

Kentucky judge overrules a ban on drive-in Easter church services citing the move 'unconstitutional' and something 'out of a dystopian novel'

- On Fire Christian Church filed a suit against Louisville Mayor Greg Fischer and the city after Fischer banned drive-in style religious gatherings
- Fischer said they were not 'practical or safe' due to the coronavirus pandemic
- US District Judge Justin Walker ruled in favor of the church on Saturday and said Louisville cannot put a stop to the services
- Walker blasted the ban as 'unconstitutional' and out of 'a dystopian novel'
- Mississippi enforced a similar ban, with footage circulating on social media of police officers shutting down a service in Greenville on Thursday
- Republicans have blasted Democratic Kentucky Governor Andy Beshear's statewide plan to order people into quarantine if they attend mass gatherings
- [Learn more about how to help people impacted by COVID](#)

By [RACHEL SHARP FOR DAILYMAIL.COM](#) and [ASSOCIATED PRESS](#)

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A Kentucky judge has overruled a ban on drive-in church services in Louisville ahead of Easter Sunday, citing the move 'unconstitutional' and something 'out of a dystopian novel'.

On Fire Christian Church filed a suit against Louisville Mayor Greg Fischer and the city after Fischer announced that drive-in style religious gatherings were not allowed on Easter because they are not 'practical or safe' due to the coronavirus pandemic.

US District Judge Justin Walker ruled in favor of the church on Saturday and said Louisville cannot put a stop to the services.

This comes as authorities in Mississippi enforced a similar ban, with footage circulating on social media of police officers shutting down a service in Greenville on Thursday.



On Fire Christian Church filed a suit against Louisville Mayor Greg Fischer (pictured) and the city after Fischer announced that drive-in style religious gatherings were not allowed on Easter because they are not 'practical or safe' due to the coronavirus pandemic



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On Fire Christian Church (pictured) won the suit and has been allowed to hold drive-in church services

Judge Walker blasted the ban in Kentucky as something out of the 'pages of a dystopian novel'.

'On Holy Thursday, an American mayor criminalized the communal celebration of Easter,' said Walker, who was recently nominated by President Donald Trump for a seat on the powerful US Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit.

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'That sentence is one that this Court never expected to see outside the pages of a dystopian novel, or perhaps the pages of The Onion.'

He said the city is prohibited from 'enforcing; attempting to enforce; threatening to enforce; or otherwise requiring compliance with any prohibition on drive-in church services at On Fire.'

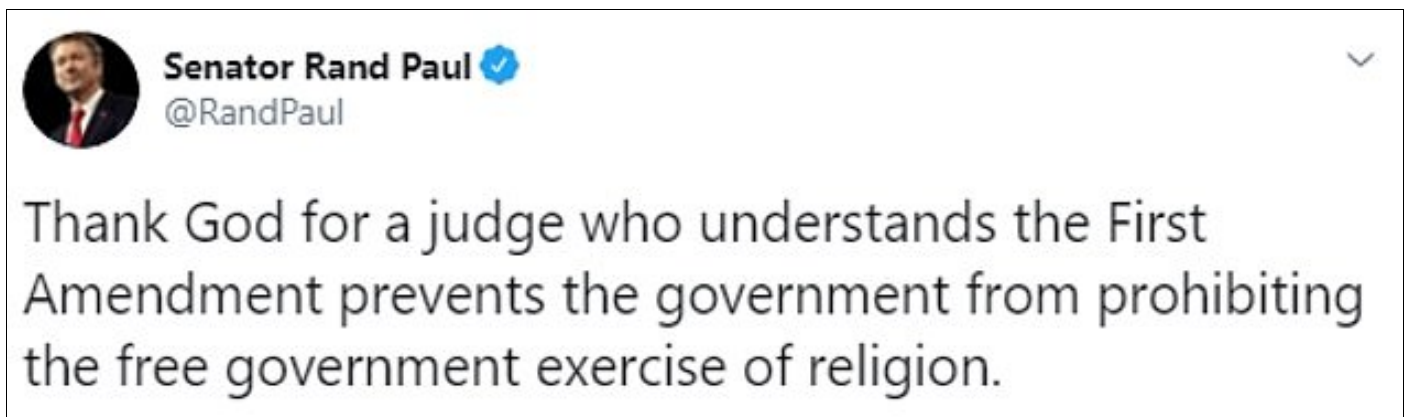
Walker added that: 'The Mayor's decision is stunning. And it is, beyond all reason, unconstitutional.'

