Devil Worshippers Threaten Burns High School, Hope Community Church and Pastor Jeremy Peeler!!! Report by Robert A. Williams

Folks, the Freedom From Religion Foundation "Devil Worshippers" out of Madison, Wisconsin are at it again threatening Cleveland County Schools. This time focusing their threats on Burns High School, Hope Community Church (a Christian Church temporarily located at 232 Main Street in Lawndale) and Hope Community Church Pastor Jeremy Peeler.

The Devil Worshippers have issued a Press Release and a Letter to CCS Attorney Colin Shive advertising their threats. They sent their Press Release and Letter Directly to me for some unknown reason. Correctly thinking I would publish it. Since the School Board has not informed the public for the past month, that is exactly what I am doing. Informing the public.

The Press Release and the threatening letter are shown below. I recommend that everybody read both very closely. I will not be adding any arguendo, comment, evaluations or anything else in this article. Please read the Press Release and Letter and form your own opinion. I will provide MY thoughts in a follow-up article. In the meantime, please feel free to send in your comments without any coaxing from me. It is time you Cleveland County folks learned to think for yourselves.

> *Freedom From Religion Foundation (FFRF) Press Release-Feb 26, 2021*
> *Sever tie-up with church, FFRF urges N.C. school district*
> *Print*

February 26, 2021



Terminate your unconstitutional teamwork with a local church, the Freedom From Religion Foundation is insisting to a North Carolina school district.

Burns High School (in Lawndale, N.C.) is reportedly working with Hope Community Church to help the church attract students. The church is building a new campus across from the high school, and district staff members have been directly communicating with church leaders about how the church can "minister and benefit" district staff and students. A local complainant informs FFRF that the church intends to become an everyday part of the school by including a gym for school sports teams to use, a banquet hall available for school use and areas for teachers to hold meetings. The church will apparently also be building a pool for the school's swim team if space allows. There is even talk about allowing students in special occupational education to earn credit by working on church facilities.

Hope Community Church is explicit in its religious mission: "We want everyone who we interact with to be able to live life in community, with Jesus Christ and with others. (Matt. 22:37-39)." It accomplishes this mission by "getting people involved in Community Groups where they can build

relationship through fellowship, prayer, and conversation," which ultimately furthers its primary goal, which is "to build relationships that help spread the gospel." In all the discussions of this new partnership FFRF is not aware of any discussions of potential safeguards that will protect students and staff members from proselytizing.

Partnering directly with a church to entice students to visit a church where they will inevitably be proselytized is an egregious constitutional violation, FFRF is emphasizing to Cleveland County Schools.

"As you are aware, the district cannot allow its schools to be used as recruiting grounds for churches," FFRF Staff Attorney Chris Line writes to the district's legal counsel. "It is well settled that public schools may not advance or promote religion. It is inappropriate and unconstitutional for the district to offer religious leaders unique access to its students and to work with those leaders to entice its students to join the church, which signals school endorsement of religion."

Courts have repeatedly struck down public school practices that affiliate such schools with religious groups and religious instruction, FFRF adds. The partnership between Hope Community Church and Burns High School impermissibly advances religion, communicates a message of school district endorsement of religion and is marked by excessive entanglement between the school district and the church.

Even if participation in school-sponsored events at the church would be voluntary, this is still unconstitutional, FFRF underscores. Courts have summarily rejected arguments that voluntariness excuses a constitutional violation.

In order to respect the rights of conscience of its students and staff members and to avoid potential legal liability, Cleveland Community Schools must immediately cease any collaborative efforts with Hope Community Church, FFRF concludes.

"The church's attempt to attract students, especially athletes, reeks of foul play," says FFRF Co-President Annie

Laurie Gaylor. “The school district should be putting a stop to such practices, not encouraging them.”

FFRF is a national nonprofit organization with more than 33,000 members and several chapters across the country, including several hundred members and a chapter in North Carolina. Its purposes are to protect the constitutional principle of separation between state and church, and to educate the public on matters relating to nontheism.

The Freedom From Religion Foundation, based in Madison, Wis., a 501(c)(3) nonprofit educational charity, is the nation’s largest association of freethinkers (atheists, agnostics), and has been working since 1978 to keep religion and government

Attachment 1 Warning Letter-Burns HS and Hope Baptist Church