



PRESS RELEASE

For Immediate Release: July 5, 2016

Contact: Kassie Dulin, kdulin@firstliberty.org
Cell: 214-542-4334, Direct: 972-941-4575

STATE OF IOWA CLAIMS IT CAN TELL CHURCHES WHAT THEY CAN TEACH ON MATTERS OF SEXUALITY

Cornerstone World Outreach Church announces legal action against government over sexual orientation and gender identity law

SIoux CITY, Iowa — Today, First Liberty Institute sent a demand letter to the Iowa Civil Rights Commission (CRC), asking them to retract earlier statements claiming it has the authority to interfere with churches' doctrine and operation. The letter was sent on behalf of Cornerstone World Outreach Church and is the first time a church has taken this type of legal action against the government over a sexual orientation and gender identity law. [Read the demand letter](#)

The Iowa CRC published a brochure called "Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity – A Public Accommodations Provider's Guide to Iowa Law." ([Read the brochure](#)) In the brochure, they state that churches are considered places of public accommodation and as such, they generally may not be exempted from the state's sexual orientation and gender identity law.

"This is a clear case of the state violating the sanctity of the church. It should send chills down the spine of every congregation in Iowa," Chelsey Youman, Chief of Staff & Counsel for First Liberty Institute, says. "The State of Iowa claims it has the power to regulate what churches can teach about human sexuality and how they operate their facilities. The government has absolutely no authority to force a church to violate its religious beliefs. This is a massive violation of the First Amendment."

First Liberty Institute sent the demand letter to the CRC on behalf of Cornerstone World Outreach, a non-denominational, Bible-based church that teaches traditional, scriptural beliefs about marriage, sexual morality, and gender roles in the church.

"I am a father of five, and I am deeply concerned that the State of Iowa would try to tell us, as a church, what we can teach about matters of sexuality and how we are allowed to ensure the safety and privacy of our children," Cary Gordon, Senior Pastor of Cornerstone World Outreach for over 21 years, says. "All we want is to be left alone to teach the Word of God and minister to our community in peace."

First Liberty attorneys asked the CRC to grant Cornerstone an exemption and promise not to enforce the law against the church by August 4. If not, the attorneys say they are prepared to pursue "all available legal options."

About First Liberty Institute

First Liberty Institute is the largest legal organization in the nation dedicated exclusively to defending religious freedom for all Americans. Read more at FirstLiberty.org

To arrange an interview, contact Kassie Dulin, Director of Legal Communications for First Liberty Institute. Email: kdulin@firstliberty.org, Direct: 972-941-9575, Cell: 214-542-4334.

###