

Embattled Operation Rescue makes its stand in Kansas

WICHITA (AP) — In 2002, Troy Newman left behind a legacy of blockades at abortion clinics in Southern California and brought his anti-abortion ministry to this Midwestern city that his group calls the abortion capital of the nation.

“I thought — and still believe — we cannot win this fight without winning it here,” said Newman, head of Wichita-based Operation Rescue.

But this conservative community with its small-town politics has proven tough territory for the California transplants, who have failed to draw the large number of protesters who once came to Wichita to demonstrate against Women’s Health Care Services, one of the few clinics in the country to perform late-term abortions, run by Dr. George Tiller.

As the nation nears the 34th anniversary of U.S. Supreme Court’s Roe vs. Wade decision that legalized abortion, Newman’s embattled anti-abortion group is again calling abortion opponents from around the country to come to Wichita from Friday through Monday for what it calls “Wichita ’07 — ACry for Justice.”

Operation Rescue said the event was prompted by Fox News commentator Bill O’Reilly, who last month told viewers of “The O’Reilly Factor”: “There should be thousands of people protesting outside Tiller’s abortion clinic in Wichita.”

Tiller and his clinic have been a target of abortion opponents for decades. His clinic was bombed in 1985, and Tiller was shot in both arms by a protester in 1993.

In 1991, the Summer of Mercy protests, organized by the original Operation Rescue group, drew thousands of anti-abortion activists to this city for demonstrations marked by civil disobedience and mass arrests.

But by 2001, only a few hundred activists came to Wichita for the 10th anniversary of the Summer of Mercy protests, and Operation Rescue leaders expect this weekend’s demonstrations to draw at most only a few hundred people.

“They no longer are much of a force. Nobody talks much about them. It is a historical remnant of their heyday that gives them any kind of cache,” said Frances Kissling, president of Catholics for Free Choice, a nonprofit abortion rights group.

Newman said Operation Rescue’s goal is to advance the anti-abortion movement, not increase its

membership. Since 1991, the numbers of abortion clinics nationwide have fallen from 2,100 to fewer than 740 today, he noted.

“When I took over in 1999, Operation Rescue was just about dead,” Newman said. “Today, Operation Rescue is one of the foremost Christian life operations in the country.”

Since 1991, Operation Rescue has been beset by factional infighting that has split the organization into regional groups, including Wichita’s. Tougher federal laws banning clinic blockades, injunctions, civil judgments and financial problems have dogged the movement. Some groups have changed their names, partly to avoid paying judgments.

The Wichita group changed its name — from Operation Rescue West to Operation Rescue — after an Internal Revenue Service investigation into its use of tax-exempt contributions.

The IRS pulled the tax-exempt status of Operation Rescue West last fall, after Catholics for Free Choice complained about an advertisement the anti-abortion group put in a Catholic newspaper soliciting tax-exempt contributions to go to the 2004 Democratic convention to oppose John Kerry’s candidacy for president, Kissling said. IRS rules prohibit the use of tax-exempt contributions for political purposes.

Newman said he disbanded the group’s parent organization in 2005, with the IRS decision pending. He said he has since reorganized the group under a new board, shortened the name to Operation Rescue and is working to regain tax-exempt status.

Newman said his attorney is trying to hammer out what financial penalty the group will have pay for its political involvement.

Newman, 40, believes most Americans are repelled by late-term abortions and has long vowed to close Tiller’s clinic. If abortion opponents cannot win public opinion when it comes to the Wichita clinic, Newman says, they cannot win it anywhere.

But David Gittrich, state development director for Kansans for Life, acknowledged Operation Rescue’s move to Wichita has displeased some ministers in the state’s anti-abortion movement.

“Some people don’t want to work with them, and I don’t really want to know why,” Gittrich said.

Some point to the group’s aggressive tactics. Newman’s so-called “truth trucks,” emblazoned with

photos of aborted fetuses, almost have become a hallmark of Operation Rescue. And his group routinely pickets the homes of Tiller’s employees and the businesses that supply the clinic.

“I am not here to be nice. I am not here to make friends. I came here single focused,” Newman said. “I am not a radical, but the actions I do certainly seem more radical in the Midwest.”

Dr. Tiller declined to comment for this story, but Julie Burkhart, executive director of the Wichita abortion rights group ProKanDo, called groups such as Operation Rescue “bullies.”

“Their goal is to decrease access for women, to shame women ... to ostracize physicians and other health care providers in the field so women do not have that option,” Burkhart said.

Some abortion rights supporters are concerned that Newman’s group, while denouncing violence, could beget it.

Margie Moore, director for law enforcement relations for the Feminist Majority Foundation, expressed concern about the upcoming

Wichita event, saying such a concentration of abortion protesters creates a supportive environment for violence.

“When people see somewhere they can go and be readily acceptable there is always a chance that someone may take that next step,” Moore said. “Even though they themselves may not be involved in actual violence, the atmosphere is there and the support is there.”

