

FAITH & JUSTICE

FEBRUARY 2021 | Volume XIV, Issue 1

3 Women Who Chose Life

PAGE 5

Why Can't A Midwife Be Pro-Life?

PAGE 17

**What Justice Barrett's
Confirmation Means For Women**

PAGE 21



Unmasked

What motivates one school district to silence
this little girl's witness for Christ?

CONTENTS



COVER STORY

- 9 Unmasked**
What Motivates One School District To Silence This Little Girl's Witness For Christ?



- 2 Minutes With Michael**
Count It All Joy

- 3 News & Quick Takes**
Case Updates From Throughout The World

- 5 Special Feature**
3 Women Who Chose Life



- 8 Alliance Profile**
Peggy Hartshorn

- 17 My View**
Should A Midwife Be Pro-Life? My University Said 'No'



- 19 Q&A**
When It Comes To Homeschooling, This Man Could Teach Us All A Lesson

- 21 Opinion**
Amy Coney Barrett's Confirmation: A Triumph And Encouragement For Conservative Christian Women

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Minutes With Michael

Count It All Joy

By Michael Farris, President and CEO

The last 12 months have brought countless challenges that even the wisest among us could have hardly predicted.

It was nearly one year ago that a pathogen — the kind that health experts had long feared — began spreading around the world and into the lives of Americans. Life ground to a halt. Businesses, churches, and schools closed. Millions lost their jobs. Hundreds of thousands lost their lives.

At the same time, our nation reckoned with racism and riots, followed by a hyper-partisan election season unlike any in recent memory.

The Bible provides perspective, as it always does. In Romans, the Apostle Paul writes: “We also glory in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope.” Likewise, in his epistle, James encourages readers to consider trials “pure joy,” for “the testing of your faith produces perseverance.”

These inspired words do not minimize the difficulty of our trials. But they do call upon us not to suffer without hope.

Over the last year, I have been heartened by the faith of our ADF clients. In nearly every circumstance, they have endured fiery tests only to emerge deeper and stronger than they were before.

I think of church leaders who were determined to serve their communities in the midst of a once-in-a-century pandemic. They stood up when government officials overstepped their authority and trampled religious freedom. I think of courageous young people like Florida State University student Jack Denton, who endured a smear campaign for merely expressing his faith. And I think of long-suffering clients like Barronelle Stutzman, who is still waiting for justice.



These days have tested our collective faith in our leaders, in the durability of the American republic, and even in our fellow man. As this edition of *Faith & Justice* reaches your mailbox, we very well may be stepping out of the long shadow cast by 2020 and into a new day’s light. Yet new challenges are already on their way. We will soon learn what kind of perseverance, character, and hope our shared suffering has produced.

Whatever is ahead, I am assured of God’s power. I’ve seen God work at ADF, and in the lives of our clients. And I am confident that He can do it again. I count it a privilege to face future challenges with the ADF team, our clients, and our Ministry Friends by my side. In the days ahead, let’s remember to count it all joy. **A**

Over the last year, I have been heartened by the faith of our ADF clients.

“

Michael Farris

News & Quick Takes

Case Updates From Around The World

Washington, D.C.

ADF attorneys filed a lawsuit against the city of Washington, D.C., after students were arrested while chalking a pro-life message on a public city sidewalk.

In June, two murals reading, “Black Lives Matter” and “Defund the Police” were created, extending the length of a city block. The Frederick Douglass Foundation and Students for Life of America sought to paint a similar mural outside a Planned Parenthood facility with the message “Black Pre-Born Lives Matter,” and the police department gave verbal permission for the project.

But when the two groups gathered to create the message, police officers informed them that they would be arrested if they painted or chalked on the public sidewalk or street. Two students proceeded to chalk, despite the warning, and were immediately arrested.

ADF is defending the groups' First Amendment rights. “The government can't discriminate against certain viewpoints by allowing some voices to be heard while silencing others,” says ADF Legal Counsel Elissa Graves.



Honolulu, Hawaii

Two atheists have falsely accused two Hawaii churches represented by ADF of defrauding the government in a lawsuit filed in state court.

The lawsuit claims the churches committed fraud by paying substandard rent to the public schools in which they meet, even though the school districts themselves agree that the churches have consistently paid all agreed-upon rents. The atheists, Mitchell Kahle and Holly Huber, filed their suit under the state's False Claims Act.

The lawsuit fails to cite a single instance in which the churches submitted a false statement to defraud the government. In fact, the churches not only paid the required rent, but also made contributions to the school by donating property improvements and volunteering their time.

Gov. Brown's personal preference for public over private education does not permit her to discriminate against faith-based schools.

“

David Cortman, ADF Senior Counsel

Hermiston, Oregon

ADF attorneys representing a private Christian K-12 school in Oregon filed a lawsuit against Gov. Katherine Brown challenging her order restricting in-person instruction in private schools.

After nearly two months of assuring Hermiston Christian School that it could provide in-person instruction to its 51 students, Brown reversed course and ordered private schools in Umatilla County to remain closed while offering a special exemption to public schools with 75 or fewer students.

After ADF filed suit, Gov. Brown retracted the public-only exception but retained orders allowing childcare facilities — including Hermiston Christian School — to supervise children while threatening criminal penalties if they instruct the children.

Portland, Oregon

Allied Attorney Bill Becker successfully defended the free speech rights of a Portland State University graduate student who was excluded from a course after she said she wasn't a “snowflake.”

During a Zoom discussion on the 2020 election, the student said, “I'm going to accept the results of the election no matter what, because I'm not a snowflake.” The instructor banned her from future classes unless she agreed to seek prior approval before using “derogatory” language in class.

After Becker sent a letter threatening to sue the university and the instructor for violating the student's First Amendment speech rights, the university backed down from its unconstitutional actions.



There is no constitutional right to gamble, but there is one that protects attending worship services.

“

David Cortman,
ADF Senior Counsel



Kaluga, Russia

ADF International has filed a case before the European Court of Human Rights on behalf of a church that is no longer allowed to meet on the property it owns.

Over the course of a 20-year legal battle, Russian authorities have consistently sought to seize the property belonging to the Word of Life Church in Kaluga, near Moscow. The church owns the land and the building, and made modifications to meet safety requirements. But authorities keep using legal requirements as a pretext to prevent the church from utilizing its building.

While the authorities could not succeed in challenging the church's title to the property, a December 2019 court decision prohibited the use of the building. The congregation currently meets in a tent outside the property.



