

Cease and Desist: Town Demands Family Stop Hosting Bible Studies

The owners of a Pennsylvania farm have been ordered by the Sewickley Heights Borough to cease and desist holding Bible studies on their private property.

Borough leaders accused Scott and Terri Fetterolf of improperly using their 35-acre farm as a place of worship, a place of assembly and as a commercial venue.

They were served a cease-and-desist order in October 2017, the Post-Gazette reported.

The Independence Law Center filed a federal lawsuit on behalf of the farmers against the borough alleging an egregious violation of the U.S. Constitution.

According to the lawsuit, the Fetterolfs were threatened with fines of \$500 per day plus court costs for having Bible studies at their home, having meetings where religious songs are sung, conducting any religious retreats for church leaders or seminary students or conducting any religious fundraisers.

“The borough has no business overseeing a group of people reading and discussing a book together on private property—even if that book is the Bible,” attorney Randall Wenger said in a statement.

The lawsuit accuses the government leaders of violating religious freedom, freedom of speech, freedom of assembly and equal protection.

“Government should not target religious activities for punishment, particularly when similar secular activities are permitted,” attorney Jeremy Samek said. “In America, no

government can categorically ban people from assembling to worship on one's property."

To that point, the lawsuit alleges the borough allows other activities and gatherings—ranging from political rallies to a Harry Potter event.

So if government leaders allow muggles to cavort in Sewickley Heights Borough, they should afford the same rights to Christians gathering for Bible study on private property.