

Westboro Baptist Church Founder Fred Phelps Dead at 84

Fred Phelps Sr., the founder of a controversial fundamentalist church that advanced its anti-gay agenda by picketing military funerals and political events, has died at the age of 84, according to the church's official blog.

Phelps, the long-time pastor and face of the Topeka-based Westboro Baptist Church, died in a Kansas hospice late on Wednesday, according to the blog post.

Phelps, who founded the Westboro Baptist Church in the 1950s, was recently excommunicated, his son Nathan Phelps said on social media this week. The younger Phelps also had said his father was near death in the hospice.

Earlier this week the group said it would not confirm his excommunication because it was a "private" church matter.

Reporting By Victoria Cavaliere; editing by Gunna Dickson

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