

Driscoll's Portland church met by protesters

by [Steve Beaven](#)

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PORTLAND, Ore. (RNS) Black-clad demonstrators gathered outside the Portland satellite branch of a Seattle megachurch on Sunday (Oct. 16) to protest the church's stance on homosexuality.

About 20 protesters lined up outside Mars Hill Church during the congregation's first Sunday morning services, carrying banners and shouting obscenities as churchgoers left when the service ended.

"Shame on you bigots," one woman yelled at worshippers as they left. "Shame on you homophobes. You're not welcome here. You're going to burn in hell."

The Portland church is an offshoot of Seattle's Mars Hill Church, led by senior pastor Mark Driscoll. Driscoll, whose church spans multiple campuses, preaches against homosexuality and once told his followers that yoga is "demonic."

Brad Salyers came to Mars Hill for the first time on Sunday with his wife and two young children. Salyers said the Bible teaches that homosexuality is a sin, but everyone is a sinner.

"We love homosexuals," Salyers said. "We love pot smokers. We love liars and thieves."

News of the church's arrival in Portland drew some opposition. Tim Smith, the lead pastor at Mars Hill, said Sunday that he had expected some sort of demonstration.

The protesters, some of whom wore kerchiefs to cover their faces, shouted profanities at adults and children. "That's not how we would go about it," Smith said afterward. "But they have the right to say what they want to say."