

The problem with prayer in schools

Try to imagine a Hare Krishna devotee praying each morning before the third grade where your child attends public school.

Undoubtedly, in a few days, parents would be making a strong protest in the principal's office.

The central problem with prayer in schools is that everyone is subjected to the devotional style and theological view of one person. Basic American rights to freedom of religion fall away as one religious tradition holds forth with the blessing of government.

At the educational level, children learn to ignore religious thoughts because they have been bored by mindless prayers.

At the emotional level, many children will feel excluded outdoors (and hence inferior) by words, phrases and styles differing from the devotional life in their family tradition.

At the sociological level, peer pressure, which is so effective with the young, will lead some children toward what they sense to be the majority, and away from their family tradition.

THE POINT of all these arguments



moral perspectives

Rev. Charles Erickson

is that in a pluralistic society, we have the right to dignity where no religious view is favored.

An even more serious issue is of concern to people considered to be the religious faithful. Prayer in school distorts the meaning of devotion. Prayer is an expression of faith and conviction, so to pretend to include greatly diverse traditions is a mockery.

Devotion is part of a specific view of the nature and relationship of the human and the divine, so to engage in generalizations cheapens it. Prayer includes commitment, so a group at prayer needs shared dedication.

Prayer is either private (not a classroom endeavor) or the act of a faith community where language, conviction, aspirations and symbols have mutually accepted meaning.

THESE ARE ALL rather familiar, if not tired, arguments for most literate people. We have been going over these concerns almost annually since 1983 when the Supreme Court set aside the practice of prayer in school.

The fascinating question is why the school doesn't seem settled. A discharge petition is being circulated in Congress to get the issue to the floor for vote. This time, the legislation is worded to forbid the Supreme Court to consider appeals from state courts on this issue.

The testimony in the House Judiciary Committee in 1984 seemed enough to lay the issue to rest for all time. It ran to 2,774 printed pages. I keep it as a souvenir because I was responsible for three of those pages.

It keeps recurring as an unsettled

problem because our political process inevitably includes a lot of lip service to nostalgic notions. Many still think this nation is a Protestant melting pot into which everyone should fit.

What happens in politics often is captive to clichés, slogans and quick-fix programs most of us abhor if we stop to think more deeply.

POPULARITY grows with opinions that are contrary to the studied conclusions of experts.

In this issue, the testimony of legal scholars, religious leaders and skilled educators is overwhelming.

People who are involved in church and synagogue don't want religion cheapened by being hawked as a trivial exercise in public.

Such people need to spread enthusiasm about their own and other religious practices.

The majority of Americans do worship and can counter the cries for legislation to try to save society by public devotion in schools.

Creating meaningful prayer habits is the sacred responsibility of home and church. Where responsibility lies dictates the moral direction.

Sunday schools have anniversary

Two hundred years ago the first Sunday school was begun in Gloucester, England. This event will be honored Oct. 2-4 in Cobo Hall in a celebration sponsored by the International Christian Education Association.

In contrast to the simplicity of the school founding when a newspaper publisher paid an English woman to teach school children reading, writing, arithmetic and religion, the anniversary observance is expected to attract 100,000 participants.

The October convention will be kicked off on Saturday, Sept. 27, with an international parade beginning in Windsor and ending at Cobo Hall.

Workshops, seminars and exhibits will be conducted by international school authorities. An historic Sunday school museum will be located at convention center with manuscripts, artifacts and historical items from around the world.

Displays are expected from the John Wanamaker Museum. Wanamaker owned a large store in Philadelphia 100 years ago, and was superintendent of the largest Sunday school in America. Other displays are expected from the Presbyterian Historical Society, the Free Library, Philadelphia; the Museum of Sunday School Heritage, and the American Bible Society.

For details on the convention or the parade, call the convention office at 399-6500.

In the long run

The International Food Storage Association, P.O. Box 249, LaVerkin, Utah 84745, has seven publications available on long-term food storage. A self-addressed double stamped envelope and 20 cents in coin will bring you a copy of "Basic Food Storage" and a list of the other publications.

