

# Anti-gay activist plans protests

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Anti Homosexuality

## over Boyd County school group

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A Kansas minister known for his aggressive anti-gay rhetoric plans protests next month against a Boyd County High School gay-rights student group and what he says is weak opposition to the group among local pastors.

Fred W. Phelps, pastor of Westboro Baptist Church in Topeka, will lead pickets in Boyd County on Jan. 12 and 13, according to his daughter, Shirley Phelps-Roper, the church's attorney.

The pickets will target Boyd County High School's Gay-Straight Alli-

ance as well as the churches of pastors who oppose the alliance but have urged Phelps to stay away, Phelps-Roper said yesterday.

"It's not good enough to say I oppose the Gay-Straight Alliance. You need to tell them why they're wrong," Phelps-Roper said.

The Rev. Tim York, pastor of Heritage Temple Free Will Baptist Church, said he urged Phelps not to come to Boyd County because the county school board voted last week to ban all clubs from county schools, thereby keeping the alliance from meeting on school grounds.

Boyd County Sheriff Philip Sturgill made the same argument to Phelps in an e-mail message, saying that while

he opposed homosexuality he disagreed with Phelps' virulent rhetoric.

"We're afraid if Mr. Phelps shows up there could be trouble," Sturgill said in an interview.

Jenny Reese, whose daughter Lena is an alliance member at the school, said her daughter is frightened by the prospect of Phelps' protests.

"She's scared for her safety," Reese said.

Phelps was in Lexington last month to protest the baptism of quadruplets who were adopted by a gay couple. There were counter-protests, but no one was arrested.

Originally, Phelps' church planned to protest outside Boyd County High and the school district office on Jan.

3. But Phelps-Roper said yesterday that after receiving messages from local ministers and Sturgill asking him not to come, the group decided to revise its plans and spend two days protesting.

On Jan. 11, Phelps and his followers will protest the anti-discrimination policy at Marshall University in Huntington, W.Va., she said.

Lt. Tim Hogg of the Kentucky State Police in Ashland said Boyd County and school board attorneys are reviewing state law to determine whether Phelps can be prevented from protesting on school grounds. Hogg said churches are considered private property, although Phelps and his followers can protest on nearby

public property.

Bill Capehart, the district's superintendent, said he doesn't want Phelps on school property.

Meantime, the American Civil Liberties Union, which is representing the alliance, is studying legal options after the board's decision to ban all school clubs, said James Esseks, litigation director for the ACLU's lesbian and gay rights project.

Esseks said the decision is the first time in his experience that a school banned all clubs to prevent a gay-rights group from meeting.

Under the federal Equal Access Act, schools must let all noncurricular clubs meet on school grounds if they let any such club meet at school.