

Portland Child Evangelism Fellowship Under Fire for Preaching to Kids About Sin

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PORTLAND, Ore. -- A chapter of a nationally-recognized Christian group that seeks to reach children with the gospel of Jesus Christ is under fire for teaching kids the biblical doctrine of sin and eternal judgment, in addition to sharing about the love and mercy of God.

The Portland chapter of Child Evangelism Fellowship (CEF) is facing resistance from some area residents as they conduct voluntary summer camps in the area and plan on hosting after-school Bible studies in local public schools. The problem? CEF teaches children that each person is a sinner in need of the Savior.

Those who oppose the group assert that because of this, CEF does not present “Jesus loves you” mainstream Christianity, and claim that the organization is “hardcore evangelical fundamental.”

“They pretend to be a mainstream Christian Bible study when in fact they’re a very old school fundamentalist sect,” resident Kaye Schmitt told local television station *KATU*.

Robert Aughenbaugh also told reporters this week that preaching to children about sin might give them feelings of fear and shame.

Aughenbaugh, Schmitt and others have organized a group called Protect Portland Children, which seeks to speak out against CEF’s message and influence parents not to allow their children to attend its events. It has set up a Facebook page that has so far generated over 800 likes. It’s profile photograph is of a child holding a sign that reads “I am not a sinner.”

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“[The] curriculum teaches young children that they’re born sinners, bound for eternity in hell unless they obey the club’s teachings,” the group asserts.

“Before the Portland public schools allow ‘The Good News Club’ to use school facilities or to promote their activities on campus it would seem appropriate to allow mental health professionals to further investigate the activities of this group,” wrote Chuck Currie of the United Church of Christ in a recent blog post about the matter.



But CEF says that it is not teaching anything outside of the basic and fundamental truths of the gospel—and that mankind must understand the bad news to know why the good news is so good.

“Listen, the message of the gospel the teaching of the core Christian tenets of the Christian faith that have been taught for 2,000 years in the Bible is what we’re teaching,” CEF Vice President of Ministries Moises Esteves told local television station *KOIN*. “There’s nothing new here.”

The group has partnered with over 30 area churches to present its evangelical outreach to youth in Portland.

“We do teach about sin,” Esteves stated, “[But] we’re not nasty. We’re not high pressure. We’re not negative, but we teach what the Bible teaches that every human being is a sinner in need of a savior.”

Reporters observed the group in action on Wednesday, singing John 3:16 with the children in attendance, which reads, “For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.”

Child Evangelism Fellowship, founded in 1937, is headquartered in Warrenton, Missouri, and has approximately 400 offices nationwide. It offers several Bible-based clubs for children, which according the ministry website, are “fast-paced, one-hour programs [that] are designed to bring the gospel of Christ to children on their level in their environment.”