

Christians Fight Back About Nixed Nativity Scene in Ohio

Christians are pushing back in one Ohio city after an atheist group from out of state threatened to sue if city officials allowed a nativity scene to be placed on the courthouse lawn during the Christmas season.

The Record-Courier reports the nativity scene, which was displayed on the lawn of the Ravenna Courthouse last year, drew several complaints, including a letter from the Freedom from Religion Foundation, (FFRF) an organization based in Madison, Wisconsin, who has threatened and/or filed lawsuits against several municipalities across the country over the separation of church and state.

Ravenna Mayor Frank Seman announced during the Thanksgiving weekend that no nativity scene would be displayed at the courthouse this year. He said he didn't want the city to be dragged into court.

Approximately 40 to 50 members of Ravenna's Bethel Baptist Church responded Saturday night by protesting the mayor's decision along the city's Main Street, holding signs and singing Christmas carols and hymns together.

"We would like to have the nativity scene come back on the courthouse lawn," David Ballert, the church's pastor told *The Record-Courier*. "I'm here with my people because we care very much about the Lord Jesus Christ ... I believe Ravenna is a great town. I believe that a town deserves to have Jesus Christ in it."

Ballert told the newspaper his members would return to carry on the protest on Dec. 22. The group's goal is to get permission from "the powers that be" to set up the nativity scene at the courthouse.

The mayor told the newspaper the letter from the atheist organization was not the reason for nixing the display this year. He said local residents also called him about the display, reminding him that he needed to uphold the Constitution. They also were concerned the city might get sued, he added.

“Everybody driving by seems to be saying ‘hello’ to us and ‘Merry Christmas’ ... I have no doubt the people are behind what we’re doing here,” Ballert said.

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