

# Unified boots out church over flier

## Sermons on sex deemed 'obscene'; parents complain

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The Rev. Dave Nelson just wanted to talk about sex. And porn. And homosexuality.

But he won't be doing it at Nash Elementary School.

The Great Lakes Church, a new church which has rented space at Nash for four weeks, lost its permit late last week after sending a colorful flier that proclaimed, "Thank God for Sex."

The flip side listed Nash as the location for the service, and a series of topics scheduled over the next five weeks, including:

- Great Sex (Bedroom: From Battleground to Playground)
- Sexy and Single (Why God Doesn't Care About Your Virginity)
- Sex Secrets (Porn, Homosexuality and Stuff Like That)

The Kenosha Unified School District called the flier obscene, disruptive and a violation of Policy 1330, which covers renting Unified space to private organizations.

Nelson said he was stunned at the outcome, and was just trying to attract non-church-going Christians to a new kind of service, while dealing with topical issues. The flier also advertised "loud music, a casual atmosphere, short services, and fun for kids."

For now, the church, which has 300 members, has moved its 10 a.m. Sunday service to the Parkway Chateau at the Brat Stop, and hopes to have a more permanent location by Feb. 8.

In an e-mail sent to parents, Nash Principal Marty Pitts said, "Please understand clearly that neither our Nash School family nor the Kenosha Unified School District had any involvement in the creation or advertising of the event promoted in Great Lakes Church's flier and Web site. It is important to both our Nash PTA and me that our Nash School family clearly understands this."

School officials said they were inundated with complaints after the fliers hit mailboxes Wednesday and Thursday.

"For us, it's not about violating their freedom of speech," Pitts said. "It's the way it was communicated to the public. We should have had an opportunity to see the flier to make sure we were comfortable with the way the school was represented.

"This was a violation in terms of the way it was communicated to the public, and it led the public, in some way, to think Nash was connected, and we are not connected in any way, shape or form, and had no knowledge of this."

Nelson said the district misunderstood the flier, and he's never had problems with similar advertisements in other communities over the last 12 years, including when he rented school space in Seattle.

"I am stunned by this," he said. "Really, we're just trying to reach out to people who don't go to church. We recognize that if we advertised a study on the book of Leviticus, we wouldn't interest anybody. We wanted to hit topics of interest to all of us, and obviously we hit a nerve. There is no bigger subject than sex.

"We were going to talk about this from the point of Scripture," he added. "What is God's point of view on this stuff? In over 13 years as a pastor, I've seen marriages destroyed because of porn. I've seen marriages destroyed because couples are afraid to talk about sex. I keep asking myself, 'How many more centuries are we going to let Elizabethan England handle the way we talk about sexuality?'"

He said he was notified of the termination Thursday night and was told the flier was obscene and pornographic.

Superintendent Joe Mangi said that was just the opinion of one person at the Education Support Center, and the real issue was it was disruptive to the school and the community.

"The principal and the secretary were handling phone calls all afternoon. We were inundated with phone calls and complaints at the ESC. The flier was provocative and offensive to our district. Like any large school district, we deal with issues of teen pregnancy, and I'm not about to support something that sends mixed messages to our teenagers."

Mangi has a meeting scheduled with Nelson Monday morning, but said he doesn't anticipate changing his stance or allowing the church to rent from Unified in the future.

"We have had a very good relationship with the school district and that principal, and we want to keep that," Nelson said. "If we could get back into the Kenosha school district again, that would be great, but I don't foresee that happening in the immediate future.

"My main goal in meeting with them is to build a solid relationship. We didn't come here to work against the school or against the community."