applied to everyone and not just the four couples whose suit in July had accused Davis of not doing her job.

Davis has refused to issue licenses to any couples, gay or straight, since the U.S. Supreme Court in June ruled that same-sex couples have the right to marry under the U.S. Constitution, citing her beliefs as an Apostolic Christian.

Before and during the hearing, about 200 demonstrators on both sides of the issue gathered outside the courthouse, some chanting slogans and many holding signs. As word of the ruling emerged, supporters of same-sex marriage erupted in cheers.

Davis' deputies still face their own reckoning as Bunning assigned each of them attorneys and said their fate would be determined at a hearing later on Thursday. He warned they could face fines or jail.

Davis' attorney objected, saying Davis had not given her deputies authority to issue marriage licenses.

The hearing in Ashland, Kentucky, lasted just over two hours. Crying at times, the soft-spoken Davis maintained that a marriage can only be between a man and a woman and she was unable to recognize same-sex marriages.

"Marriage is a union between one man and one woman," she said under questioning by her attorney.

Davis thanked the judge before walking toward the marshals.

Also testifying was April Miller, who along with her partner Karen Jacobs had three times tried to get a marriage license from Davis' office. They were one of four couples who sued Davis in July.

When asked why she had not simply gone to another county to get a license, Miller said she wanted it in the county in which she has lived for nine years. Miller, who said she voted for Davis in last year's election for clerk, said she has been in a relationship with her partner for 11 years.

A U.S. marshal said he did not know to which detention facility Davis was being sent. Davis told *Fox News* earlier she was ready to go to jail for her beliefs.

"I've weighed the cost and I'm prepared to go to jail," Davis told Fox in an interview published on Thursday. "This has never been a gay or lesbian issue for me. This is about upholding the Word of God."

Apostolic Christian beliefs are rooted in a literal interpretation of the Bible.

Davis, who earns about \$80,000 a year, according to state officials, is being legally represented at no cost by Liberty Counsel, a Florida-based Christian religious advocacy organization.

Some demonstrators outside the courthouse chanted slogans like “God is great” or “Do your job,” and many held signs or flags, like the rainbow flag—a symbol for gay rights.

Warren Howard of Ashland said he wants Davis to do her job or quit.

“Seems like every time something backwards happens, Kentucky’s on the sides of the backwardness,” he said. “And the thing about it is: It’s not true. Most of the people I speak to realize this shouldn’t have went on for as long as it has.”

More people came out in support of Davis. One man held a sign saying, “Don’t make a moral wrong, a civil right.”

Theresa Craig from nearby Carter County, Kentucky, said the courts were a disgrace for not backing Davis.

“Ms. Kim Davis, she’s doing the right thing,” Craig said. “She’s just standing up for her God, which as Christians we need to do.”

Back in Morehead, Kentucky, phones at the clerk’s office rang busy and a sign on the door from Davis said the office was closed for the day as she and her staff appeared in Ashland for the hearing. The sign said the office would reopen on Friday.

(Additional reporting by Daniel Bases in New York, Suzannah Gonzales in Chicago and Emily Stephenson in Washington; Writing by Ben Klayman; Editing by Howard Goller)

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