



CREATING A COMMUNITY
VALUING DIVERSITY, EQUALITY
AND RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Citizens Project **FreedomWatch**

Jesus Camp, The First Amendment, and Religious Freedom

by Amanda Dooley

The First Amendment gives Americans unparalleled religious freedom by prohibiting the federal government from establishing a state religion, from preferring one religion to another, and from prohibiting the free exercise of religion. In the case of *McCreary County v. ACLU* in June of 2000, the Supreme Court ruled that displays of the Ten Commandments in two Kentucky courthouses were unconstitutional based on the First Amendment. Although the Ten Commandments are featured in Christianity, Judaism, and Islam, ACLU lawyers argued that federal endorsement of the Ten Commandments not only favors monotheistic religions over polytheistic religions, but also endorses religious adherence— infringing on citizens' rights to non-religious beliefs.

In this case, the Supreme Court illustrated that the misinterpretation of the First Amendment as "anti-religious" is, indeed, false. The continued separation of church and state is imperative to maintain religious freedom. The Supreme Court ruled narrowly (5-4) in this case, and, currently, America is still experiencing serious threats to church-state separation. For example, there are over 170 grant programs offered by federal

agencies to faith-based groups—that is, religious organizations that provide social services. Additionally, leaders among the Christian evangelical community, such as Focus on the Family's James Dobson, refuse to endorse politicians who do not profess their faith in Christ.

Rachel Grady and Heidi Ewing's documentary, *Jesus Camp*, is a revealing and beautifully crafted film about the growing movement within the religious right to raise children to challenge separation of church and state in America. This acclaimed 2006 documentary follows three children to Becky Fischer's "Kids on Fire" Pentecostal summer camp located just outside Devils Lake, North Dakota. In the documentary, children as young as five years old make it their mission to "reclaim America for Christ." In addition to attending daily sermons, children pray before a cardboard cutout of George W. Bush, invoke the Spirit to appoint "righteous judges," and listen to graphic anti-abortion lectures. This film shows the building of "God's Army" for America's culture war.

Please join Citizens Project for a screening of *Jesus Camp* followed by a brief discussion.

**Please join us for a FREE SCREENING
of the critically acclaimed
documentary *Jesus Camp***

**Tuesday, April 24
6:00 - 8:00pm**

Congregational Church of
Manitou Springs
103 Pawnee Ave.
(turn left onto High St. for parking)

**Thursday, April 26
6:00 - 8:00pm**

Max Kade Theater in
Armstrong Hall
Colorado College
14 E. Cache La Poudre St.

Co-sponsored by CC's Queer
Straight Alliance

**Saturday, May 5
1:30 - 3:30pm**

East Library
5550 N. Union Blvd