

CHRISTIANS UNDER FIRE

Christians ordered to stop praying inside mall

Even told, "People who eat in the food court can't bow their heads"



(Courtesy Fox News)

Managers of a shopping mall in Dublin, Georgia, who told a group of visitors they were not allowed to pray in the facility – not even over their lunches in the food court – are starting to backtrack after headlines exposed the policies of the facility owned by [MCK Properties](#).

A report from [WMAZ-TV in Macon, Georgia](#), late Tuesday said the owners no longer “have an issue” with people praying “privately and quietly.” They say their ban is on “congregating, soliciting or disturbances.”

The Facebook page statement came after a group of mall walkers reported a different explanation. According to a [commentary from Fox News columnist Todd Starnes](#), whose latest book is “God Less America,” the “Dublin Girls Run” group had been using the mall for their walking.

But gathering in a circle recently to start their session with prayer, they reported to Starnes, they found a security guard barreling toward them, telling them prayer was not allowed. Starnes’ report came through Tammy Brantley, a “wife, a mom and an avid power walker.” “She’s also a person of deep faith in God.”

They have, the report said, “run road races dressed up like Chick-fil-A cows and superheroes.” “And it’s not all that unusual to see the ladies accessorizing their running attire with tutus and feather boas,” the report said. “The group was started to be healthy and to be spiritually healthy, too,” Starnes said Brantley told him. “I like to start off my runs with a prayer and end it with a prayer.”

It was just a few weeks back when they had gathered in the mall for a power walk. They formed a small circle and bowed their heads for prayer, Starnes said.

“But before one of the runners could say, ‘Lord Jesus,’ she was interrupted by a mall cop barreling down a corridor. ‘The security guard came running toward us

and said, 'You are not allowed to pray at the mall. That's against the policy,'" Brantley told Fox News.

When the women said they had prayed before without problems, the guard said there was a problem with another group "trying to proselytize shoppers." Starnes said the ladies thought the security guard was simply mistaken so they asked him to call the mall manager.

"The mall manager verified that prayer is not allowed at the mall because this is private property," she said, according to Starnes. Brantley said she then found out the restriction was worse than she thought.

"I said, sir, are you saying that people who eat in the food court can't bow their heads and pray?" she said. "He said, 'No ma'am.' That's exactly what he said."

News soon got out, putting pressure on the property owners. [The WMAZ report](#) included a statement from John Engler, MCK vice president.

"The Dublin Mall over the last week has been the subject of conversation throughout the community. Through meeting with some of the various people involved, some of the stories have merit while others have gone off the deep end and due to the sensitive issue have publically hampered the Dublin Mall. The Mall first and foremost has no issues or objection whatsoever with anyone of any religion denomination privately and quietly praying over there food before they eat or showing devotion towards their religion of choice provided it does not impose itself on others or take away from the overall shopping experience."

Brantley said her group wasn't violating the mall conduct code, which bans "disorderly conduct, or other disturbances which disrupt or endanger any patrons." The mall boasts on its website it is trying to be more than a mall.

"Through careful management, judicious planning and the cooperation of local government, the Dublin Mall has become something of an ad hoc community center, a place where people gather for performances, events and other gatherings important to the town," the managers explain. Starnes said the women hope one day to return to the mall.

"The Good Book encourages us to run a good race – to press on toward the goal. And I have no doubt that Tammy and her cloud of witnesses will continue to run their race with endurance," he said. "It's a difficult task in a nation that has become increasingly hostile to people of faith."

For supporters of the power walkers, more assurances may be needed.

The incident sparked a new Facebook page called "Pray Like Jesus," and organizers say they got a permit from the city for a prayer rally outside the mall from 6-7 p.m. Thursday.

Read more at <http://www.wnd.com/2014/08/women-ordered-to-stop-praying-inside-mall/#0rWU77CiE7vo4hbv.99>