

## Church under fire



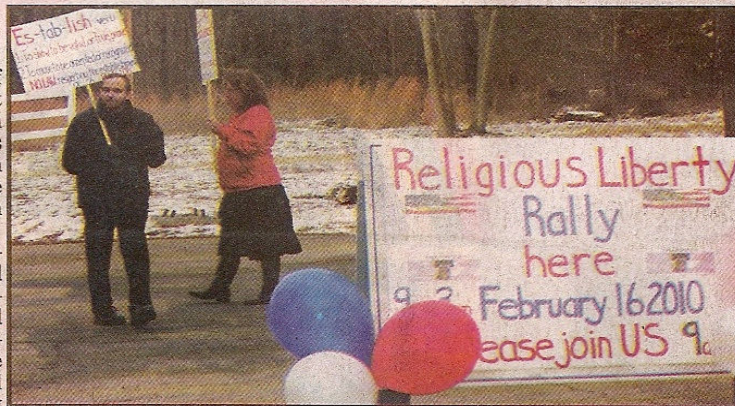
## Creation Seventh Day Adventist Church members protest court order

By **Jebb Johnston**  
Staff Writer

**GUYS, Tenn.** — Members of Creation Seventh Day Adventist Church watched Tuesday as a sign company stripped the letters spelling the name of the church from their building just across the state line on Old Highway 45 in Guys, Tenn.

Under the supervision of a constable, the sign company removed all signage from the old gas station-style canopy and then used spray paint to cover what remained. Religious materials were also confiscated, and several church members stood by holding signs of protest.

It all stems from a trademark infringement lawsuit filed by the Seventh-Day Adventist Church



Photos by Jebb Johnston

**John Orman with Nickels Signs & Graphics (top) paints over** what remains of the white lettering of the name of Creation Seventh Day Adventist Church in accordance with a court order. Assistant Pastor **Lucan Chartier** and other church members (above) carried signs of protest.

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against the Guys congregation which resulted in an injunction barring the church from using the Seventh-day Adventist name. The Creation Seventh Day Adventist Church formed 19 years ago and has been at its Guys location for about

eight years.

The church members feel they are victims of religious persecution.

"For us, it's a matter of religion and conviction to use the name," said Lucan Chartier, assistant pastor. "For Seventh-day Adventists, that name,

using it is actually part of the religion. Both we and the church that is suing us believes that."

In 1991, the Creation church notified the Seventh-day Adventist Church of its formation, its name and reasons for separating, according to Chartier.

"After 20 years, they finally decided to go after us," he said.

Chartier said the larger church's similar action against other churches prompted the formation of the Creation Seventh Day Adventist Church. He said the church used the trademark of the name to "try

and shut out any religion

that resembles theirs from using that name. We couldn't be members of a church that was doing that. We couldn't give our tithes and support to an organization that we thought was forcing people to violate their conscience."

The churches have some doctrinal differences. Prominent among them is the Creation church's belief in complete separation of church and state — an area where the trademark issue comes into play.

The plaintiff in the case is the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists. The defen-

dant is pastor Walter McGill, who church members said is in Africa doing mission work.

Court documents show the plaintiffs filed a motion for sanctions and permanent injunctive relief after the defendant "displayed an unwillingness to appear at several court-ordered mediation conferences." A magistrate judge concurred.

McGill has since been found in civil contempt stemming from the continued use of websites, signs and promotional materials that violate the injunction.

"They are trying to get an arrest warrant for him as soon as he comes back into the U.S.," said Chartier. "They are trying to get him extradited. They basically are trying to get all information on bank accounts, our web-

sites, anyone who may be in any way associated with this church, preaching its message in any capacity, and locking them down. So people are at this point either leaving the country or preparing to go to jail."

It is unclear what comes next for the church, which has had a congregation of 10 to 15.

"There's really nobody that has been attending for the last few weeks," said Chartier. "We're pretty scattered at this point."

But they are keeping in touch, and he believes they will have a future.

The defendant has been ordered to pay attorney's fees and costs of \$35,567 to the plaintiff.

"Obviously, we can't afford that," said Chartier.

Beyond the trademark question, he would like to see a court address whether the larger church's trademark is constitutional.

Signs and materials were also removed Tuesday from a free community counseling center the church operated in Corinth.