

4:06 pm | Published by [Editorial Staff](#)

# ACLU Fights For Churches To Accept Sex-Offenders

A registered sex-offender who was arrested after attending a Baptist Church in North Carolina is challenging a law that would give him the right to go to Church without restrictions.

Twice convicted James Nichols, 31, says he is now a Christian after ‘finding God’ while spending a month and a half in jail for indecent liberties with a teen girl and attempted second-degree rape, according to the [Associated Press](#).

Police say Nichols was arrested at his home after he attended the services because the Baptist Church he chose to worship at has a nursery. Under state laws, sex offenders are banned from coming withing 300 feet of any place used to care for children.

Georgia, which passed legislation that prevents sex-offenders from living or working in places near schools, bus stops, places where children congregate and child care facilities, has been [sued](#) by the Southern Center for Human Rights behalf of Georgia’s 16,000-plus registered sex-offenders because the law there prevents offenders from volunteering in places of worship that has child care. The lawsuit, [Whitaker v. Perdue](#), is pending in federal court.

“Criminalizing the practice of religion for everyone on the registry will do more harm than good,” said Sara Totonchi, policy director for the Southern Center for Human Rights. “With these laws, states are driving people on the registry from their faith community and depriving them of the rehabilitative influence of the church.”

Nichols agrees and is getting some help fighting his case from an organization that may come to no surprise to many, the ACLU.

Lawmakers like state Sen. David Hoyle (D) who sponsored the bill in North Carolina says people like Nichols should have thought about the repercussions before they committed the crime.

“I’m not denying him the right to go to church. He denied himself that,” said Hoyle. “If they are a convicted pedophile, they have given up a lot of their rights.”

Joseph Green, pastor of the Baptist Church that Nichols attended just prior to his arrest, let him know that he is welcome but added he’s also careful to protect the congregation from harm and those criminals who want to exploit the Church.

“I told him as long as he’s honest with me, then we’re willing to embrace him and help him focus and get his life back on track,” said Green. But, “The Bible talks about wolves coming in in sheep’s clothing, so I’ve got to be watchful over everyone coming into my church.”

Church members tended to agree with their pastor. “God turned my life around,” said Baptist church member, Shawn Cox. “I’m not saying that you bring the guy in and put him over the youth program or the youth ministry as soon as he walks in the door. But there’s no way he can overcome these things without help and support.”

Recommend

Send

Sign Up to see what your friends recommend.

Related posts:

1. [ACLJ Fights to Protect Children From Convicted Sex Offenders](#)
2. [Churches Sue City of Phoenix Over Ordinance Prohibiting Ringing of Church Bells](#)
3. [Kansas Court Moves Against Planned Parenthood As Former AG Fights To Keep Law License](#)
4. [ACLU Threatens School Over 4th Grade Single-Sex Classroom](#)
5. [Louisiana's New Law Allows Gun-Totting Churchgoers](#)

**Short URL:** <http://www.christianlawjournal.com/?p=8756>