

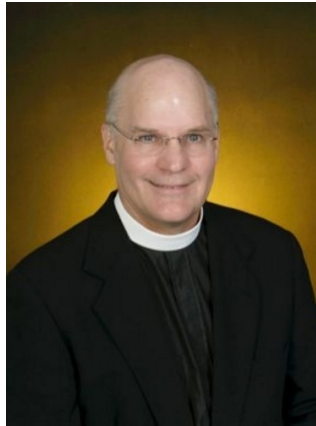


Written by [Dave Bohon](#) on June 20, 2012

Texas Town Defies Atheist Group, Reinststitutes Prayer at Government Meetings

A small Texas town has taken a bold stand for prayer and patriotism. [CBS News](#) reported that on June 12 the city council of Weatherford, a west-central Texas community, voted four to one to bring back the tradition of a regular invocation, as well as the Pledge of Allegiance to both the state and U.S. flags, following a 37-year absence of the rituals.

The move was pushed by the Parker County Ministerial Alliance, a local group of Protestant ministers, who said they were saddened by the nearly four-decade omission. According to the [Fort Worth Star-Telegram](#), the group has taken the responsibility of arranging for local religious leaders to offer the one-minute invocation at the council meetings, and has promised to allow leaders of other faiths in the area to participate if they wish.



The *Star-Telegram* noted that some residents had proposed a moment of silence instead of the prayer, which Father Scott Wilson (pictured at left), rector of [Weatherford's All Saints Episcopal Church](#), aggressively opposed before the council. "While we understand this effort to satisfy a variety of citizens — for us it's not adequate," testified Wilson, a member of the Ministerial Alliance. "We know that members of the city council pray privately before they begin their sessions and certainly that should be beneficial for those that pray. But a corporate prayer goes a great deal further; it becomes beneficial to the whole city."

Wilson emphasized that an invocation would demonstrate that Weatherford is a city under God. "Our city council is a pinnacle of leadership of Weatherford and effectively for all of Parker County," he said, explaining that "a prayer to God at this meeting is asking him to guide us, provide for us, preserve our culture, our families, our schools and indeed to bring prosperity to our lives." Wilson urged the council "not to falter under tyranny or bullying of the small minorities whose thoughts are so different than the majority of us."

Naturally, the atheist Freedom From Religion Foundation (FFRF) entered the fray, sending a letter to the city council admonishing its members that reinstituting the invocation may place the city on the wrong side of the debate over the supposed constitutionality of such prayers. Similarly, local resident Bobbie Narramore complained that the prayer would make those with no faith feel left out. "I am against an invocation," Narramore declared, as if reading from a page of the ACLU's talking points concerning the First Amendment. "I am for the separation of the church and state." He added that "we have Muslims living here. We have Jews living here. By having prayer, we're telling them, 'Forget you



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because you don't have a recognized church.'"

One council member, Mayor Pro-Tem Waymon Hamilton (pictured at right), who voted against the measure, expressed his fear over potential lawsuits filed by area residents recruited by the FFRF/ACLU axis. "If we do get into litigation over this, it will be the taxpayers that would in all likelihood pay for it," Hamilton warned. "Win, lose, or draw, the only one that wins is the lawyers." Hamilton insisted that he had nothing against prayer in general, saying that he often whispers one privately before council meetings. "I am not opposed to prayer," he said. "The Lord is the one who knows who prays." But, he added, "putting the taxpayers at risk of litigation is not prudent."

According to the [Weatherford Democrat](#), council member Jeff Robinson, who made the motion for the prayer-and-pledge addition, pointed out that the cities of Dallas and Fort Worth, as well as the U.S. Congress, open their sessions with prayer, a solid precedent that Weatherford should follow, he lobbied. "When I look at the fact that the Supreme Court of the United States has a prayer prior to starting each session, and the Senate and the House of Representatives, both in the United States and in Texas, have a prayer to each of their meetings, it's something that I would very much like to see us do," Robinson told his fellow council members. "Praying on your own is great, but when you pray as a group I think great things can happen."



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