Your Invitation to Worship

For Church Directory Information
Please Call 644-1100 Ext. 200

FAITH COVENANT CHURCH
35415 W. 14 Mile Road at Drake
661-9191
Sunday School and Sunday Worship 10:00 AM

LIVONIA CHRISTIAN CHURCH
36075 Seven Mile Road
475-2075
Sunday School 9:45 AM
Worship Service 11 AM
"SMILE" All-Church Picnic at 12 Noon
Fellowship 12:00 PM
Rev. Austin G. Denny

CLARENCEVILLE UNITED METHODIST
20300 Middlebelt, Livonia
474-3444
9 AM First Worship Service
10:15 AM The Church School
11:15 AM Second Service of Worship
Nursery Provided at All Services

SAINT ANDREW'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH
16360 Hubbard Road
Livonia, Michigan 48154
421-8451
8:00 AM Holy Eucharist
9:00 AM Christian Education Classes
10:00 AM Family Eucharist
Sunday Morning - Nursery Care Available
10:30 AM - Wednesday Eucharist
The Rev. Kenneth G. Davis
The Rev. Edward A. King

WARD PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF LIVONIA
Farmington and Six Mile Roads
422-1150
Worship & Sunday School 8:30, 10:00 & 11:30 A.M.
"Dachau and Oberammergau"
Dr. Bartlett L. Hess
7:00 PM
Film: "Heavenly Deception"
The Story of One Man's Liberation from the Moonie Cult
Wednesday 7:30 p.m. - HOUR OF POWER
(Activities for All Ages)
At Conditioned Sanctuary
Sunday Service Broadcast
9:30 A.M., WMUZ-FM 103.5
Nursery Provided at All Services
Janet Fitter

FARMINGTON HILLS BAPTIST CHURCH
28301 Middlebelt Road, 1/2 Mile E. of 12 Mile
A FULL-SERVICE CHURCH
SUNDAY
GRADED BIBLE SCHOOL 9:45 AM
WORSHIP SERVICES 11 AM and 4 PM
CHILDREN'S CHURCH 10:00 AM
WEDNESDAY FAMILY NIGHT 7:00 PM
Douglas H. Brown, Pastor
Daniel Curry, Minister of Music and Youth
Nursery provided at All Services
C.B.A. Affiliated
No Steps

BLOOMFIELD HILLS BAPTIST CHURCH
3600 Telegraph Road • 1001 N. North Long Lake Road
Bloomfield Hills 48305
Dr. Douglas H. Gallagher, Pastor
Rev. Jim Lake, Associate Pastor
Larry Simmons, Director of Church Music
COFFEE HOUR 9 AM
SUNDAY SCHOOL 9:30 AM
MORNING WORSHIP SERVICE 10:30 AM
EVENING WORSHIP SERVICE 7:00 PM
(Beginning September 7) 6:00 PM
WEDNESDAY MID WEEK SERVICE 7:30 PM
Nursery Available

FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH OF FARMINGTON
Richard Duncan Pastor • Phone 474-0350
SUNDAY SCHOOL 9:45 a.m.
MORNING WORSHIP 11:00 a.m.
EVENING SERVICE 7:00 p.m.
WEDNESDAY BIBLE STUDY 6:00 p.m.

Christ Church Cranbrook
On Lone Pine Road at Cranbrook Rd.
Bloomfield Hills
SUNDAY SUMMER SERVICES
8:00 AM - Holy Communion
10:00 AM - Morning Prayer, Sermon,
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Mrs. Dorothy Miller, Dr. C.E.
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Home 2 - Armstrong, Emeritus
Barbara Sinclair, Associate Minister
Lance R. Jennings, Pastor
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CHURCH SCHOOL 9 AM
SUNDAY WORSHIP SERVICE 10 AM
ADULT EDUCATION 9 AM
WORSHIP 10 AM
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Dr. Samuel F. Stout

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2525 Telegraph Rd.
Bloomfield Hills 48305
7:30 AM - 9:00 AM
The Rev. L. Alden Erickson

NORTHBROOK PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
14 Mile and Lahser Roads
Pastor
M.L. Dunkelberger
E.W. Dunn
Phone 642-0300

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Sunday School 10:00 AM
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Minister
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35300 Eight Mile Road
Farmington Hills
Lowell Anderson, Pastor
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BIBLE STUDY & BIBLE STUDY HOUR 9:00 AM
476-6520

Kirk in the Hills PRESBYTERIAN
1340 W. 117th Ave. E.
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Robert L. Lindsey
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11:30 AM - Worship Service and Child Care

Ascension of Christ Lutheran Church
16335 W. 14 Mile
Birmingham
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Morning Worship 10:30 A.M.
424-8520

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Church Office - 474-8888
Parsonage - 474-2844

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SUNDAY SCHOOL 10:30 A.M.
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21 - MATTER
28 - REALITY

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