



Written by [Selwyn Duke](#) on March 6, 2015

Soviet Amerika? Florida City With Homosexual Commissioner Cracks Down on Churches

The government official, cloaked in a disguise, carried a concealed camera. He apparently wanted to know if the group he was investigating was engaging in worship — and he wanted evidence.

Pastors in Lake Worth, Florida, say they're being persecuted by their city, in what has been [called](#) a "Soviet-style crackdown." And it all began, alleges one church leader, when he had an encounter with an openly homosexual city commissioner who would later tell people the pastor was "anti-gay."

Writes [WND.com](#):

Churches in Lake Worth, Florida, are being told they need to acquire permits in order to stay in business....

Several churches in the South Florida region have reported to Fox News that they've been ordered to obtain business permits, or face fines and closures. But one in particular has come under an egregious city attack.

[Fox News reported](#) city officials sent out a code enforcement officer, decked in a hoodie, to spy on one Southern Baptist church that had gathered in a coffee house.

"Government employees are public servants and prohibited by the Constitution from inhibiting religious freedom," said Mat Staver, the founder of Liberty Counsel, a religious liberty law firm, in an interview with Fox News. "That is a far cry from sneaking around and into a church and acting like KGB agents."

... The [Southern Baptist church] pastor, Mike Olive, said they met without trouble from the city until last month, when one commissioner, Andy Amoroso, reportedly began telling people in the community that the church was anti-gay, Fox News reported.

Amoroso is hardly an impartial observer. The first openly homosexual man elected to the Lake Worth City Council, Amoroso appears aggressive in homosexual activity and activism. He owns a business in the municipality known as "Studio 205," which he [bills as](#) "The Fun Store" and "the only Pride store in Palm Beach County." Also called an "LGBT store," the establishment "sells dildos and gay porn" and "padded boxers," but this is okay because Lake Worth "prides itself on an artsy, hippie way of life," [writes](#) the *Broward Palm Beach Times*. In addition, Amoroso once opened what has been [called](#) his county's "first gay travel agency," which, presumably, doesn't just mean a happy one.

And last year Amoroso organized and led a protest in favor of faux marriage on the steps of Lake Worth City Hall, [saying](#), "It's really to tell Tallahassee it's not OK that gay couples can't get married in Florida." Of course, in reality they may — form a matrimonial union with a member of the opposite sex — which is what marriage is, by correct definition.





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But while Amoroso believes people should have the right to “[undefine](#)” [marriage](#) freely, critics say that worshipping freely is a different matter. As [OpposingViews.com reports](#), providing more detail on the church crackdown:

Other churches in the area said they faced similar problems [to Olive’s] with the city of Lake Worth. They claim the city is forcing them to have a “business tax,” despite federal tax exceptions that have been in place for the last 40 years.

In 1970, the Supreme Court ruled in *Walz v. Tax Commission of the City of New York* that property tax exemptions for places of worship is [sic] constitutional.

However, representatives from the First Baptist Church in Lake Worth said they paid the city around \$500 for inspection and use of occupancy fees. City council members did not specify the purpose of the tax when asked by local media.

As for Olive, Fox News’ Todd Starnes spoke to the pastor and offers more information on his run-in with the city commissioner, [writing](#):

Pastor Olive told me he tried to convey to Amoroso that the church’s message is ‘Love God, Love People.’

“Our message to the gay community is the same as it is to the straight community,” he said.

The commissioner, Olive said, did not seem to appreciate his message.

“He pointed at me and said, ‘Listen, you better not have a church down there,” Olive told me.

Shortly thereafter, in what Starnes calls the “strangest of coincidences,” the cloak-and-camera city code-enforcement officer showed up. And while Amoroso would not return Starnes’ phone call requesting comment, the officer’s “[case narrative](#)” speaks volumes. Reports Starnes:

The code enforcement officer’s notes [read like something out of a KGB report](#).

“I walked back to the Coffee Bar and was able to visualize, in my opinion what appeared to be a ministry in progress,” he wrote in the report.

He documented how he observed “people holding what appeared to be Bibles or religious books as one had a cross on it” and “what appeared to be a ministry in progress.”

“I was approached by an unknown man with a cross around his neck,” he wrote.

(Well, as China has proven, there are ways of finding out who that man is.)

Lake Worth’s community sustainability director, William Waters, told Starnes that officials have no axe to grind with the churches. It was just a matter of treating everyone “equally,” and the city views a church as just another business — like a smut store, I suppose.

Equal or not, however, the city’s actions appear unprecedented. Joan Abell, interim part-time pastor of the First Presbyterian Church, [told](#) the *Lake Worth Tribune*, “We’ve been there 99 years and we’ve never had to have a license.” She asked, “Where do you all of a sudden say the church has to have a license to gather and pray?”

Abell also pointed out that the “licensing” process involves government inspections. Suspicious, apparently, that it may just be another vehicle through which to shutter houses of worship, “she’s very concerned that the city will demand that the church make repairs that it doesn’t have the money to make, writes the *Tribune*. Note that due to financial pressure from the city, Olive was forced to hold his



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last Christian service on February 29.

And when viewed against the backdrop of recent events — bakers and other Christian businessmen being forced into “sensitivity training” or to close shop for not servicing faux weddings — many are rightfully suspicious that Lake Worth’s actions reflect the homosexuality agenda. One might also wonder about the special treatment being demanded. After all, fornicators and adulterers have long been common in our society, but they never asked that churches and Christians dispense with sexual teaching or face persecution. And consider the implications of the homosexuality activists’ demands. As I [wrote](#) last October:

Is the church supposed to say adultery is a sin, fornication is a sin, self-gratification is a sin, viewing pornography is a sin, but homosexuality is, what? A lifestyle choice, sort of like living on a houseboat?

This would be comical to anyone who didn’t fail at mastering childhood categorization problems (i.e., what things belong together?). It would be like saying that devil’s food cake didn’t belong with sugar cookies, petits fours, Napoleons, and ladyfingers in the category of desserts because it’s the favorite of some corpulent, Jabba the Hut-looking slob who’ll feel better about himself if it’s classified as a vegetable.

So in essence, what homosexuality activists are asking is that the church scrap all of its sexual teaching to accommodate their wishes.

Unfortunately, as ABC “Family’s” airing of a “romantic” same-sex kiss [between 13-year-old boys](#) evidences, the activists’ wishes are, more and more, being fulfilled.



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