Newman said his group has distanced itself from anti-abortion violence and screens those who want

to represent Operation Rescue, although it has no formal membership system.

“We have a reputation to keep: We are committed, absolutely committed, to serving the peace,” he said.

But several abortion rights supporters, including ProKanDo, cited the criminal background of Cheryl Sullenger, Operation Rescue’s outreach coordinator and spokeswoman, who followed Newman from California to Wichita.

Sullenger served more than two

years in prison for passing along bomb-making materials in a thwarted 1987 conspiracy to bomb a San Diego clinic. She has since renounced such violent tactics, and she and Newman have worked together since 1991.

“They exercised Christian forgiveness, and they didn’t have any problem with it,” Sullenger said of Operation Rescue.

Thank You!!

Thank you very much to the girl who used her red pickup to turn my horses around when they were headed down Franklin Avenue from Veterans Drive. They must have wanted to check out January Sale Specials! A guardian Angel, who herded them all back in the pasture.
I'd like to know your name.

Thanks again,
Lon Sowers



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Schedule of church services

ASCENSION-ON-THE-PRAIRIE EPISCOPAL, Rev. Don Martin, College Drive & Wheatridge Rd., 462-3041, Holy Eucharist, 9:00 a.m. every Sunday. Evening Prayer, 5:15 p.m. Wednesday, September through May. Christian Education for Youth, 6:30 p.m. Wednesday, September through May

COLLEGE DRIVE ASSEMBLY OF GOD, Pastor, Jeremy Gundling, 245 W. College Dr. - 462-8234 Early Service - 8:00 a.m.; Sunday School 9:30 a.m., Morning Worship - 10:45 a.m.

BEREAN CHURCH, 1000 S. Franklin, 460-2763, www.colbyborean.com; Sunday School 9:30 a.m., Sunday Worship 10:45 a.m. Awana Clubs, Wednesday, 7 p.m., Middle & High School, Wednesday, 7 p.m. @ the Heartland Christian School Gym

FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH, Rev. Carroll H. Morony, Grant & Webster Street, 462-2867. Sunday School 9:15 a.m., Morning Worship 10:30 a.m.

COLLEGE VIEW BAPTIST CHURCH, (SBC), Pastor Tom Huffman, 1185 Wheatridge Rd. at College Drive, 460-7144, Sunday Bible Study 9:30 a.m., Sunday Worship services, 10:45 a.m.

MINGO BIBLE CHURCH, 420 Main Mingo, 785-462-2992: An independent community church served by Village Missions Pastor Chris Shubert. Sunday School: 9:30AM - all ages. Sunday Services: 10:45AM. Sunday Nights: 1st Sunday of the month: potluck following morning service - no evening service; 2nd Sunday: services at 6:30 PM; 3rd Sunday: informal fellowship - bring a snack to share!; 4th and 5th Sunday: services at 6:30 p.m.

SACRED HEART CATHOLIC, 462-2179, Father Dana Clark, Pastor, Saturday Eve. Mass 5:30 p.m., Sunday Masses 8:00 & 10:00 a.m., Confessions will be heard Saturday 4:30-5:05 p.m. and from 7:30-7:45 a.m. and 9:25-9:40 a.m. on Sunday.

FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, Rev. Carol Rahn, 515 W. 4th, 462-6342, Worship, 11:00 a.m.

WESLEYAN CHURCH, 320 W. Pine - 462-8391, Sunday School 9:30 a.m., Sunday Worship 10:40 a.m., Sunday Evening Cell groups at 6:00 p.m., Wednesday Youth Ministries, Kids Clubhouse 7 p.m.

CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS, 1145 S. Franklin - 460-6605, President Gary Slavens, 460-2656; Rocky Robbins, 1st counselor, 460-1101; Tim Wilson, 2nd counselor, 785-846-7796. Sacrament meeting 10 a.m., Sunday School and Primary 11:20 a.m., Priesthood, Relief Society, YM/YW, 12:10 p.m.; Family History Center open to public, 7-9 p.m. Thursdays or by appointment. Call 462-3571.

COLBY UNITED METHODIST CHURCH, Rev. James Mardock, pastor, 950 S. Franklin, 462-6521, Sunday Worship Services at 8:30 and 11:00 a.m., 6:30 p.m., Fellowship coffee 9:30 a.m., Sunday School, 9:45 a.m., KXXX broadcasts 11:00 worship. http://www.gbmg-umc.org/colby-umc/

REDEEMING LOVE MINISTRIES, INC., 345 N. Franklin, Dr. W.G. and Rev. Orvella Romine, Saturday Evening 7p.m. Worship, Equipping Class, Sunday, 10a.m., Sunday worship, 11a.m., Wednesday, R.L.M Training Centers (Bible School), 7p.m.

CHURCH OF CHRIST, 510 E. 4th, Jay Kelley, minister, Sunday Bible Study 9:30 a.m., Sunday Worship 10:30 a.m., Sunday Eve. Worship 6:00 p.m., Wednesday, Bible Study 7:00 p.m.

