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Protesters with Christian nationalist ties protest Lititz Pride event; refused to leave private park until police came



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A pastor who espouses Christian nationalist beliefs and the editor of a conservative publication were among about a dozen people who protested Sunday's Lititz Pride Festival, refusing to leave the private park until police came, according to organizers.

One man carried a sign that said "Burn Gays." Another held a sign that said "Christ hates Pride." The demonstrators handed out rainbow-colored pamphlets that said Pride on the outside, but contained pictures of a bloody fetus inside, according to a message on Facebook posted by event organizer Lititz Chooses Love.

Nearly 1,000 people attended the festival at Lititz Springs Park. The private park is owned by the Lititz Moravian Congregation.

Joel Saint, pastor of the Independence Reformed Bible Church in Morgantown and executive director of the Mid-Atlantic Reformation Society, was one of the protesters. The society had planned an event to discuss Pennsylvania's founding as "an explicitly Christian State" at Tied House, a Lititz restaurant. The event was moved to Quarryville and was scheduled for Thursday, June 23.

Organizers said the event was moved because of larger-than-expected interest from the public. But the move also came after days of heated social media comments blasting the restaurant and its owner, St. Boniface Craft



Brewing Co., for hosting the discussion between Saint and Chris Hume, both of whom believe in a religious test for serving in public office.

Hume, who is the managing editor of the Mountville-based *The Lancaster Patriot*, was also among the protesters, according to *Lititz Chooses Love*.

Saint, of Denver, and Hume did not return messages seeking comment Thursday.

In a statement issued Wednesday, *Lititz Chooses Love*'s board said it wanted to focus on the positive of the event, in which nearly 1,000 people participated in "a family-focused celebration of acceptance and authenticity."

But the organization said it was important to recount what the protesters did.

"This is some of what we witnessed and several attendees reported: A man in a yellow shirt talked explicitly to minors about anal sex and sodomy.... They handed out brochures to adults and children that appeared to be a Pride brochure but inside pictured a bloody fetus. We have retained a copy of this brochure. Another man, after being told not to enter the park by police, trespassed into the park and walked through the playground area with a sign that said, 'Burn Gays.' ... The group ... told children they needed to repent or suffer the wrath of God. They made comments to parents of queer children, making fun of their children," the statement said.

The statement concluded by focusing on positive aspects of the event.

"We want to tell you that, in the face of hate, scores of attendees locked arms and sang 'Jesus Loves Me,'" the ending said. "... We want to tell the story of the beautiful, smiling people who showed up and chose love."

Kellye Martin, events manager for the park, said she was alerted to the protesters by representatives of *Lititz Chooses Love*.

Martin approached the protesters, who she said were well-inside the park, and told them they could not protest in the park because they were violating park bylaws.



The park's bylaws prohibit political rallies, demonstrations and speeches "to keep the park a welcoming place for all so people can come enjoy the park for respite and enjoyment," she said.

"He flat-out refused. He would not move. 'Get the cops. I'm not moving,'" Martin said the man told her.

Martin walked over to two nearby Lititz police officers and told them what was going on. The officers told her they would need a map or survey to clearly show the park boundary to move the protesters, she said.

Martin retrieved one from the visitor's center and showed it to the protesters

"I just tried to keep it as calm and factual as I could," Martin said.

She told the protesters again that they were on private property, but they refused to move. A member of Lititz Chooses Love then called police.

When police saw the map indicating the park's boundary, they told the protesters they had to leave.

Several moved immediately, Martin said.

"The rest needed a little more convincing. They just wanted to engage in semantics," she said, explaining one the men asked if they were not welcome at the park.

Martin said she told them they could come in if they left their protest materials behind and interacted peacefully with attendees.

She said the entire interaction took about 45 minutes.

The Lancaster Pride Festival was Saturday at Clipper Magazine Stadium and drew three or four protesters outside the stadium, but on stadium property, said Alex Otthofer, president of Lancaster Pride.

Security directed the protesters to the public sidewalk, he said.





Event discussing 'explicitly Christian state' relocates from Tied House in Lititz to Quarryville





Christian nationalist discussion relocating from Tied House after backlash [update]



Critics decry Tied House for hosting Christian Nationalist discussion on creating 'explicitly Christian state'