He also noted that drive-thru restaurants and liquor stores were still allowed to operate in the area.



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US District Judge Justin Walker (right with Mitch McConnell) ruled in favor of the church on Saturday and said Louisville cannot put a stop to the services



The judge's decision was welcomed by Kentucky GOP Sen. Rand Paul

The judge's decision was welcomed by Kentucky GOP Sen. Rand Paul who tweeted:

'Thank God for a judge who understands the First Amendment prevents the government from prohibiting the free government exercise of religion.'

The ruling came as Republicans blasted Democratic Kentucky Governor Andy Beshear's statewide plan to order people into quarantine if they attend mass gatherings, saying it unfairly singles out religious services.

Under the new action, people seen participating in mass gatherings in Kentucky this weekend will have their license plate numbers recorded by authorities, who will provide the information to local health departments.

Health officials will contact each participant and require them to go into quarantine for 14 days.

Beshear, a deacon at his church, said the action was needed to prevent an Easter weekend acceleration of the coronavirus.



Democratic Kentucky Governor Andy Beshear issued a statewide plan to order people into quarantine if they attend mass gatherings, including religious gatherings

Republican Attorney General Daniel Cameron slammed the move saying it unfairly

singles out religious services.

'Directing a uniformed presence at church services to record the identity of worshippers and to force a quarantine, while doing no such thing for the people gathered at retail stores or obtaining an abortion, is the definition of arbitrary,' Cameron said in a tweet on Saturday.

At the same time, Cameron encouraged people to celebrate Easter at home and continue to practice social distancing.

President Trump last week toyed with the idea of allowing churches a social distancing exemption to celebrate Easter.

'And I brought it up before, I said, maybe we could allow special - for churches - maybe we could talk about it, maybe we could allow them for great separation outside on Easter Sunday,' he said at the White House press briefing last Saturday.

'But somebody did say that, 'well, then you're sort of opening up to that little - do we want to take a chance in doing that when we've been doing so well?''

The president then said like many Americans he would watch both Palm Sunday and Easter Sunday services on his laptop.

Kentucky had nearly 1,700 confirmed cases of coronavirus and its death toll stood at 90 as of Friday.

Cops shut down Mississippi drive-in church service after local mayor bans Easter worship amid coronavirus lockdown

Cops shut down a drive-in church service in Mississippi after the local mayor banned all Easter worship amid the **coronavirus** lockdown.

Police were caught on camera shutting down a drive-in service held by Reverend James Hamilton of the King James Baptist Church in Greenville

Thursday, after people flocked to attend the service while social distancing in their cars.

Greenville Mayor Errick Simmons banned all in-person church services as part of Mississippi's shelter-in-place order to slow the spread of coronavirus.

Parishioners hoping to gather together for Easter weekend have tried to sidestep the ban by holding drive-in church services where they can maintain social distancing by staying in their cars.



Police shut down a drive-in service in Greenville Thursday

The state's shelter-in-place order did not specify a ban on drive-in services, but the mayor's office said in a press release that churches are 'strongly encouraged to hold services via Facebook Live, Zoom, Free Conference Call, and any and all other social media, streaming and telephonic platforms.'

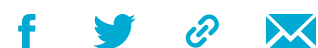
In an intense video posted on Reverend Hamilton's Facebook account, officers were seen putting a stop to his service in Greenville on Thursday.

In the footage, police were seen breaking up the service, ordering parishioners to leave or face a \$500 fine, Magnolia State Live reported.

'I'm a good citizen, I ain't breaking no law. I ain't selling no drugs. I'm just preaching the word of God. Look at all these police cars here,' Hamilton is heard exclaiming in the video.

He spoke of his disbelief that drive-in church services are being broken up and churches are classed as non-essential businesses while liquor stores can operate curbside services and remain open as essential businesses.

'Liquor and beer has killed more people than coronavirus ever would,' Hamilton told Fox News.



Police arrive at Mississippi church to shut down drive-in service



Donald Trump skips his daily coronavirus update for first time in a month as he reveals he will watch Easter Sunday service by controversial pastor who said Islam 'promotes pedophilia' and homosexuality is 'filthy'

Donald Trump has skipped his daily **coronavirus** update for the first time in a month as he reveals he will tune in to an Easter Sunday service with a controversial pastor who says Islam 'promotes pedophilia' and homosexuality is 'filthy'.

The president was notable by his absence on Easter Saturday as he failed to hold a coronavirus task force press briefing or any public update on the virus, which has now infected more than 530,000 Americans.

