What You Need to Know

* Opulent Life Church entered into a lease for a property on the town square of Holly Springs, Mississippi. However, the city refused to approve the church’s request for a permit to renovate the property until it met the requirements of a special zoning ordinance that applied only to churches.
* The ordinance included requirements that the church get the approval of 60 percent of local property owners and final approval from the town’s mayor and Board of Aldermen before it could exist in the area.
* The zoning requirements were a clear violation of the First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution and the federal Religious Land Use and Institutionalized Persons Act (RLUIPA).
* First Liberty filed a lawsuit. In a decision that set important precedent, the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit struck down the city’s unlawful ordinance and also expressed concern about a new ordinance the city had passed that was just as discriminatory.
* In advance of a trial over the new ordinance, First Liberty was able to reach a settlement with city attorneys allowing Opulent Life Church to permanently relocate to the downtown area of Holly Springs.

For information about the religious liberty rights of churches and how to best defend those rights, download First Liberty’s free Religious Liberty Protection Kit for Churches.