

## Constitutionality of prayer in school

It's been 50 years since the Supreme Court ruled in *Engel v. Vitale* that school-sponsored prayer was unconstitutional.

It was and is a wise decision, though much misunderstood by a great many. The court did not, as people often say, outlaw prayer in school. What is outlawed was state-sponsored prayer, dictated by the school administration or state.

There is a great difference. Students can and do lead prayer in school today, though not during class time when others might or might not want to take part. Sports teams often join in prayer before or after a game. Many kids pray in school, before meals, or maybe just before a big test.

What's missing is the prayer led by the principal or written by the state Board of Education that sometimes marked schools of yore. Many would say that's a good thing.

School prayer used to promote a pretty narrow view of God: Protestant, Christian, white-oriented, mainstream. OK for the children of white Protestants, we'd guess, but what about the others, the Catholics, the Jews, the Orthodox?

"Just write a prayer that everyone can agree on," someone will say. Easier said than done, however.

We've seen many examples of why state-sponsored or approved religion has no place in schools. In one town, a Baptist-sponsored troupe asked to put on a play at school. The principal allowed as how he didn't see the harm in it.

Next morning, though, a gaggle of angry Mormon parents was waiting outside his office. They saw the harm, or feared they did. One man's harmless play, it seems, is the next parent's heresy.

The funny thing is, Baptists as a whole usually get it. The Baptist church understands and backs separation of church and state right down the line.

The country as a whole is more observant of religious rights today. It's not that long ago when some public school districts were run by nuns or pastors because "no one else went to school there," or "no one cared."

But aren't we a nation founded by and for God-fearing men? Yes, for the most part, but these same founders saw the need for the Bill of Rights, protecting citizens from the government they were forming, guaranteeing certain rights.

The Constitution says the government shall not favor any "establishment of religion," nor interfere with the free exercise of religious rights. That means schools can't tell students when or how to pray.

They're still free to pray, and we ought to be thankful for that. The freedoms guarded and guaranteed by the First Amendment are the bedrock of our liberty. Anything – including school prayer – that threatens them needs to go. – *Steve Haynes*

On the  
Prairie Dog  
*Steve Haynes*



## A morning surprise of sweet rain

I was awakened Sunday morning by a strange sound. At first I couldn't imagine what it was. Then I asked Jim, "Is that rain I'm hearing?"

He said, "I don't know, let me look."

He opened our bedroom door to the balcony and said, "Sure 'nuf! It's raining."

It was beautiful. A nice gentle rain that left puddles in the street. It was early enough that no neighbors were up and I stepped out onto our front porch in my nightgown and drank in the smell. Nothing fresher and cleaner smelling than an early morning rain.

I would say "giddy" best describes everyone's mood in this part of the country. There's a smile a mile wide on every farmer's face. Whether this rain is too little too late or enough to save this year's corn crop remains to be seen. But for the moment, it just plain feels good, and that's enough for now.

-ob-

Our tomato plants are loaded. In fact, we've already had several vine-ripened

Out Back  
*Carolyn Plotts*



tomatoes. They were delicious, too. But we've got to quit eating them right out of the garden. We'll never have any for BLTs.

-ob-

Jim is running for the title of "King of the Honey-Do" list. This week alone he has changed out and/or installed four light fixtures; built and installed two more pull-out shelves for the kitchen cabinets; and made coffee three times. In my book that makes him a definite contender. Since he has no competition, he is a shoo-in to win.

When I was single I said I wanted a man who was "capable". Perhaps I didn't fully understand what that entailed, but I knew I wanted someone

who could do things; fix stuff; you know, be useful.

Wow! Did I get what I asked for and then some. So far, I haven't discovered one thing Jim Plotts can't do. He's an excellent carpenter; a good mechanic; an acceptable electrician; a decent plumber; he can dance; sing; mend his own overalls; cook (if he can fry it); play guitar; and quote scripture like a preacher.

If he's asked to do something he's never done before he won't say, "I can't do it," instead he'll say, "Let me study this out for a minute." Jim always sees the "how to", not the "why not."

The flip side, however, to a man who can do everything, is that he does. Jim is a man of multiple projects. He's happiest when he has many (some say too many) irons in the proverbial fire. So, unless you are a woman who can tolerate some projects taking a little longer than you would like, don't pray for a "capable" man. You just might get what you ask for.

## Crops have been devastated by brutal heat

Across the state Kansas farmers are looking skyward, praying for rain and some relief from the record heat and drought. An early spring and ideal planting season had row-crop producers feeling optimistic about the potential yield for this year's crop.

