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"Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die. Believest thou this?"
John 11:25–26

Supreme Court Rules 8-1 in Favor of Christian Counselor
This week, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled 8-1 in favor of free speech in the case *Chiles v. Salazar*. The case involves Kailey Chiles, a licensed therapist in Colorado, who filed a lawsuit after the state passed a law limiting what counselors could discuss with their minor-aged clients. The law specifically prohibited counselors from helping minors reconcile their perceived sexual orientation or gender identity with their bodies. However, the law allowed counselors to discuss these same topics with minors if they supported the state-sanctioned message that people can change their sex or that same-sex attraction is good. The Supreme Court heard the case last fall after Chiles lost at both the district and appellate levels. Justice Neil Gorsuch, writing for the majority, noted that Colorado engaged in viewpoint discrimination. As such, the law was held to the strict scrutiny test, a level of review higher than what the lower courts had applied. The Supreme Court found that the law violated the First Amendment. "The First Amendment stands as a shield against any effort to enforce orthodoxy in thought or speech in this country," wrote Gorsuch. Justice Ketanji Brown Jackson, the lone dissenter, argued that "there is zero evidence that Colorado has engaged in the corrosive and illicit suppression of ideas that the First Amendment valiantly repels." Jackson instead sided with Colorado, which had argued that its law regulated conduct, not speech. Although conservatives have celebrated the win, the majority's opinion is a narrow one. As such, states remain free to legislate other medical practices, such as surgery, in a way that requires sex-rejecting procedures. Still, the ruling is a step in protecting counselors seeking to provide biblical help to young people struggling with gender dysphoria. "Counselors walking alongside these young people shouldn't be limited to promoting state-approved goals like gender transition, which often leads to harmful drugs and surgeries," said Chiles. "The Supreme Court's ruling is a victory for counselors and, more importantly, kids and families everywhere."

House Introduces Bill to Protect Tax-Exempt Status of Religious Organizations
Last week, Congressman Blake Moore of Utah introduced the Fair Treatment of Religious Organizations Act of 2025, a bill that would protect religious organizations with beliefs or practices concerning marriage, sexuality, or gender identity. The bill would prevent the federal government from considering a religious organization's view on these topics when determining grants, contracts, or other tax benefits. A press release by Moore noted that religious organizations have faced legal uncertainty around their religious hiring and policy rights. For instance, the case *Bostock v. Clayton County* reinterpreted Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 to prohibit organizations from discriminating against an employee's perceived sexual orientation or gender identity. In addition, the Trump administration has sought to revoke Harvard University's tax-exempt status for its failure to comply with the administration's executive order on combating antisemitism. Without this bill, a future administration could try a similar tactic and attempt to revoke the tax-exempt status of a religious organization that has biblical views on marriage and sexuality. The AACS has endorsed the bill and released the following statement of support: "Congressman Blake Moore's legislation . . . safeguards the religious identity and

practices of organizations accessing federal programs. His bill makes clear a fundamental principle of the First Amendment that has been overlooked by many in our contemporary society: religious individuals and the organizations they establish must retain the freedom to practice their beliefs in the public square without having to compromise their fundamental liberties."

Student Loans Move to Treasury from Education Department

The Education and Treasury departments have signed an interagency agreement that transfers responsibility of ED's student loan portfolio to Treasury. Currently, ED oversees a nearly $1.7 trillion student loan portfolio, making ED the equivalent of the fifth-largest bank in the country. ED has historically relied on Treasury to manage that portfolio. For instance, Treasury already disburses the student loans and provides the income verification data that ED uses for the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). Under the new agreement, Treasury will collect student loans and manage ED's portfolio. First, Treasury will start collecting on defaulted student loan debt from the nearly 25% of borrowers in default. Then, it will manage the other loans, such as servicing non-defaulted loans. Eventually, Treasury will administer FAFSA. In a press release, Education Secretary Linda McMahon lauded the agreement as a commonsense, efficient solution. "By leveraging Treasury's world-renowned expertise in finance and economic policy, we are confident that American students, borrowers, and taxpayers will finally have functioning programs after decades of mismanagement," said McMahon. Some worry that the agreement will hurt borrowers. Aissa Canchola Bañez, policy director of Protect Borrowers, decried the agreement as "irresponsible, reckless, and bad news." Others celebrated the agreement as a win for borrowers and students. The Heritage Foundation released a statement that the agreement "is the most significant step that agency officials have taken so far to downsize and ultimately close the Education Department. This is a thoughtful, responsible approach to managing student loans."

Preacher Wins Case at Supreme Court

Last week, the Supreme Court handed a preacher a win in a unanimous decision, allowing him to sue his local government for violating his rights to religious liberty and free speech. The case, *Olivier v. City of Brandon*, began in 2019, when the city of Brandon, Mississippi, passed an ordinance that restricted protests during live events at the Brandon Amphitheater. Gabriel Olivier, a Christian and street preacher who used signs and loudspeakers in public, was cited for violating the ordinance in 2021. He paid a fine and later sought damages arguing that the ordinance violated the First and Fourteenth Amendments. A district court and the Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals ruled against him, arguing that a Supreme Court precedent in the case *Heck v. Humphrey* (1994) prevented Olivier from bringing a civil suit that could invalidate a prior conviction. The Supreme Court found that the *Heck* precedent did not apply because the relief that Olivier sought was "a purely prospective remedy" that had "nothing to do with Olivier's prior conviction." Justice Elena Kagan, writing for the Court, stated that the Court would not place Olivier in the "dilemma" of choosing whether to "flout the law and risk another prosecution, or else forgo speech he believes is constitutionally protected." With this decision, Olivier can proceed with his First Amendment lawsuit against his local government.

In Case You Missed It:

Weekly Market Update provided by Jeff Beach of the AACS Investment Team at Merrill Lynch

Practical Legal Help for Christian Schools: ADF Ministry Alliance

American Heroes Student Art Contest—Deadline May 1

Faith and Grades: Could Religion Be the Missing Piece in Students' Success?

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