

School District Threatens to Call Police Over Bible Giveaway

A public school district in Illinois sent a “cease and desist” letter to an unnamed person who gave away Bibles to boys and girls on a public street owned by the district.

“This individual was warned that law enforcement would be called should he or any affiliated persons come onto the School District campus for the purpose of distributing Bibles to students,” an attorney for the La Harpe Community School District no. 347 wrote in a letter to the Freedom From Religion Foundation.

The Freedom From Religion Foundation, a Wisconsin-based group of atheists, agnostics and free-thinkers, had filed a complaint with the district over two issues regarding religion at La Harpe Elementary School.

The first involved flyers that Principal Lila McKeown had reported distributed to teachers at staff meetings.

The flyers referenced Christian holidays like Easter and Christmas and included Bible passages.

“Easter is the celebration of God’s greatest gift—salvation through Jesus Christ,” one of the messages read. “Easter blessings! May you feel Christ’s Love in your Heart & be filled with his Peace & Joy this Easter Season.”

“Isaiah 9:6-7 (“For unto us is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,” read another message.

The Freedom From Religion Foundation accused the principal of using her position “to promote her personal religion to

teachers and students.”

The school district said they have taken steps to eliminate Bible verses from future staff flyers.

“Principal McKeown will no longer be placing Bible verses in any staff communication or any other School District correspondence or communications in the future,” the district’s attorney wrote in a letter to FFRF.

The other issue involved unnamed individuals who gave away free Bibles to students on April 20. The out-of-town agitators accused the Gideons of being behind the Bible giveaway.

The Gideons, an international ministry that provides Bibles to school children, hotels and other areas, did not return calls seeking comment.

“La Harpe Elementary may not allow Bible distributions on school property,” the FFRF attorney wrote to the district. “It is unconstitutional for public school districts to permit Gideons to distribute Bibles as part of the public school day.”

The district explained that there’s a roadway that splits the grade school campus in half. Up until 2013, the city owned and maintained the road. And while the community still commonly views it as a city roadway, it is, in fact, a school district roadway.

While the district cannot ascertain where the Bibles were distributed, the attorneys believe it happened on an area along the roadway.

““Public schools have a constitutional obligation to protect the rights of conscience of young and impressionable students,” the FFRF wrote.

The district responded swiftly—vowing to call the police should anyone come onto the campus to distribute Bibles.

“This individual was clearly informed that North D Street is a part of the School District campus and cannot be used for Bible distribution activities,” the district’s attorney wrote.

So let that sink in for just a moment—a public school sent a cease and desist letter to someone who was giving children a copy of the Good Book. And they threatened to call the police.

That’s what a war on religious liberty looks like, America.