Garry Leist, Senior Pastor at
Calvary Chapel Dayton Valley

Dayton Valley, Nevada

The 9th Circuit Court of Appeals ruled in favor of Calvary Chapel Dayton Valley in its lawsuit against Nevada Gov. Steve Sisolak's unconstitutional worship restrictions.

As the state started to reopen in late May following coronavirus lockdowns, Calvary Chapel hoped to resume in-person worship services while following a comprehensive safety plan. But Gov. Sisolak's orders limited church gatherings to 50 people while casinos, bars, and other businesses were allowed to operate at half capacity.

The 9th Circuit's decision makes it clear that a church cannot be treated more harshly than secular entities, according to ADF Senior Counsel David Cortman, who argued before the court on behalf of Calvary Chapel.

"There is no constitutional right to gamble," Cortman says, "but there is one that protects attending worship services."



Warsaw, Poland

Poland's top court has affirmed the right to life of unborn babies with disabilities. The Constitutional Tribunal of Poland ruled that abortions performed on the basis that the child may have a disability violate the right to life protected in the Polish Constitution.

ADF International intervened to highlight the clear protections that exist in international law for unborn children, including those with disabilities. It argued that screening out unborn babies based on disability violates a country's obligations under international law.

The Polish law that was challenged "allowed medical professionals to end the life of a child who does not fit the profile of what some consider 'healthy or desirable,'" says Robert Clarke, Deputy Director of ADF International.

**As a society, we prohibit discrimination based on disability.
This should also be true for babies in the womb.**

“

Robert Clarke, Deputy Director, ADF International

Special Feature

3 Women Who Chose Life

For women and girls facing an unwanted pregnancy, abortion may seem like the only solution. *I can't afford to raise a child. I'm too young. I'll have to drop out of school. My family and friends will judge me.*

Since *Roe v. Wade* was decided in 1973, over 57 million babies have been denied the right to life, their mothers choosing what may have seemed like an easy and logical solution. But, thanks in part to a growing number of pro-life ministries and resources, more and more women are pursuing other options. They are recognizing that their unborn child is, in fact, a precious person who deserves to live.

Read the stories of three young women who faced what was, for them, unthinkable — and made the courageous decision to choose life for their babies.

Eva

As Eva Jurado and her sisters entered their teen years, their father delivered a solemn warning: “If any of you girls gets pregnant, we’re done — you’re gone.” That was Eva’s consuming thought when she found out she was pregnant at age 16.

“My initial instinct was to hide it from my family,” she says. She remembered a small building she often passed while walking through her Glendale, Arizona, neighborhood: Crisis Pregnancy Center. Maybe the people there could help.

Walking into the center, she was greeted by a warm and welcoming advocate. The woman was sympathetic to her situation, asking questions, “making me feel like I was more than just a kid that made a dumb mistake.” But Eva left with no intention of returning, and a gnawing question remained: should she have the baby, or not?



The advocate didn't give up. She called the next evening, inviting Eva to return for a free ultrasound. Eva agreed ... and that's when everything changed.

“I just remember seeing a baby on the screen, and his arms were moving, his legs were kicking,” she says. “In that moment, I knew that it was another person. It wasn't just about me anymore.”

She knew then that she would keep her child. But it took her a week to work up the courage to tell her parents. “One morning I called my mother into my room. I simply handed her the ultrasound pictures. She cried and left to get my dad.” Eva hurried out of the house, certain she was about to be kicked out.

That night she called her boyfriend, Frank, told him where she was, and asked him to pick her up. “Instead, my parents ended up driving up,” she says. “I stared in disbelief as I watched my dad come out of the car. He simply put his arms around me and told me he loved me.”

Frankie Jr. was born that summer. “This little boy brought so much joy to everyone's life,” Eva says. “It's just unbelievable to me now that I would ever consider anything other than life for him.”

Frank and Eva married a year later. Frank joined the Coast Guard, and Eva earned a degree in radiologic technology, following a longtime goal to pursue a career in medicine. The couple had two more children.

Today, 20 years later, Frankie Jr. is a college student and a pro-life advocate. “He loves to speak out against abortion,” Eva says. She is an advocate herself, volunteering at the ministry (now named Choices Pregnancy Center) that offered her much-needed support



**I was an angel in my parents' eyes.
I wanted to uphold that.**

“

Ruth Asmarzadeh

**In that moment,
I knew that it was another person.
It wasn't just about me anymore.**

“

Eva Jurado

as a teen. One day a week, she counsels women and performs ultrasounds — sometimes for young girls who are “the spitting image of my story,” she says.

“That’s the heartbeat,” she tells one teen girl, pointing to movement on the screen. She sees the girl’s face change, and remembers how powerful an image like this was when she faced her own unplanned pregnancy.

“That’s where I felt my eyes and heart were opened,” she says. “It’s really cool.”

Ruth

Uh-oh ... I’m so sorry. One second.”

Ruth Asmarzadeh barely has a chance to start telling her story when the call of duty interrupts.

Eli has just fallen out of his chair. “You’re OK, Buddy,” comes the consolation — somehow firm, calm, direct, and nurturing, all at the same time. The 4-year-old’s cries subside, and life resumes.

These may not sound like magic words, but Ruth has learned there is little they can’t accomplish.



She had no plans to be a mother at this stage of her life. What she *did* plan was earning a psychology degree and dedicating her professional life to helping others. When she enrolled at Pikes Peak Community College in Colorado in 2016, she had friends, extracurricular activities, a job — and a reputation.

“I was an angel in my parents’ eyes,” she says. “I wanted to uphold that.”

So, when Ruth found out she was pregnant at 18, she saw no other option. She booked the earliest possible appointment at Planned Parenthood, intent on doing whatever it took to avoid tarnishing her image.

But she could not avoid her closest friend at the time. In need of a ride, Ruth had no choice but to reveal her intentions. The urgency was not lost on either of them.

“She told me I was rushing into this because I didn’t want to think about it,” Ruth says. “She was absolutely right.”

Ruth skipped her appointment and talked with an older friend who’d had two abortions in her younger days, after being pressured by the father. She listened to her friend sob while explaining that, since then, she had miscarried one planned pregnancy and hemorrhaged during another. Twenty years later, she was still broken.

“She said she still looked forward to seeing them in heaven,” Ruth recalls.

The right decision was suddenly clear. This was not a problem. It was a child. *Her* child. “All of a sudden, I got protective. That’s when I knew.”

She weathered sideways glances from people at school when she started showing. Eli was worth every one.

She endured long days juggling school, work, and diaper changes. Eli was worth every minute.

Her college's Students for Life group threw her a baby shower, and Students for Life of America surprised her with \$6,000 to help finish her degree as part of its "Pregnant on Campus" initiative.

