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The Star Press

WEEKEND

SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 16, 2025 | THESTARPRESS.COM

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Bygone Muncie!

Chris Flook

Muncie Star Press

USA TODAY NETWORK

# Magic City tapeworms and their many cures

In late April of 1880, the Muncie Daily Times wrote that Munsonian doctor William Egbert had removed a 46-foot-long tapeworm from an unnamed fellow citizen.

This was the first of many ghastly tapeworm reports I found in local newspapers from the two decades before 1900.

Tapeworms were a common human parasite up through the late 19th century. Before the advent of food safety laws and federal meat inspections, undercooked animal products — especially pork and beef — offered tapeworms a place at the dinner table, so to speak.

Several species can infect humans, but *Taenia solium* (pork tapeworms) and *Taenia saginata* (beef tapeworms) are the most common. The infection, called taeniasis, occurs after eating raw or undercooked meat containing a larval cyst. Once ingested, the larva matures into a long, flat worm in the intestine.

Tape-worms can live for years in your gut, feasting on every delicious meal, Taco Bell and any other tasty treats you consume. Left unchecked, some worms can grow to several yards in length.

*Taenia solium* is especially terrifying. When humans ingest the eggs of a pork tapeworm, the embryos, called oncospheres, burrow into the intestinal wall. Some travel through the bloodstream and can lodge in muscle, brain, eyes or other tissues causing cysticercosis.

Thankfully, today we have modern antiparasitic drugs that rid the body of intestinal or tissue infections.

But 130 years ago, our forebears had nothing but quack cures and prayers to drive out their tapeworms.

In August 1887, the Daily Times reported that Frank Spear from Anderson expelled no less than an 18-yard-long tapeworm after an itinerant “witch doctor” administered a concoction to purge the parasite. Spear had been suffering from ill health for a long time and never found a cure.

After downing the elixir, the Times wrote that Professor W.H. Jonts “extracted 55 feet of tapeworm.” Spear was reported to be “the happiest man in town.” But sadly, a week later he had a debilitating stroke. It’s unclear in the records whether it resulted from the worm itself or the cure.

In April of 1893, local doctor Oscar Reynolds removed a 28-foot tapeworm from Munsonian Stella Coss.

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# Religious right pursues agenda

Once-fringe Christian movement gains influence in state

Alexandria Burris and Kayla Dwyer Indianapolis Star | USA TODAY NETWORK

When Indiana lawmakers banned transgender health care options in 2023, it was a victory for Christian conservatives who’d been advocating for the law for years. • But for Ryan Welch’s family, it launched a nightmare. Welch and his wife, Lisa, are the parents of a transgender son who had socially transitioned at 14 and was receiving hormone therapy when the law took effect.

The Indianapolis family joined the ACLU and other families in suing the state, fearful their son’s depression and anxiety would return if he were forced to detransition. They lost the battle in court. So they sought the care out of state.

Fast forward to 2025, and Lt. Gov. Micah Beckwith intimated at an Indianapolis convention for religious conservatives that wins like these are only the beginning.

“The Lord spoke to my heart, saying, ‘Micah, Indiana needs to remember that the battle is not over,’” said Beckwith, a pastor. “2024 with the Trump administration was not the finish line. There’s a battle that will continue to rage.”

That battle is a spiritual one, and it’s for the soul of the nation, conservatives like Beckwith say.

Indiana has seen its share of both Christian leaders and “culture war” legislation spread by conservative think tanks to red states.

Lately, a set of ideas that pushes Christianity further into public life — based on the belief that church and state shouldn’t be separate —

has taken root. Considered by some to be fringe or extreme, rhetoric embracing the idea has become more prominent in politics.

It reflects a growing national political movement that academics call Christian nationalism, which is based on the belief that the United States was founded as a Christian nation and its laws should prioritize that religious perspective in governance. In the background, the U.S. Supreme Court has been increasingly ruling in favor of religious conservatives since President Donald Trump made three court appointments.

It’s seen at the state level not only through the election of Beckwith, a pastor and flippantly self-professed Christian nationalist, but also through an uptick in model legislation injecting religion into public policy governing schools, transgender

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