

## ACLC Fights Houston Transgender Policy as Threat to Religious Freedom

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Houston, Texas became a battleground for religious liberty when Mayor Annise Parker passed a controversial ordinance that would allow transgender people to use a men's or women's bathroom, depending on the gender with which they identify. There was an initial outcry from many conservative groups and Christians towards the law, but the real blowback came from the mayor's demand to subpoena sermons and communications of pastors who opposed the ordinance.



American Clergy Leadership Conference members rallied to the call in the midst of the controversy. They got to work connecting with other Houston pastors including Houston Pastoral Council President Rev. Dave Welch and Rev. Dr. Wendy Castano, two of the five pastors subpoenaed by the mayor. "The bottom line is that the religious liberty issue is opening the doors for us to meet and reach out to many good clergy who otherwise would never take the time to meet with us," said Rev. Bob Exler of ACLC Houston. Many of the pastors expressed their desire to work together all over the country. The controversy has brought the teachings of True Father, founder of ACLC, into the forefront on the fight towards religious liberty. His teachings on true family values are now being received by respected clergy.

Many of the ACLC members have been busy visiting churches in Houston, and have even made connections with Mormon and Muslim congregations, all of whom are eager to work together on the issues of religious freedom and family values. An LDS Bishop of a local congregation was interested in attending an ACLC prayer breakfast and even offered their facilities for a future convocation.

The mayor continues to stand behind the ordinance; however, she recently withdrew the subpoenas. Pastors and organizations have signed a petition to overturn the ordinance. There is a court case currently scheduled for January. Bob Exler believes this incident was a way to open doors and build bridges for the religious communities in Houston to work together toward a common goal. He looks forward to continuing to foster new relationships and programs in Houston and around the country.