"Raising Eli while finishing school was difficult," she admits, "but it was easier with practice and with the support of good friends who stuck with me and believed in me and Eli."

Now 23, Ruth works for a psychiatric hospital and is mulling the decision about whether to pursue counseling or psychopharmaceutical therapy at the next level. But for now, she pins the phone to one ear with her shoulder, as duty calls once again.

"Sorry, I promise I'm listening. I'm just trying to get the car seat in."

Rebekah

Rebekah Hagan was determined not to become a stereotypical teenage mother when she became pregnant with her first child as a 17-year-old high school student. She managed to graduate early, get accepted into college, and marry the father of her child.

But halfway through her freshman year, Rebekah realized she was in an unhealthy and potentially dangerous relationship.

"My relationship was physically and verbally abusive, and my young son was seeing it unfold," she says. "I knew I needed to leave. But, right as I did, I found out I was pregnant again."

This news was the culmination of her fears. "I was living with my parents," she says. "My dad had said, 'We've done a lot for you with your first pregnancy, so don't ever let there be a second under my roof. Otherwise, I will kick you out.'"

For the sake of her son, Eli, Rebekah began to consider her options. In her mind, there was only one — abortion. "I believed that having another baby would

hurt my son's life. I'd be losing my family's support," Rebekah says. "I grew up in a Christian home, but I justified my decision by thinking God would forgive me."

She was eight weeks pregnant when she went to Planned Parenthood for a chemical abortion. She instantly regretted the decision. "I got into my car and thought, 'Oh Lord, what did I just do?' I started crying and praying."

While still sitting in the parking lot, she Googled options for reversing the effects of the abortion pill and stumbled across AbortionPillReversal.com, a program of Heartbeat International. On the site was a phone number for women having second thoughts about taking the abortion pill. After summoning the courage to dial the number, a nurse told her about a new reversal protocol that called for a series of progesterone injections.

"She told me I still had a chance of saving the baby," Rebekah says. She was referred to a doctor who was willing to give the injections a try. Only after the process had begun did she realize that her second child would have been aborted on Eli's birthday.

"It would have been horrific if I'd done it," she says. "Every year would have been a birthday and memorial."

Meanwhile, her family rallied to her in a way she'd never dared to hope. Her parents stood with her in the decision to keep her child.

Seven months later, Rebekah gave birth to a healthy baby boy, Zechariah. Now, seven years later, she works for Heartbeat International as a development officer. She is also a pro-life speaker and advocate.

"Having a baby doesn't ruin your life; it just changes it," Rebekah says.

"I've met so many women who regretted having abortions," she says. "But I never met a woman who regretted having her child." 🦋

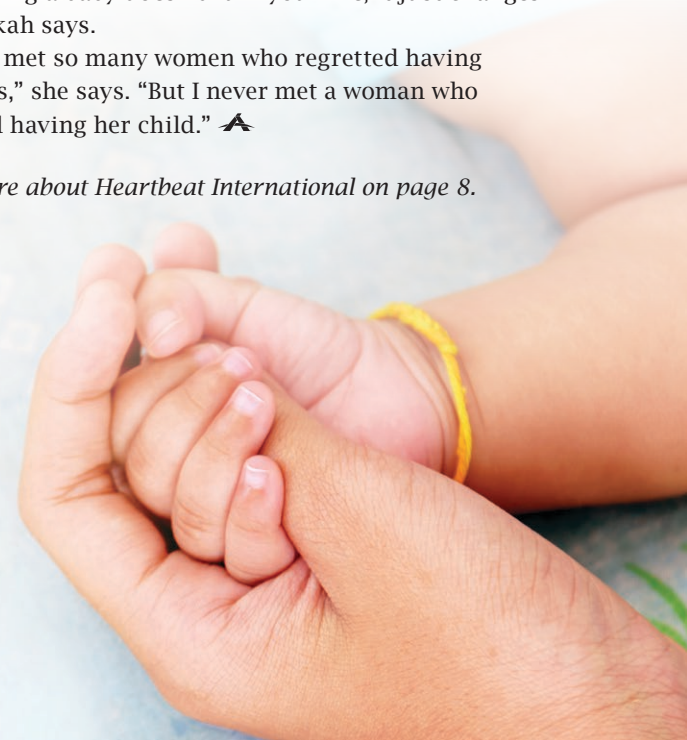
Read more about Heartbeat International on page 8.



I never met a woman who regretted having her child.

“

Rebekah Hagan



Alliance Profile

Peggy Hartshorn

By Jay Hobbs

Peggy Hartshorn was a young wife and aspiring English professor when an NPR news report changed her life.

It was January 22, 1973. And while Peggy had encountered the issue of abortion during her undergraduate studies on the West Coast, the idea that one Supreme Court decision could obliterate state-level protections for unborn life came as a genuine shock.

But shortly after confirming the *Roe v. Wade* decision, Peggy sensed an irresistible calling to get involved.

“I knew I had to do something,” Peggy writes in her book *Foot Soldiers Armed with Love*. “For me, this was a never-to-be-forgotten day, seared into memory, like other days in history when the United States suffered surprise attacks.”

Peggy was soon involved with a local Right to Life chapter, delivering presentations on abortion and the sanctity of life in living rooms and church basements to anyone who would listen.

Two years later, Peggy and her husband, Mike, met a young woman named Anne. Facing an unexpected pregnancy, Anne had been abandoned by the baby’s father but was unwilling to abort her unborn child. Unless she could keep her pregnancy a secret, she was convinced she would bring shame to herself and her family. The Hartshorns took her in, and in the process discovered what would become their lifelong passion: combating abortion by helping one woman at a time.

“The best alternative to abortion is another person,” Peggy says. “I’ve never met a woman who really, deep down, wanted to have an abortion. When we eliminate the perceived ‘demand’ for abortion one woman at a time, we impact the community and culture for life.”

I’ve never met a woman who really, deep down, wanted to have an abortion.

“

Peggy Hartshorn



Much has changed in the 45 years since the Hartshorns first took in Anne. In 1981, they helped establish Pregnancy Decision Health Centers, a multi-location pregnancy center throughout Central Ohio. In 1993, Peggy became the first full-time president of Heartbeat International, which was founded in 1971 to support a burgeoning movement of pro-life individuals and groups who were serving pregnant women with practical help.

Today, Heartbeat International’s network, made up of 2,800 affiliates in over 60 countries, includes pregnancy resource centers, ultrasound-equipped medical clinics, maternity homes, non-profit adoption agencies, and abortion recovery programs. In the U.S. alone, the Heartbeat network serves 1.5 million clients each year.

