



*(Light of the World Church properties and adjacent lot.)
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Lawsuit Filed Against Nebraska Village That Refuses to Let Church Build on Town Square

Decisions by Village Board to deny use of property for a local congregation violates Constitution, state and federal laws

Walthill, NE—First Liberty Institute and Attorney Sam Diehl of the Gray Plant Mooty law firm today filed a lawsuit in the U.S. District Court for the District of Nebraska in response to the Village of Walthill’s continued and repeated denials of building and use permits to Light of the World Gospel Ministries, a small, multi-ethnic local church in the village.

Read the complaint [here](#).

“The Village of Walthill is trying to keep this church off of Main Street,” said Roger Byron, Senior Counsel for First Liberty Institute. “Light of the World Gospel Ministries wants to invest in and help revitalize this diverse community by tearing down dilapidated buildings and provide a new space that would serve the community. Why is the Village preventing this church from meeting the needs of this community?”

Light of the World is a rapidly growing, vibrant congregation of more than 150 congregants in a town of about 750. The church meets in a converted funeral home on

Main Street. Lacking the much needed space, their children meet for Sunday lessons in a windowless steel structure heated with space heaters.

The church purchased several old buildings directly across the street from its current meeting place, hoping to tear down the rapidly deteriorating structures and build a church and related facilities to serve the community. But, even though the Village initially approved the church's building permit, the Village later revoked the permit without a valid reason. The Village also denied without valid reason multiple permits from the church to demolish and clean up dangerous structures on the church's property, and other permits the church sought to use its property to worship and minister.

"This church has served the Walthill community for years. But it needs a new church building to safely worship," said Sam Diehl, lead counsel for the church.

In their complaint, attorneys with First Liberty assert that the actions by the Village violate state and federal laws, including the First Amendment and the federal Religious Land Use and Institutionalized Persons Act (RLUIPA).

For more on this case, visit [FirstLiberty.org/LOTW](https://www.FirstLiberty.org/LOTW)

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About First Liberty Institute

[First Liberty Institute](https://www.FirstLiberty.org) is the largest legal organization in the nation dedicated exclusively to defending religious freedom for all Americans.

To arrange an interview, contact Lacey McNeil at media@firstliberty.org or by calling 972-941-4453.