COLBY EVANGELISM CENTER, Rev. Robert Cooper, 815 West 3rd - 462-2062, Sunday School 9:45; Sunday service 10:00 and 6:30 p.m.; Wednesday Bible Study 6:30 p.m.; Friday Youth Power Hour at 7:00 p.m.

FIRST CHRISTIAN CHURCH, (Disciples of Christ), Pastor Bradley L. Herndon, 385 W. 3rd - 460-2718, Sunday Morning Worship at 9:00 a.m.; Sunday School at 10:30 a.m. E-mail: fccolby@st-tel.net

TRINITY LUTHERAN CHURCH, Rev. John L. Schmidt, East 5th & Country Club, 462-3497, Services, Sat., 5:30 p.m., Sunday; Sunday School and Adult Bible Class 9:15 a.m.; Services, 10:30 a.m. Visit us at www.trinitycolby.com

OUR SAVIORS LUTHERAN CHURCH, Brewster, Sunday worship 9:00 a.m.; 2nd Sunday of the month at 8:00 a.m.

PLEASANT HOME CHURCH, Pastor, Charlie Busch, 694-2242, 3190 Road 70, Edson, Worship, 9:00 a.m., Sunday School 10:00 a.m., Evening service, 6:00 p.m.

LEVANT COMMUNITY CHURCH, 205 1st St., Pastor Jerry Vincent, 586-2376, Sunday School (classes for 3 years & up and 3 adult classes) 9:30 a.m., Morning worship 10:30 a.m.

WINONA METHODIST CHURCH, Rev. Sheryl Johnson, Sunday School, 10:30 a.m., Morning Worship 9:15 a.m. (CDT)

BREWSTER UNITED METHODIST CHURCH, PO Box 250, Brewster. Pastor Dorine Chambers, 785-462-6044, Sunday School: 9:45 a.m.; Worship Service, 10:45 a.m.

THE SHEPHERD’S STAFF, REXFORD, Joan Dingworth, Director, 687-2565

REXFORD COMMUNITY CHURCH, Rexford, Pastor Lane Purcell, 687-3305, Sunday School 9:30 a.m., Worship Service 10:30 a.m.

BREWSTER COMMUNITY CHURCH, Mike Pinkelman, Pastor, Brewster - 694-2720, Sunday School (all ages) 9:30 a.m., Worship Service 10:30 a.m., Bible Study 7:00 p.m., Wed. mornings 6:30 a.m. - Men’s Bible Study, Wed. 7:00 p.m. - Children’s Ministries (Royal Rangers/ Missionettes), Wed. 7:15 p.m. - Intercessory & Prayer, Thurs. 4:00 p.m. - Women’s Bible Study

Veteran priest in China dies at 103

BEIJING (AP) — The Rev. Joseph Meng Ziwen, a Roman Catholic clergyman in China since the 1930s who secretly served as a bishop to underground congregations while working as a priest in the Communist Party-sanctioned church, has died at 103.

Meng died Jan. 7 in the southern city of Nanning, where he was a priest for the state-backed Chinese Patriotic Catholic Association.

An official with the association, which oversees Catholic churches, confirmed the death but would not disclose a cause.

AsiaNews, a Vatican-affiliated news agency, said Meng died from liver cancer.

Meng secretly served from 1984 to 2003 as bishop to underground churches, which operate outside the state-sanctioned system, according to a biography released by the Holy Spirit Study Center, a Catholic research center in Hong Kong.

Tens of millions of Chinese

worship in underground churches that remain loyal to the Vatican in defiance of a 1951 order by the ruling party for China’s Catholics to sever ties with Rome.

Born in 1903, Meng studied in Malaysia, was ordained a priest in 1935 and later served as a seminary teacher, the Holy Spirit Study Center’s biography said.

Following the 1949 communist revolution, he was sent to a labor camp in 1951 and spent 20 years in captivity, the biography said. It said that after his release, he helped rebuild the church in the Nanning area by training young Chinese priests.

Meng was ordained a bishop in 1984 in China’s underground church, according to the Holy Spirit Study Center.

Its biography quoted Meng as saying that when a Chinese official asked him whether he really was a bishop and who appointed him, he replied, “I was chosen by the Catholic Church and that is enough for me.”

Court upholds ban on Muslim scarves

MUNICH, Germany (AP) — A court has upheld a ban on Muslim teachers wearing head scarves in schools in the German state of Bavaria under a law requiring teacher attire be in line with “western Christian” values.

An Islamic association based in Berlin had complained about the law, which authorities in the conservative-run state have used to ban head scarves while allowing Roman Catholic nuns to continue to wear their head-covering habits in schools.

The Bavarian Constitutional Court ruled last Monday that the application of the law in the state neither violated religious freedom nor was discriminatory.

Authorities in several states, including Baden-Wuerttemberg and Hesse, have introduced similar head scarf bans.

A lawyer for the Islamic Religious Community said some of its members were considering taking their case to the Federal Constitutional Court, Germany’s highest court.

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