Peggy shifted roles in 2016 to lead Heartbeat’s board, and she remains active in the pregnancy help movement. She recently released *The L.O.V.E.*

Approach, a book that introduces a broader audience to the principles from her 1994 volunteer training manual that is used in pregnancy centers throughout the world.

“No barrier will stop pregnancy-help people,” Peggy says. “They’re constantly coming up with new ways to reach women and serve them in the most excellent way possible, and all with God’s love to motivate their every move.”

“It’s so clear that God is working,” she says, “and we take great inspiration from that.” **A**

LEARN MORE about
Heartbeat International:
heartbeatinternational.org

Read about one life that was saved through the ministry of Heartbeat International in *3 Women Who Chose Life*, p. 5

Cover Story

Unmasked

What motivates one school district to silence this little girl's witness for Christ?

By Chris Potts

L Lydia Booth happily roams her family's small Braxton, Mississippi, farm with a little pack of loyal dogs, including an old mama Boston Terrier that the local coyotes treat with hard-earned respect. She likes feeding chickens, dotes on goats, and enjoys bringing the cows buckets of something that seems to do for them what catnip does for the feline set.

Most of all, the 9-year-old loves a bearded lizard named Arlo. He's a big one, spending most of his days basking under a heat lamp in a clean glass case half as long as Lydia's bed, listening to her murmured opinions and secrets and the music she coaxes from her little green keyboard.

Arlo holds first place in Lydia's heart, but she is not above spending summer days tracking down other lizards of every size, color, and variety. She's become something of an authority on them.

"I look at the color of their throat to see if they're male or female," she says. "The females, they can actually run. The males are braver, and they don't run that fast. I look to see if they're healthy, and make sure they're all right. I let the little ones bite me."

You let them ...

"I don't know," she shrugs. "It feels good, for some reason. Their teeth ... it's like a massage to my finger." But —

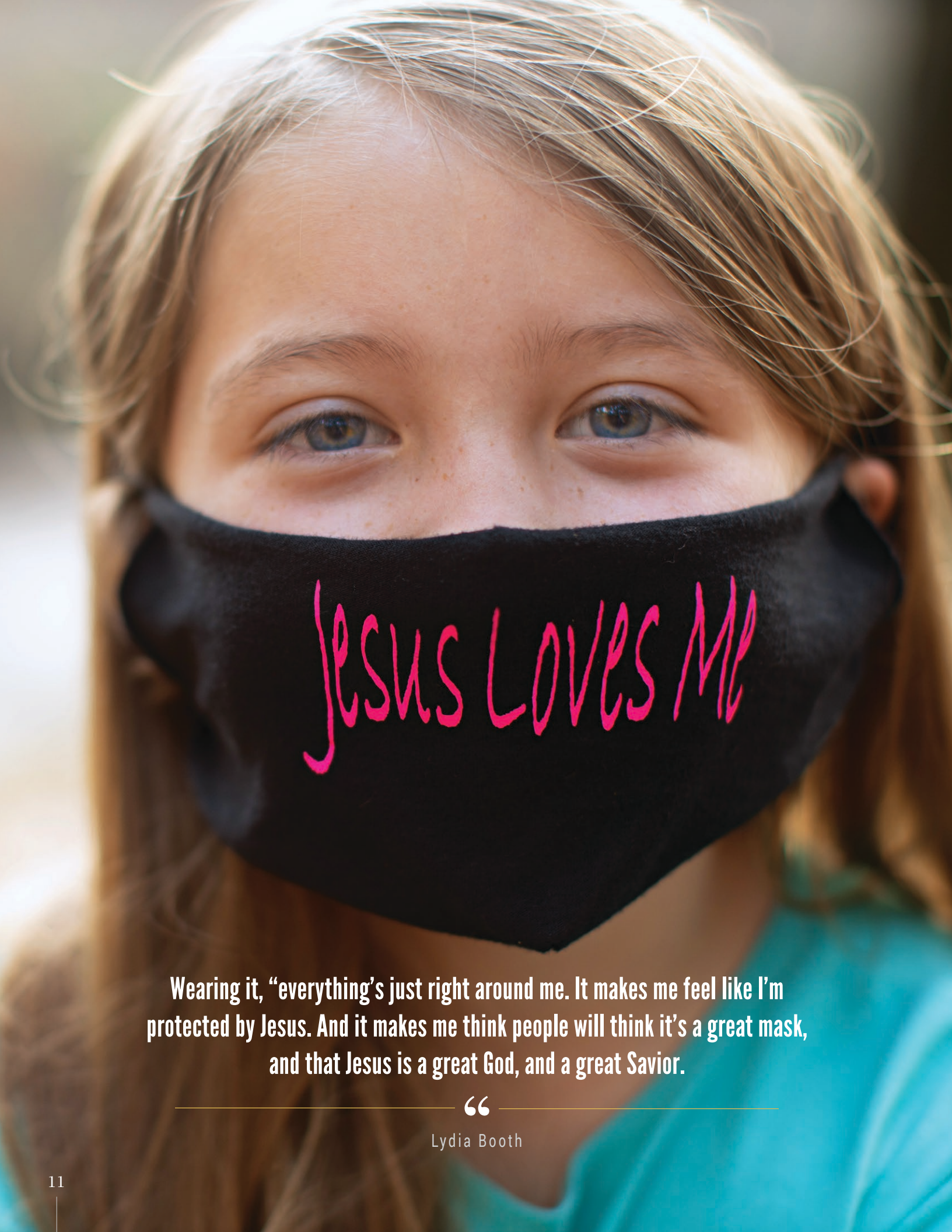
"Last time, I caught a wild one. As big as Arlo. (She holds her hands apart.) He had a big mouth, like this. (She demonstrates.) I didn't want this thing to

bite me. But he did. (She holds up a finger to show a small red scar, still healing.)

Did it hurt? "A little." She grimaces at the memory.

It's not the only memory that makes Lydia grimace. Last autumn, something else betrayed her innocent trust. The grown-ups who run Lydia's school took a bite out of this young child's faith. The scars are healing. But she still remembers the hurt.





JESUS LOVES ME

Wearing it, “everything’s just right around me. It makes me feel like I’m protected by Jesus. And it makes me think people will think it’s a great mask, and that Jesus is a great God, and a great Savior.

“

Lydia Booth

Jennifer Booth usually picks her younger children up after school. Her youngest, Roman, is in kindergarten, and Lydia is in the third grade. One day last October, the two came running and piled into the car, breathless as usual with the events of the day.

