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NEWS

Appeals court rejects groups' claim against S.F.

SAN FRANCISCO (AP) — A federal appeals court has upheld a lower court ruling and rejected claims from religious groups that the city of San Francisco violated their First Amendment rights by publicly denouncing a nationwide anti-gay advertising campaign. The 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals affirmed Jan. 16 a district's court's dismissal of a claim brought against the City and County of San Francisco in 1998 by the American Family Association Inc. in Tupelo, Miss., Kerusso Ministries in Newport News, Va., and the Family Research Council in Washington, D.C. The appeals court found that San Francisco, although it had urged television stations not to air the ads, had not threatened to impose any sanctions if the groups continued to urge gay people to "convert" to heterosexuality and therefore did not violate the groups' rights. The plaintiffs were three of several groups that sponsored the "Truth in Love" ad campaign that appeared in newspapers and television commercials nationwide in 1998.

Gay-supportive church in Colorado vandalized



Colorado Rep. Mark Larson (R) said vandalism at a Denver church is an example of why he is sponsoring an amendment to the state's hate crimes law.

DENVER — Religious leaders and gay civil rights supporters denounced vandals for writing anti-gay messages on walls and pouring bleach over phones, computers, and carpet Jan. 16 in offices at Columbine United Church in Arapahoe County. The Denver Post reported that Arapahoe County Sheriff Pat Sullivan said the vandalism, which caused an estimated \$5,500 in damages, is being investigated and that he would determine whether it would be considered a hate crime. Rev. Steve Poos-Benson, the church's pastor, speculated that the vandalism was done because the church's minister of music, Michael Hayes, is gay and the church welcomes and affirms gay people. Colorado Rep. Mark Larson, a Republican, and Sen. Penfield Tate, a Democrat, said the vandalism illustrates why they are sponsoring a bill to amend the state's hate crimes law.

Conservative Episcopalians meet at conference

LITTLE ROCK (AP) — Saving souls, not dividing the U.S. Episcopal church, is the goal of his mission to America, the archbishop of Southeast Asia told members of an Anglican splinter group Jan. 18. Archbishop Datuk Yong Ping Chung addressed about 500 members of the Anglican Mission in America at its four-day annual conference. The group caters to conservatives who no longer want to be affiliated with the U.S. Episcopal Church. The dissidents believe the Episcopal Church, the U.S. branch of the international Anglican Communion, has become too liberal in its interpretation of the Bible. For instance, the dissidents believe scripture prohibits same-sex relations, while the Episcopal Church has tolerated ceremonies for gay couples.

ELCA picks director to conduct gay study

CHICAGO — Rev. James M. Childs Jr. on Feb. 1 will begin directing a four-year study on homosexuality for the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, ELCA News Service reported. Childs is the Joseph A. Sittler Professor of Theology and Ethics and director of academic development at Trinity Lutheran Seminary in Columbus, Ohio. While on leave from Trinity, he will serve as director of ELCA studies on sexuality and be based in the denomination's Chicago headquarters. The 2001 ELCA Churchwide Assembly asked last August that the Division for Ministry & Division for Church in Society conduct a comprehensive four-year study on homosexuality and report back to the 2003 and 2005 Churchwide Assemblies.

Anti-gay Protestants, Catholics speak out

RIGA, Latvia — Latvia's Catholic and Protestant leaders spoke strongly against homosexuality Jan. 10 when they offered remarks for an anti-gay essay contest, Agence France Presse reported. Catholic Archbishop Janis Pujats in part said, "Vampires and kleptomaniacs are also strange orientations. But we aren't required to adopt a law about their special status." Olafs Bruvers, director of Latvia's human rights bureau, warned that while the contest is not illegal, some statements published could be offensive and slanderous.

— From staff and wire reports

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religion report

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