

City Prohibits Family From Holding Bible Study on Its Own Property

Scott and Terri Fetterolf have owned their 32-acre farm for about two years. They also have a yarn and wool shop, sell fresh produce, flowers and other goods, provide educational classes and host private events like bridal showers and prayer groups. But their freedom to worship on their own property has now been called into question.

They were served a cease-and-desist order late last year by the borough of Sewickley Heights claiming the “farm was being used improperly as a place of worship, a place of assembly and as a commercial venue and ‘special studio or school,’” according to the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*.

The borough wants the Fetterolfs to pay \$500 each for permits for all of their activities in order to continue them.

Jeremy Samek is senior counsel for the Independence Law Center, an arm of the Pennsylvania Family Institute. He told CBN News his organization is representing the Fetterolfs, and what’s happened to them violates their constitutional rights.

Samek says placing these sorts of requirements on the Fetterolfs—or anyone for that matter—is illegal.

“What they’re doing here is they are requiring them to make a request with the zoning board and get permission to hold a Bible study ... require them to go through a public hearing to receive permission ... and that kind of prior restraining is unconstitutional and infringing on their right to freely exercise their religion,” Samek told CBN News.

Samek says they’re being forbidden to hold not only Bible

studies, but church staff meetings, retreats or even religious fundraisers by putting them in the category of a place of worship. He said, for example, a youth group of 30 students couldn't come to the farm and sing religious songs, but the same group of kids could have a graduation party and play music without restriction. {eo}

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