“Mama,” Lydia said, “I’ve got bad news.” Her computer lab teacher, she said, had warned her against continuing to wear her favorite mask. The one that has “Jesus Loves Me” printed on it.

“She just said it,” Lydia remembers, “a little angry, but not much. She told me not to wear it again. Not to wear that kind of mask, with words.”

Jennifer was taken aback. No words at all? She’d seen all kinds of masks on children, with all kinds of messages. “That’s insane,” she thought, telling Lydia they would check the school’s regulations on masks when they got home. At the house, she pored over all the paperwork the school had provided — the official handbook, letters, directives on COVID procedures. Nothing.

“I couldn’t find anything that specified anything to do with masks,” she says, “so I assumed they’d go by the dress code.” But the code, too, was silent. “I didn’t see anything against words on the mask. So, my assumption was: maybe the teacher’s having a bad day, and Jesus hit a nerve. Maybe she felt convicted or something.”

Jennifer texted some friends whose children attended the school, even one who worked there. None of them had heard of the mask rule. Her curiosity growing, she reached out through a private Facebook post ... and still couldn’t find anyone familiar with the rule.

You’re going to have to show me something. You can’t just decide you’re going to censor my child.

“

Jennifer Booth

She decided it must have been a mistake. Lydia had worn the same mask plenty of times before, and no one had made any negative comment. Besides, Lydia was particularly fond of the “Jesus Loves Me” mask — and not just because it was light and easy to breathe through.

“I love the words,” Lydia says. Wearing it, “everything’s just right around me. It makes me feel like I’m protected by Jesus. And it makes me think people will think it’s a great mask, and that Jesus is a great God, and a great Savior.”

Unable to find any regulation that backed up the teacher’s request, Jennifer let Lydia wear the mask to

school again. That morning, sitting in her reading class, Lydia heard someone call her name. She looked up to see the principal, who winked at her, smiled, and left the room. Her teacher then came over with a different mask, asking her to put on the other, plain one, instead.

“It made me sad, and a little confused,” Lydia remembers. “Sad, because I love the words on that mask. And confused, because I didn’t know why it was happening.”



The Booth family, from left to right: Roman, Jennifer, Hunter, Lydia, and Matthew

At home, the phone rang. It was the school principal. Jennifer’s heart skipped a beat. A principal calling had to mean bad news.

“We’re going to have to replace Lydia’s mask,” the principal said. “You can’t have religious or political things on masks at school.”

“Really?” Jennifer asked. “I’m going to need you to pinpoint that policy in your handbook for me, because I’ve read the handbook, and there are no such rules.”

Over the phone, they scrolled through the handbook together. “I know it’s in here,” the principal insisted. She pointed Jennifer to the dress code, then to the section on obscene words and gestures.

“I’m sorry,” Jennifer said, “but everything that I’m reading here does not put Jesus in any of those categories. You’re going to have to show me something. You can’t just decide you’re going to censor my child.”

After they hung up, Jennifer called her husband, Matthew, who was working out of town on an extended construction project. Upset and teary, she told him what was going on.



If you don't have freedom of speech, you don't have freedom of religion. Because, as a Christian, I'm called to spread the Gospel. And you can't do that, if you can't talk about it.

“

Jennifer Booth

“Hold on now,” Matthew said. “We’re not going to play that. Let me make some phone calls.” Like Jennifer, Matthew has lived in and around Braxton most of his life. The two are related to, acquainted with, or went to high school alongside virtually every one of the 180 or so people in town, and know most of the rest of the county, too. Matthew contacted a relative in the district office, who tried to convince him the newly discovered mask policy was for Lydia’s own good.

“What if some kid sits down beside her and says something derogatory about her mask?” the woman asked. “What if they come to school with a mask that says, ‘Allah Loves Me’ or ‘Satan Loves Me?’”

“You don’t do anything,” Matthew told her. “Let Lydia handle it. She can hold her own.”

The woman insisted that the policy had to stand. “What are you going to do?” she asked.

“We’ll fight,” Matthew told her. “That’s it. I’m not going to be silenced. And my kid’s not going to be silenced, either.”

Jennifer, meanwhile, was still doing her homework. She found nothing about masks on the district website. What she did find was the 2013 Mississippi Student Religious Liberties Act, which guarantees the freedom of students to express religious views. She also found a written pledge from district officials to respect students’ free speech rights. Later that day, she sent Lydia’s principal, teacher, and the district superintendent an email.

“I told them, ‘Hey, I’m going to need you to give my child her mask back — the one that says, ‘Jesus Loves Me.’ One, there’s no rule or regulation, anything you have, that says that she can’t wear it, and two, it’s a violation of her rights. Those rights, on both the state and federal level, are recognized in your handbook. You’re in violation of your own handbook and federal law.”

“And I want you to apologize to her for making her feel bad, like she’s done something wrong.”

That afternoon, Lydia climbed into the car wearing a different mask. She was upset. “Mama,” she said, “they

made me change masks. And it *is* against the rules.”

“No, Baby,” Jennifer told her. “It’s not. And Mama’s going to take care of it. You didn’t do anything wrong, okay?” Inside, she was racking her brain over what to do next.

A parent suggested she contact the assistant superintendent, a man of good character, a man to be trusted. Jennifer emailed the man, passing along the compliment and asking if they could talk. “I just need some questions answered,” she said. “I need to know how often your staff goes to a specific room looking for a specific kid with a specific saying on their mask. My daughter wasn’t disrupting anybody, but she seems pretty singled out to me. What’s the real issue here?”

A little while later, he called her. The mask policy, he admitted, was not in the handbook. Rather, it had been in the “restart plan,” mailed to parents and posted on the district website just before the start of the new school year. The plan included a slew of COVID-related instructions, including the rules about masks. It had since been taken off the website, he explained, but he offered to send Jennifer a copy of what he said was the original, posted plan. That way she could see for herself that no one was making up these rules about masks.

And that they didn’t owe her, or Lydia, an apology.

The “restart plan” email came through, and, as the administrator had assured her, included a paragraph saying masks should carry “no political, religious, sexual, or obscene gestures or symbols.” Jennifer’s heart sank. She sat at her computer, feeling sad, tired, and beaten.

But also sensing ... a little nudge in her soul. As if God were prodding her into action. “*You need to look at this,*” she felt Him say, as she stared at the restart plan. “*You need to look at this.*”

Jennifer, as it happens, makes her living as a specialist in information technology. She knows computers. Looking at this crucial paragraph that had suddenly, almost magically, appeared ... a little professional curiosity began to nag at her. *What if this restart plan was still archived on the district’s website?* She began to tap the appropriate keys, and — lo — there the document was.

