

Christian Street Preacher Arrested for Speaking Against Homosexuality Wins Settlement

A Christian street preacher who was wrongfully arrested by police and held in custody for over 19 hours has received £13,000 (about \$21,600) compensation in an out-of-court settlement.

Greater Manchester Police had accused 57-year-old John Craven of public-order offenses after two teenage boys approached him in September 2011 and asked what he thought of homosexuals.

Craven responded by quoting the Bible's stance on homosexuality but said that "whilst God hates sin, He loves the sinner."

The teenagers then kissed in front of him and taunted him with suggestive sexual acts.

Craven was arrested by Police Constable Alistair McKittrick for a public-order offense after the pair told the officer they felt insulted by Craven's comments.

He was not offered food or water until, after almost 15 hours, he was given a bowl of cereal and a microwave meal following a complaint to the police from his friend.

Craven also says he was denied access to medication for his rheumatoid arthritis.

Craven, who has been street preaching for seven years, says, "I never intended to cause anyone harassment, alarm or distress. In fact, quite the opposite. I preach the gospel, which means good news and the love of God for all.

"The actions of the police have left me feeling nervous and

anxious. I found the whole episode extremely distressing.

“It appears that the actions of the police were calculated to give me and other street preachers the impression that we could not preach the gospel in public without breaking the law and if we did we would be arrested.”

Craven will receive £13,000 (about \$21,600) as compensation for wrongful arrest, false imprisonment and breach of his human rights.

Under the European Convention on Human Rights, people have the freedom to manifest their religion (Article 9) and freedom of expression, which includes the freedom to impart information and ideas without interference by a public authority (Article 10).

The total cost for Greater Manchester Police, including both parties' legal bills, will be over £50,000 (about \$83,200).

The settlement comes a few days before the case was due in court.

The Christian Institute supported Craven's case through its Legal Defence Fund.

Colin Hart, director of the Christian Institute, says, “Nobody should face 19 hours in custody for simply answering a question about their beliefs.

“The disgraceful way in which Mr. Craven was treated fell well below what the public deserve. In terms of the infringement of religious liberty, it was one of the worst cases we have ever dealt with.”

“Freedom of expression is a very basic human right,” Hart continues. “The very foundations of our liberty depend upon it. I hope that Greater Manchester Police learn lessons for the future from this case and make every effort to ensure that it never happens again.

"I am delighted for Mr. Craven that a settlement has been reached."