



*(Members of Canaan Baptist Church participate in a clothing drive on property owned by the church.
Photo credit: First Liberty Institute. May be republished.)*

Texas City Threatens to Take Property from Church

First Liberty Institute defending church from the City of Duncanville's attempt to seize church property using eminent domain

Dallas, TX—Today, First Liberty Institute and Winston & Strawn LLP filed a motion to dismiss the City of Duncanville's condemnation petition seeking to seize Canaan Baptist Church's property through eminent domain.

You can read the motion [here](#).

“Canaan Baptist Church believes that God gave the Church *this* property to fulfill its religious mission to minister to and serve the local community, said Keisha Russell, Counsel for First Liberty Institute. “The City cannot interfere with the Church's religious exercise by taking the Church's property when the City has many other options. The Church is determined to fight the City and win.”

Canaan Baptist is a small, Christian church founded in 1969 that ministers to the Duncanville and South Dallas community. The Church owns property in Duncanville on which it will build a new facility. Currently, the Church uses the property to serve the local community by holding, among other events, clothing drives, movie nights, and youth activity days. On August 28, 2020, the City of Duncanville filed a Petition for Condemnation in Dallas County court against the church, pastored by Dr. Jarvis Baker. The City is seeking to acquire the property to build “a fire station, public safety facility and/or other related improvements.” The City has a fire station across the street from the Church's property.

First Liberty’s motion argues that all government actions, including eminent domain proceedings, must comport with Texas laws protecting the free exercise of religion. The motion states, “The Church’s acquisition of the Property, its investment in plans to construct a house of worship on the Property, its current use of the Property for religious activities, and its desire to expand its ministry to those within the community from a centrally-located and heavily trafficked location, are unequivocally motivated by its members’ sincerely held religious beliefs.” It continues, “Here, the City’s seizure of the Property would meaningfully curtail Canaan Baptist’s free exercise of religion. If the Property were seized, Canaan Baptist’s ongoing ministry and other religious activities on its consecrated Property would immediately halt.”

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About First Liberty Institute

[First Liberty Institute](#) is a non-profit public interest law firm and the largest legal organization in the nation dedicated exclusively to defending religious freedom for all Americans.

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