Trump has been addressing the nation on a daily basis, usually from the James S. Brady Press Briefing Room in the White House, since mid-March as the nation has grappled to bring the pandemic under control.

But on the day that the US became the deadliest nation in the world from coronavirus, as its death toll inched past hard-hit **Italy's** and topped 20,000, and on the eve of the day he had previously vowed the nation would reopen from the pandemic, the president was nowhere to be seen.



The president skipped his daily coronavirus update for the first time in a month on Easter Saturday as he takes an Easter break. Trump has been addressing the nation on a daily basis, usually from the James S. Brady Press Briefing Room in the White House, since mid-March as the nation has grappled to bring the pandemic under control

Instead, Trump simply tweeted to wish Americans a 'safe and blessed Easter Sunday' and to plug controversial pastor and his evangelical adviser Robert Jeffress whose service he said he will be watching remotely.

'Wishing all a safe and blessed Easter Sunday. I will be tuning into Pastor @robertjeffress at firstdallas.org/liveworship Church in Dallas, Texas tomorrow morning at 10:20 AM Eastern,' his tweet said.

Trump's choice of pastor and one of his evangelical advisers has long been a source of concern for some due to the pastor's extreme right-wing views.

Jeffress, pastor of the 4,000-member First Baptist Church in Dallas and a Fox News contributor, has sparked controversy on many occasions for his homophobic and anti-Islam comments.

Back in 2010, Jeffress said Islam 'promotes pedophilia'.

'The deep, dark, dirty secret of Islam: It is a religion that promotes pedophilia – sex with children. This so-called prophet Muhammad raped a 9-year-old girl – had sex with her,' he said.



He seemed to be taking an Easter break and instead tweeted to wish Americans 'a safe and blessed Easter Sunday'. He also plugged an Easter Sunday service with controversial pastor and his evangelical adviser Robert Jeffress



Jeffress is known for saying Islam 'promotes pedophilia' and is an 'evil religion'. He has called homosexuality 'filthy' in the past and claimed Barack Obama was 'paving the way' for the Antichrist

A few weeks later, he stood by his comments and even rallied Christians and conservatives to stand up to 'this evil, evil religion'.

The pastor is also known for his discriminatory comments towards the LGBT community, having branded homosexuality 'filthy' and 'degrading'.

'What they [homosexuals] do is filthy. It is so degrading that it is beyond description. And it is their filthy behavior that explains why they are so much more prone to disease,' he said.

The controversy doesn't end there, after he has made no secret of his Republican views and even used his faith to promote his political support of Trump.

Former President Barack Obama was 'paving the way' for the Antichrist', according

to Jeffress in 2012.



Trump with First Lady Melania Trump (right) and daughter Tiffany Trump (left) arrive for Easter service at the Church of Bethesda-by-the-Sea in Palm Beach on Easter Sunday 2018



Trump, accompanied by a person dressed as the Easter Bunny, at the 141st Easter Egg Roll on the South Lawn of the White House in 2019

By contrast, he agreed that Trump has been chosen by God to run America.

Citing the New Testament, Jeffress claimed in August 2017 that, 'In the case of North Korea, God has given Trump authority to take out Kim Jong Un.'

Even when reports of Trump's unholy past reared its head when it emerged in 2018 that hush money was paid to porn star Stormy Daniels, Jeffress brushed it off saying voters 'knew they weren't voting for an altar boy' when they appointed him as their president.

As he watches the pastor's service remotely, it will mark the first time since Trump entered the White House that he has remained in Washington DC for the Easter weekend.

Over the last three years, the president and his family have traveled to Mar-a-Lago in Florida and enjoyed spending the holidays with a brunch on the lawn of his Palm Beach estate and attending a service at Bethesda-by-the-Sea, an Episcopal church

where Trump and First Lady Melania married in 2005.

The annual White House Easter Egg Roll, one of the oldest White House traditions, has also been cancelled.

The event has only ever been canceled on two other occasions since 1878 - during World War I and World War II.

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Peter 'The Cat' Bonetti will be fondly remembered for his reflexes, gravity-defying saves and incredible legacy at Chelsea after legendary goalkeeper dies following long Alzheimer's battle

Peter Bonetti's long battle with Alzheimers ended this Easter Sunday, at 78, and football is in mourning for a goalkeeper so acrobatic and gravity-defying that Chelsea did indeed call him The Cat.

MFootball

Severe weather and tornadoes are forecast to barrel through the South to East Coast affecting 4.5million on Easter Sunday