



Pro-Life Pastor Convicted of Helping Women Avoid Abortions Released From Jail

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Oakland, CA (LifeNews.com) -- A pro-life pastor in Oakland, California who was convicted of helping women outside abortion centers find life-affirming alternatives has been released after spending 18 days in jail. Reverend Walter Hoye was charged with violating an anti-free speech ordinance Oakland officials put in place to target him.

Oakland officials had enacted the law that prohibited contact within eight feet of women entering abortion businesses without their consent.

Last month, Hoye began serving a 30 day sentence and he received three years probation as well as a requirement to pay a \$1,000 fine and a \$130 restitution fee. He was ordered to stay 100 feet away from any abortion center in the city of the Oakland.

Judge Stuart Hing of the Alameda Superior Court denied the defense motion to stay the sentence pending appeal.

After serving two and a half weeks of the sentence, Hoye was released on Tuesday and was met by a large contingent of pro-life supporters.

Dion Evans, pastor of Alameda's Chosen Vessels Christian Church and on hand to greet Hoye, told the Contra Costa Times that the Oakland anti free speech ordinance has backfired. That's because he says more pro-life advocates will turn up at area abortion centers to help women.

"They would have been in a better position if they would have left him alone. They picked on one man on one street, one day a week trying to reach one woman at a time with one sign for one hour," he said. "Now a mobilization has come together because they've created an unjust law. People like myself who have been cheerleading are not on the sidelines anymore. We're now in the game."

Hoye made good use of his time in prison and regularly talked with inmates about pro-life issues, but also led six men to adopt the Christian faith.

His wife Lori said pro-life advocates visited Hoye in prison, including Salvatore Joseph Cordileone, the Diocese of Oakland's bishop-designate.

"He visited Walter Hoye because he respects Hoye's affirmation of the value of human life," said Diocese spokesman Mike Brown.

But Nancy Nadel, the Oakland council member who drafted the ordinance, complained to the Tribune about the pro-life people.

"Even though there are more people out there and they're noisy and annoying," she said.

The potential news of a conviction on what Hoye considered an unjust law didn't get him down.

At a hearing on February 19, Judge Hing stated that he had not intended to impose any fine or jail time on Rev. Hoye if

he would agree to stay away from the abortion center. Reverend Hoye refused to agree not to offer alternatives to abortion-minded women.

"If you are reading this email then it can only mean that I have been incarcerated," he told LifeNews.com in an email sent by his attorneys. "I will be back. Thank you all so much! May God bless you and keep you always."

Dozens in the African-American and pro-life communities from around the nation who came out in support of Rev. Hoye were outraged by the sentence.

"It is absolutely incredible that in America an individual can be sentenced to jail for engaging in peaceful free speech activity on a public sidewalk," Allison Aranda, an attorney for the Life Legal Defense Foundation, told LifeNews.com. "Rev. Hoye is being singled out for particularly harsh punishment because he refused to agree not to offer help to women considering abortion. Where is the justice in that?"

Hoye is an African-American pastor who feels a special calling to work for the end of the targeting of black Americans by abortion.

According to 2004 statistics from the National Center for Health Statistics, about 37 percent of pregnancies among black women end in abortion, compared with 12 percent for non-Hispanic white women and 19 percent for Hispanic women.

As part of his efforts, he stands in front of an abortion clinic in Oakland with leaflets offering abortion alternatives and a sign reading, "Jesus loves you and your baby. Let us help."

Hoye spent 40 days fasting prior to beginning the jail sentence, which made Bill May, the chairman of the pro-life Catholics for the Common Good, describe him as slight and gaunt as he was calmly led from the Alameda County courtroom.

When he returns to the streets to help women, Hoye will have one less abortion center to visit. That's because the nation's oldest abortion center, located in Oakland, [has been forced to close](#) because of financial issues.

Related web sites:

Life Legal Defense Foundation - <http://www.ildf.org>

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