

March 12, 2018

Dear Representatives,

The clergy of Christians Uniting, an ecumenical group representing congregations located in the small towns surrounding Norvelt, Mt. Pleasant Township are deeply concerned with the escalation of threats of gun violence in the wake of the massacre at the Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida on February 14 of this year. In the two-week period from February 19 through March 2, we have seen every school district in the surrounding area cancel classes or dismiss early in at least one of their buildings because a threat was discovered. This has caused various levels of concern among the families in our congregations who work at and/or attend public schools.

Our concern goes deeper than the current gun debate occurring in the legislature of our commonwealth and throughout the county. We see the issues in our schools as a symptom of a growing lack of respect for life. Such respect for life has been further eroded by the cultural relativism that teaches competing truths, that there is no right or wrong, and a growing intolerance toward those in positions of authority who attempt to teach what is right or wrong.

We maintain that the Bible is true in all matters of faith. It is true that every life is a precious gift from God. The Bible teaches that God is the creator of all things, including the gift of life (Genesis 1:1-2:3). The Ten Commandments further outline God's desire governing our relationship with Him and with our neighbor.

One of the ways we have been addressing concern for children in the Mt. Pleasant Area School District, specifically at Norvelt Elementary, is through an afterschool program sponsored and funded by Christians Uniting and the Norvelt Union Church. At the beginning of each school year parents are welcome to sign their children up for the afterschool program held every Monday that school is in session from mid-September through Easter. This is a voluntary program.

From 3:45 until 5:30 each Monday afternoon the children hear a Bible story, are given a small meal, make a craft and are given time to complete homework assignments. We do charge a small fee of \$2.00 per day that the child attends the program. However, no child is turned away if they are not able to afford this small cost.

This is just one way we are offering support to the families in our School District.

We are asking that any legislation crafted to address the concerns related to our public schools be done from the perspective that every life is a precious gift from God, that such gift be honored and respected from conception through natural death. Thank you for your time in listening to our perspective and for your service to our Commonwealth.

Sincerely,
The Pastors of Christians Uniting

The Reverend Mark A. Werner, President of Christians Uniting and Pastor at St. Paul Evangelical Lutheran Church
The Reverend Daniel Baker, Pastor of St. Paul United Church of Christ
Pastor Shirley Farino, Pastor of the Kecksburg Church of God
Pastor Kimberly Foos, Pastor of the Pleasant Unity United Methodist Church.
The Reverend David Greer, Parson of the Norvelt Union Church
The Reverend Merv Lapp, Bishop of the Trauger Mennonite Congregation
The Reverend John Sedlak, Pastor of St. Florian Catholic Church