

# Virginia Couple Threatened With Eviction for Hosting Bible Study Fight Back



A woman reads from the Book of Joshua during the 27th Annual U.S. Capitol Bible Reading Marathon in Washington, May 2, 2016.

A couple threatened with eviction from their Virginia-based senior living community for hosting a Bible study have gotten the support of a conservative legal group to fight the decision.

In July, the Community Realty Company sent a notice to Kenneth and Liv Hauge, who live at the Evergreens at Smith Run in Fredericksburg, informing them that they must either halt their Bible study or be evicted by Aug. 31.

The First Liberty Institute sent a letter to an attorney representing CRC and the Evergreens on Thursday demanding that the Hagues be allowed to continue their Bible study.

First Liberty General Counsel Hiram Sasser penned the letter, which argued that the actions taken against the couple are a violation of the Fair Housing Act and that the property owners had “a long record of obstructing and stifling residents’ religious beliefs.”

“First, when the Evergreens, through its manager, approved Hauge’s Community Room reservation request for the Bible study, it refused to allow Hauge to call the event a ‘Bible Study.’ Instead, it required him to refer to it as a ‘Book Review,’” wrote Sasser.

“Second, in 2017 the Evergreens refused to reimburse the resident social committee for an agreed-upon portion of expenses associated with a monthly resident social dinner because a resident briefly and audibly said grace over the meal.”

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Sasser demanded a response from CRC and the Evergreens no later than Aug. 30, or else his organization was going to pursue all possible legal actions.

“Evicting elderly residents from their home for holding a Bible Study is not only outrageous, it’s illegal,” said Lea Patterson, associate counsel for First Liberty in a statement released Thursday.

“It’s frightening that a management company would use the threat of eviction to stop residents from meeting together to discuss any issue, let alone their faith.”

A semi-retired Lutheran minister who has resided at the Evergreens with his wife since January 2017, Hauge began holding a Wednesday evening Bible study at an on-site community room.

On July 23, the Hagues received a “Notice to Cure Default or Quit” letter from

their landlord, informing them that they had to cease holding the Bible study or face eviction.

According to the notice, their Bible study “has caused, and continues to cause, serious and substantial disturbances with other residents in the community.”

These included allegations that the weekly study involved “operating an unauthorized business” and “interfering with other residents’ use of the community facilities.”

“Landlord has received a series of complaints over the past several months regarding your conduct at the community,” read the notice.

“Landlord has also learned that you show religious films on Sunday evenings, followed by a group discussion on the religious film. This activity has resulted in complaints to Landlord similar to those related to the Bible study class.”

The landlord stressed in the notice it was not coming due to the Christian beliefs of the Hauges nor was it “requesting that you cease practicing your religion.”

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