Now she found herself looking at two versions — the one sent by the administrator, and the one archived on the website. “*Okay, Lord,*” she asked. “*What now?*” She began tapping more keys.

“A lot of people don’t think about it,” she says, “but when you create a document, it has a whole lot of data. That data has properties. Whenever you pull up those properties, it’s going to tell you who, when, what applications are involved — everything that’s been modified or created in that document.”

In a few moments, her computer skills told her that the original, archived restart plan did *not* contain the paragraph about masks. The administrator himself had added that paragraph just a few minutes before emailing what he called “the original” plan to her.

“He had literally modified this document to include the information he needed to make himself right,” Jennifer says, still a little astonished to realize that “every single word out of his mouth was a lie.” She was dealing, she realized, with people willing to “run over a 9-year-old” to protect their legal position.

And willing to lie to make her little girl feel like she’d done something wrong.



Someone recommended Alliance Defending Freedom (ADF) to the Booths, as a group that might come to their defense. They called, and ADF agreed to take their case. In its larger issues, the case is of a kind that ADF attorneys are encountering more and more, all over the country.

“School administrations like this are all too common,” says ADF Legal Counsel Michael Ross. “We’re seeing administrators all over the place trying to shut down speech. They have many different reasons for doing it, but we are seeing a lot of Christian and

conservative viewpoints being marginalized.” Harder to find, Ross says, are individuals who will challenge that unconstitutional mindset.

“The First Amendment law is very clear that these administrators can’t pick and choose what messages they will allow and not allow. We just need people who are willing to stand up to those administrations.” Many, however, are intimidated at the prospect of challenging government officials during a pandemic.

“In the age of COVID, we’re seeing a lot of people just concede way too readily to a lot of these restrictions,” Ross says. “We certainly want to respect public health and try and be responsible citizens ... but this has nothing to do with health or being responsible. It’s just about what was said on a particular mask. Just because we’re in a pandemic doesn’t mean that our constitutional rights go away.”

In Lydia’s case, Ross says, the school district erred first in punishing her for not heeding a nonexistent policy. Then, to hide that error, they fabricated a new policy that itself violates the law. In the process, administrators sideswiped not one but two constitutional amendments.

“Lydia’s First Amendment free speech protections were violated because they discriminated against her for her religious views,” Ross says. The Supreme Court has said, over and over and over again, that the government does not get to decide which views are and are not acceptable [or] what types of messages they will allow on masks, as long as those messages aren’t obscene.”

What’s more, Ross says, in silencing Lydia’s religious views, administrators “are preventing her from being able to share her faith with others, in violation of the Free Exercise clause of the First Amendment.”

School and district officials compounded that by violating Lydia’s 14th Amendment right to equal protection under the law, by objecting to the message on



Just because we're in a pandemic doesn't mean that our constitutional rights go away.



Michael Ross

her mask but not, apparently, to messages like “Black Lives Matter” on the masks of others. (Lydia’s older brother, Hunter, who attends high school in the same district, marveled that his sister could be penalized for “Jesus Loves Me” when he was seeing all kinds of political slogans, team logos, and other messaging on his classmates’ masks every day.)

“That’s why we want these administrators to have narrow, definite, and objective policies in place,” Ross says, “so that they can’t pick and choose what is and isn’t political, or what counts as religious or not religious.”

Children and even adults are often censored,

Matthew says, because people in authority want to change a rule, or because something doesn’t fit their agenda. “It makes it a little rough — you don’t want to be disrespectful to authority, and you don’t want to make up your own rules,” he adds. “But you’ve got to know when to draw the line, whenever they’re overstepping their boundaries.”

“You don’t want to be confrontational,” Jennifer says. “And that’s probably been the biggest struggle with this, for me. I don’t want to hurt anybody. It’s not about hurting anybody. But if you don’t have freedom of speech, you don’t have freedom of religion. Because, as a Christian, I’m called to spread the Gospel. And you can’t do that, if you can’t talk about it.

“Little by little, they’re taking God out of everything,” she says. “First, they start with prayers, and taking devotionals out of schools, and now they’re trying to take away just saying Jesus’ name. So, where’s the line for us as Christians? There has to be a line.”

That realization is what prompted Matthew and Jennifer to pursue the case with ADF. “I felt like God wouldn’t have given me the information I needed to look at, if there wasn’t something that needed to be done about it,” Jennifer says. “And I’d have felt very convicted if I hadn’t done something.”

As of this writing, the school district and the Booths are still at a legal impasse. The district is letting Lydia wear her mask again — but administrators still refuse to officially retract the original policy and replace it with one that is constitutionally sound, or to apologize to Lydia for the embarrassment and confusion they've made her feel about sharing her faith.

"The thing is, it wasn't ever about a mask," Matthew says. "The ultimate goal is teaching my kids to stand up for what's right, and not just bow down before the government."

"I want my kids to know that, one day, Mama and Daddy are not going to be here," Jennifer says, "and they've got to stand up to this stuff, too. It's probably going to be a lot worse. And I want them to be so strong in their faith that they take it head-on. And don't back down."

"I've talked with Lydia a little bit about it," Matthew says. "She's said for a long time that she wants to be a missionary when she grows up. I told her, 'You know, in a roundabout way, you're already doing mission work.'"

Indeed, she is. A young classmate, seeing her mask, wanted one just like it. ("It's not a good time to be wearing one," Lydia warned her.) The friend's older sister, in junior high, heard about what was happening, and decided to read the Bible — all the way through.

Nor is Lydia's witness limited to her mask. "She lives out her faith every day," a former teacher wrote on Facebook.

"She's different from a lot of kids," Matthew says. "I really feel she's filled with the Spirit. I'm not saying that because she's my child — that's just her. She does stuff she isn't supposed to; she gets in trouble ... but she's passionate about talking to people about Jesus. And as far as her dealing with all this — if something's said to her, I believe that she's going to fight the good fight, and try to lead the one saying something to Christ."


"I'm happy that He made this world and He made us," Lydia says. "And I'm glad He made things just right for us. Just like I've got a lizard, and I love him so much. I think about how when He created lizards, it makes me happy. And all the other animals, and the beautiful world out there. I think it's just right for us, and that's one reason I love Him. He protects us."

"I'm feeling like God is telling me to get prepared," she says, "and He's making me learn a lot more stuff ... so that I should fight for the Lord. So everybody will know He is the King, and nobody will go to the bad place. Or ..."

