

Was It Anti-Christian Bigots or Ignorant Educators Who Made Believing Boy Cry?

It's almost Easter, but an incident that occurred just before Valentine's Day crossed my desk—and it's got me fired up.

A little boy cried after a Nazareth, Pa., teacher confiscated his Valentine's Day cards because they contained religious messages and a Bible verse about Jesus, a lawsuit filed this week in federal court alleges.

Imagine that. Jesus was not welcome in Nazareth. You can't make this stuff up, folks—as documented in my upcoming new book, *God Less America*.

Alliance Defending Freedom (ADF) filed a federal lawsuit against the Nazareth Area School District on behalf of Donald and Ellen Abramo and their son. They claim a teacher and the principal at Floyd R. Shafer Elementary School violated their son's constitutional rights.

They allege that the little boy was prohibited from distributing St. Valentine's Day cards to his classmates because the cards contained a sentence about the religious history of the holiday along with the Bible verse John 3:16.

"To single out a faith-based message for censorship is exactly the type of hostility to religion that the First Amendment forbids," ADF attorney Jeremy Tedesco says.

The school district did not return numerous calls seeking comment. A spokesman also declined to comment to the local newspaper.

The Alliance Defending Freedom lawsuit is jaw-dropping. The school was apparently so hostile to religion that the Abramos'

son was scared to pray over his meals because “he is afraid of getting in trouble.”

In early February, Ellen Abramo received a letter from her son’s teacher with instructions about the distribution of “Friendship Day” cards (also known as Valentine’s Day). It seems that Floyd R. Shafer is one of those “politically correct” public schools.

The note also instructed parents to avoid attaching candy in the cards.

“Please remember not to attach anything other than non-edible treats or approved snack items to the Valentines,” the instructions read. See? It really is one of those “politically correct” public schools.

So instead of candy, the first-grader and his older siblings decided to include a message about the history of St. Valentine.

“St. Valentine was imprisoned and martyred for presiding over marriages and for spreading the news of God’s love,” the message read. “In honor of St. Valentine’s Day, I want you to know that God loves you!!!”

The card also included a Bible verse, John 3:16.

When the day came to distribute the cards, the boy’s teacher “became concerned about the religious message,” the lawsuit states.

The teacher immediately delivered the cards to the principal—identified in the lawsuit as William Mudlock.

“Principal Mudlock reviewed the cards and determined that, because of their religious nature [the boy] would not be allowed to distribute them,” the lawsuit states.

The principal then directed that the religious messages be

removed from the cards, and the cards were then placed in a bin. Mudlock believed the child was guilty of “proselytizing” his religious faith.

Boys and girls were able to distribute cards that included images of a skull and toy guns, but the card that included a message about Jesus was deemed to be offensive.

Later that afternoon, Mrs. Abramo called the school searching for answers. The principal reiterated that the cards could not be distributed because of their religious nature. He said the cards might be “offensive” to someone, the lawsuit states.

He also claimed the school was prohibited from giving students any religious materials. Well, that’s rich, because the school wasn’t passing out the cards—the little boy was.

In spite of Mrs. Abramo’s pleas, the school refused to back down—leading the little boy to break down in tears.

“He was very sad,” Tedesco told me. “It’s a terrible message to send to kids. There were cards with guns and skeletons, yet his religious beliefs are taboo?”

The Abramos, who are Catholic, were not quite ready to let the incident slide by. So they contacted the school superintendent (the same one who won’t return my telephone calls). He didn’t return their calls either.

Instead, the school district’s attorney replied—a guy by the name of Gary Brienza. All I can say is brace yourself for what he said.

“Mr. Brienza proceeded to tell the Abramos that under the U.S. Constitution there is both a ‘freedom of religion’ and a ‘freedom from religion,’” the lawsuit states.

“He claimed that the Constitution prohibits a person from imposing their religious beliefs on someone else; therefore, the school district can restrict a student from distributing

religious materials,” the lawsuit further states.

I’m not sure what law school Brienza attended, but it might be a good idea for somebody to subpoena his constitutional law class grades.

I’m not sure if we’re dealing with a bunch of ignorant educators or a bunch of anti-Christian bigots. Neither bodes well for people of faith in the town of Nazareth.

It really takes a special kind of stupid to get worked up over a Valentine’s Day card. Pardon me, I meant to say Friendship Day card.

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