That enthusiasm has faded as we now realize the harvest for many Kansas farm families will be limited – or nonexistent. Kansas recorded one of the driest Junes ever and one of the hottest months in this state's history. While the western third of Kansas is blessed with irrigated crops, they are already feeling the brunt of the hot, dry weather, and the rest of the state is being devastated by this brutal heat.

Most farmers have some level of crop insurance and will recover a portion of their economic losses. Producers must remain proactive and begin working with their crop insurance agents immediately. This will ensure they receive the indemnities they are entitled to.

Kansas row-crop farmers are already making hard decisions based on the likelihood this drought will continue and grow. Some of these decisions include: is it time to take this crop out and salvage something? Is the crop already too far gone and should I leave what remains as residue? Should I hay what remains of my corn or milo? Do I need to divert some of my irrigation

Insight  
*John Schlageck*



and choose which fields I believe will still yield a crop?

Hard choices?

You bet; however, the key is to begin talking with your crop insurance agent about your individual situation.

"Make sure you're getting all your i's dotted and your t's crossed regarding your crop insurance policy," says Mark Nelson, Kansas Farm Bureau commodities director. "And remember, if you do decide to harvest your crops early, beware of prussic acid."

Prussic acid can cause livestock deaths. Ruminant animals (cattle and sheep) are more susceptible to prussic acid poisoning than non-ruminant animals because the ruminal microorganisms have enzymes which will release prussic acid in the animal's digestive tract.

Once plants containing prussic acid have been consumed by an animal, the toxin rapidly enters the blood stream and is transported throughout its body. Prussic acid inhibits oxygen utilization by the cells in the animal's body. In essence, the animal suffocates

With conditions shaping up like they are in Kansas, any number of common plants may accumulate large quantities of prussic acid (cyanogenic compounds). Corn, sorghums and related species readily accumulate these compounds.

Another potential problem that may be facing row-crop producers is aflatoxins. Aflatoxins are highly toxic chemicals produced by certain mold fungi. They're often associated with drought conditions during grain fill and the accompanying high daytime and warm nighttime temperatures, that are conducive to fungal invasion and aflatoxin production, Nelson says.

The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has established strict limits for the presence of aflatoxins which can impact the deliverability, use, price and insurance indemnities that farmers may receive for aflatoxin-contaminated grain.

"For crop insurance claims, aflatoxin tests must be done by a Risk Management Agency (RMA) approved testing facility," Nelson emphasizes. "Make sure to keep in touch with crop insurance agents. Let them know what your plans are before you take action if possible, and definitely before you cut, so an accurate appraisal can be made."

A farmer's biggest risk remains the weather. This fact is being hammered home in a big way again this year.



Thumbs up and congratulations to Shelbi McKenna on representing Kansas for compound archery at the National 4-H Shooting Sports in Grand Island, Neb. on June 17 through 22nd. Brought in.

Thumbs up and thanks to Steve Mathes for the thought provoking letter that expressed the thoughts of many people. Called in.

Call Dana for your next ad. 877-3361!

THE NORTON TELEGRAM

OFFICE HOURS:  
8 a.m.-5:30 p.m. Mon.-Thur.  
8 a.m.-5:00 p.m. Friday  
Phone: (785) 877-3361  
Fax: (785) 877-3732

E-mail:  
nortontelegram@nwkansans.com

STAFF  
Dana Paxton..... General Manager  
Advertising Director/  
email: dpaxton@nwkansans.com  
Carleen Bell..... Managing Editor  
cbell@nwkansans.com  
Dick Boyd..... Blue Jay Sports  
nortontelegram@nwkansans.com  
Michael Stephens..... Reporter  
Society Editor/Area Sports  
mstephens@nwkansans.com  
Vicki Henderson..... Computer Production  
Marcia Shelton..... Office Manager

ISSN 1063-701X  
215 S. Kansas Ave., Norton, KS 67654  
Published each Tuesday and Friday by  
Haynes Publishing Co., 215 S. Kansas Ave.,  
Norton, Kan. 67654. Periodicals mail postage  
paid at Norton, Kan. 67654.

Postmaster: Send address changes to Norton  
Telegram, 215 S. Kansas, Norton, Kan. 67654  
Official newspaper of Norton and Norton  
County. Member of the Kansas Press Association,  
National Newspaper Association, and the  
Nebraska Press Association

Nor'West Newspapers  
Dick and Mary Beth Boyd  
Publishers, 1970-2002

Kansas Press  
Association



Letters to the Editor and Thumbs Up:  
e-mail dpaxton@nwkansans.com  
or to write 215 S. Kansas Ave. 67654