Lydia lowers her voice to a whisper. "... hell."

She makes another grimace.

"I just don't like saying that word." **A**



It wasn't ever about a mask.
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before the government.

“

Matthew Booth

My View

Should A Midwife Be Pro-Life?

My University Said 'No'

By Julia Rynkiewicz

You might think a commitment to protecting unborn life would be an asset for a midwife. In fact, that commitment almost ended my career before it began.

I had wanted to be a midwife since I was in my late teens and started to explore university courses. Pregnancy and childbirth were fascinating to me, and I'd always wanted to work in a health care setting. More and more, I felt called to take care of pregnant women and help bring life into the world.

I enrolled in the Midwifery course at the University of Nottingham (United Kingdom). But in my final year of training, I began to face discrimination because of my beliefs. The difficulties began with my decision to start a pro-life society on campus.

I had attended a weekend pro-life conference a few months before, and was so inspired by the wonderful people who spoke at the event. It was powerful to hear how ordinary people like me had done so many important things to support unborn life — like praying outside abortion clinics and starting pro-life societies. I knew I needed to do the same sort of thing.

I returned home from that weekend and decided to set up a pro-life society at my university. I gathered my friends,

I simply wanted to live out my pro-life convictions, and I was punished for it.

“

Julia Rynkiewicz



and we formed Nottingham Students for Life (NSFL). But our initial application to become a society was rejected by the Students' Union, on the grounds that we conflicted with the university's Equal Opportunities Policy. (I don't think the university saw the irony of this reasoning.)

We appealed the decision, but our application was rejected a second time. Officers from the Students' Union even organized a protest against NSFL outside the building where our application was being discussed. Some held posters reading, "Don't tell me what to do" and handed out leaflets — "Your body, your choice."

We submitted yet another appeal — this time with the help of ADF International, and the decision was overturned at last.

As an official society, we were able to take part in the Freshers' Fair, an annual event where new students can learn about university societies. I don't think any of the other societies at the event could possibly appreciate just how grateful we were to be there. We had such a good day. Many people signed up to join our group, and others came by to ask questions. It seemed like everything would go smoothly after that.

Then the university came after me personally.



You would think a love for unborn children
would be a natural part of being a midwife.

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Julia Rynkiewicz

A few days after the fair, I received a letter from the School of Health Sciences informing me that I'd been suspended from my hospital placements — a vital part of midwife training. I was stunned. The suspension was immediate, and I'd received no warning that this was even being considered.

Normally, a student has to do something quite serious to be suspended immediately, like committing a crime or doing something negligent that would pose a serious risk to a patient or staff member. I asked the School for an explanation, but had to inquire again and again before I received one.

I learned that one of my lecturers had submitted a complaint with the midwifery school after seeing me at NSFL's stall at the Freshers' Fair and learning about my affiliation with a pro-life society. The lecturer suggested that my professional suitability as a midwife should be reexamined.

My case would be decided by a Fitness to Practice Committee, through a process that would ultimately take four months. While I waited for a decision, I had the chance to read the report that had been produced for the investigation. I read shocking things that people had said

about me — people I should have trusted, people I *did* trust.

I was really surprised by one line in particular, declaring it was inappropriate for me to be studying to be a midwife while holding such strong “anti-abortion” views. You would think a love for unborn children would be a natural part of being a midwife. It seemed paradoxical that this could actually ruin my chances of helping pregnant women bring their babies into the world.

The suspension caused me so much stress and anxiety. I was worried about the implications for my future. Would the record on my fitness to practice hinder my ability to find a job as a midwife?

I still had to attend all my lectures, but I felt so unmotivated to continue studying. I'd sit in the back and not participate in what was going on. My grades went down. The whole ordeal made me doubt whether I really wanted to be a midwife.

Ultimately, ADF International helped lift my suspension from my hospital placements. The university agreed that I had indeed done nothing wrong. But because of my four-month suspension, I was unable to complete all my required assessments, and my graduation had to be delayed a year.

Putting my life on hold because of the investigation was really difficult, both mentally and emotionally. I simply wanted to live out my pro-life convictions, and I was punished for it. I filed a complaint with the university, because what I went through felt unfair and unjust. After reviewing my complaint, the university offered an apology and a settlement.

I hope my case helps bring about change on university campuses, where censorship has been steadily increasing across Europe. Many students are afraid that their views could be considered “unacceptable” by their universities. Some fear their professors might treat them differently if they express their real opinions.

My settlement demonstrates that the university's treatment of me was wrong — and while I'm happy to move on, I hope this means that no other student will have to experience what I did. Students should not be afraid of expressing their values and beliefs.

A university should be the place where they are invited to do just that. 🏹

WATCH a video
about Julia's case at
ADFLegal.org/fj-Midwife

Q & A

Mike Smith

When It Comes To Homeschooling, This Man Could Teach Us All A Lesson

By Karen Kurtz

Mike Smith has been battling for the legal rights of homeschooling families for nearly four decades — first as a homeschool parent, and now as president of Home School Legal Defense Association. Smith, along with ADF President and CEO Michael Farris, founded HSLDA in 1983 to protect the right of families to provide personalized, at-home learning for their children.

Smith's view of education took a profound turn in 1981, when he heard a radio program that introduced him to the idea of homeschooling. He and his wife, Elizabeth, began homeschooling to meet the academic and social needs of their children, but soon came to value its many other benefits, including spiritual development and family integrity. Three of their four children, now adults, were homeschooled.

An attorney, Smith began defending homeschooling in California both in court and before the legislature after HSLDA's founding. He joined the organization full time in 1987, serving as its vice president until becoming president in 2000. Today, HSLDA provides over 100,000 member families with legal representation, educational consulting, and practical resources.

F&J: You and your wife were pioneers in homeschooling. What challenges did you face when at-home education was in its infancy?

MS: At that time, in 1981, we had two children in private school and were not satisfied with the results. We attended a homeschool conference after being exposed to homeschooling on the radio, not knowing whether we'd ever do it or not. But out of that, we said, "Let's give this a try." There weren't many homeschoolers, so there were few support groups my wife could meet with. And there wasn't any curriculum designed for homeschoolers at that time.

Almost immediately, we found out that California was not a homeschool-friendly state. The Department of Education took a position that unless you were a certified

teacher or were paying a tutor to teach your child, you couldn't homeschool. I was able to legally defend our right to homeschool. Then other homeschooling families started to reach out to me, asking, "Can you help us? Because we're being told that if we continue this, they're going to remove our children or put us in jail."



Mike Smith

F&J: And that led you to start an association to defend homeschooling families?

MS: Yes. I met Mike Farris and his wife, Vickie, at a homeschool conference, and found that they were facing the same thing in Washington state, where they lived at the time. Back then, you had to make constitutional arguments to homeschool. You had to file briefs. That cost a lot of money, and most families could not afford a lawyer to do all that. So Mike had the idea of forming a community of

We've seen story after story of how it was obvious that God intervened to raise this movement up.

“

Mike Smith

homeschool families who would stand up and fight for their right to homeschool. The membership would be \$100 a year, which would give families access to legal counsel. My initial response was, “I wish I'd thought of it myself.” It was that good. And he asked, “Well, how would you like to be in on the ground floor?” I accepted, and we formed a partnership.

F&J: How have legal efforts made it easier for families to educate their children at home?

MS: In the early days, homeschooling was difficult because most states did not have a way that parents could homeschool legally. The states went after them. So we started defending these families, one at a time — and as we won cases, those victories would apply throughout the state where we were. We also started legislatively working state after state, introducing homeschool laws. And now homeschooling is recognized as legal in some form or fashion in every state. And it was through God's grace, because we saw over and over again how God intervened to help us win.

F&J: What's one of the ways you've seen God intervene?

MS: Many years ago, Nevada's Board of Education introduced a regulation that would have tightened up requirements for homeschoolers. They knew they didn't have to worry about most homeschooling parents — but because of outliers who would not be diligent about teaching their kids, they felt they had to monitor all of them. I went to the hearing where the regulation was to be discussed, and got there early. The door to the room was open, so I walked in and sat down. I listened as they revoked a teacher's certificate because he had molested two teenage girls.

Our matter was next on the agenda. I stood up and said, “I probably shouldn't have been present during this hearing. But you did the right thing. You properly executed justice against this teacher. But I didn't hear you offer to follow all the other good teachers around to monitor what they're doing. Because that wouldn't be right, would it?

But that's what you're doing here, with our homeschool families.” And by the grace of God, they agreed. They took a vote, and decided not to add the regulation. If I hadn't been there early, I wouldn't have made that argument. We've seen story after story of how it was obvious that God intervened to raise this movement up.

F&J: It's been said that COVID-19 has made every family a homeschooling family. Has the pandemic helped parents better understand at-home education?

MS: I hate this COVID thing. It's terrible. But it is making parents think about their children's education, which is really important. A lot of states are not doing in-person schooling, so they're sticking kids in front of a computer all day long. Parents are realizing that, uh-oh, this is not going to work. So tons of families are having to reconsider how they want to direct their child's education and how they're going to take a more active role.

I have a neighbor who never would have thought about homeschooling. But when she and her husband found out their kids would have to sit in front of a computer five, six hours a day, they thought, “No way would we do that to our child.” So they're homeschooling today. And I think more and more parents are going to decide to take control of their children's education.

F&J: How has ADF supported your efforts?

MS: ADF has been a very strong supporter financially through its granting program. They've also helped us overseas. Germany has been hostile to homeschooling. It's illegal; nobody can homeschool in Germany. ADF International has come alongside and partnered with us, and been a tremendous help in supporting that. It's an uphill battle to win anything. But ADF does win, and they have the expertise to do it. Their attorneys over there are fantastic, and it's been great working with them. 🏹

Learn more about Home School Legal Defense Association at hsllda.org.

Opinion

Amy Coney Barrett's Confirmation:

A Triumph And Encouragement For Conservative Christian Women

By Kristen Waggoner

Justice Amy Coney Barrett's recent confirmation to the U.S. Supreme Court is truly momentous and a cause for celebration. Shattering a unique glass ceiling, she has become the first mother of school-age children to serve on the high court, where her inspiring presence gives a voice to millions of Americans who have been underrepresented at this elite level: conservative women.

I'm grateful for this confirmation for a couple of reasons. Justice Barrett's experience and previous decisions suggest she's someone who deeply respects the First Amendment. All Americans benefit when a justice believes her role is to apply the law as it *is* written, rather than as she would *like* it to be written.

But my gratitude is also more personal. Serving in public life as a conservative, a Christian, a woman, *and* a lawyer can be lonely. There simply haven't been many of us living at the intersection of these identities. It's refreshing to look at the Supreme Court bench and remember we're not alone.

In part because of our religious convictions, we believe that God created the sexes equal and complementary. Because we know moms and dads aren't interchangeable, many conservative Christian women make the noble, wonderful choice to stay home and raise their families. That choice should be celebrated and

supported. It does, however, have the unintended consequence of reducing the number of conservative Christian women with careers in the public square.

For conservative Christian couples, putting family first often means that women make career sacrifices and, as a result, don't rise to the top of their fields. I have three children, and — even with a supportive and generous husband — I've faced several times during my career when I've had to turn down opportunities for the good of my family.

Some progressives suggest that being a strong, public-facing woman requires support for abortion and a host of other family-detrimental policies. But Justice Amy Coney Barrett — wife, mother of seven, practicing Christian, committed conservative — stands up and proves them deeply mistaken. During her confirmation hearings, I was inspired to see a woman who was articulate, brilliant, and at the height of her profession, yet unapologetic for her roles as a virtuous wife, dedicated mother, and committed believer.

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Kristen Waggoner



Justice Amy Coney Barrett

Unfortunately, Justice Barrett came under attack for just this awe-inspiring balance between her work and her family, as some opponents claimed (with little self-awareness) that there was no way she could be a good mother and a good judge. Such harassment exposed the narrowness and rigidity of some on the far left, who seem bent on eliminating diversity of thought among women. Justice Barrett's confirmation hearings made it clear that many flourishing, successful, confident women don't have a place in the worldview of certain activists.

It would be unwise to predict how Justice Barrett might rule on particular issues related to the work of Alliance Defending Freedom. But since joining the court, she already has sided with religious freedom in striking down New York state's discriminatory COVID restrictions that treated churches and synagogues worse than secular businesses and gatherings. My hope is that she has the

courage to interpret the Constitution according to its original meaning, and that she never minimizes the importance faith plays in her life.

Conservative Christian women are a significant part of American society, and we have been chronically underrepresented in public. But that's starting to change. There are more of us working as attorneys than ever before. We hope to serve as mentors and models for young women who seek wisdom on how to use their gifts for God's service, both at home and in the legal practice.

Justice Barrett's Supreme Court confirmation breaks an important barrier for women and girls — demonstrating that it is possible to honor a woman's role as a wife and mom, and also serve as a high-level attorney. **A**

Kristen Waggoner is General Counsel for Alliance Defending Freedom.



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