



## News Release

**For Immediate Release: 5.14.24**  
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### **Colorado Church Sues Town for Halting, Retaliating Against its Temporary, Emergency Shelter Ministry**

*From cooperation to aggressive harassment, Castle Rock, CO attacks the church's humanitarian aid for desperate people in the community.*

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**Castle Rock, CO**—Attorneys with First Liberty Institute today filed a federal lawsuit and a motion for preliminary injunction against the town of Castle Rock, Colorado after officials there sought to shut down the on-site temporary and emergency shelter ministry of “The Rock,” a church in the town. The town has not only insisted the church end its efforts to offer temporary and emergency shelter for helpless and suddenly homeless people, it has also interfered with its ability to serve as a Red Cross emergency shelter and retaliated against the church by threatening the business license of a coffee service located in the church.

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

“Churches that take action to care for the homeless should be encouraged and affirmed, not opposed and retaliated against,” said First Liberty Senior Counsel Jeremy Dys. “It’s not enough for the town to try to stop this church from using its property to provide temporary shelter to displaced single moms and their children. The town is also trying to prevent the church from partnering with the Red Cross in times of emergency.”

According to Pastor Mike Polhemus, “Our mission is to transform society by loving others as Christ loved us. This includes providing such a level of outreach and aid to the surrounding community that, if we ever close our doors, the entire community would feel our church’s absence. It’s shocking that the town is preventing us from providing temporary shelter and wrap-around assistance to people who are in their greatest need, thus helping to reduce homelessness in our community.”

Other than The Rock’s location, the Town of Castle Rock, Colorado, has no emergency or temporary shelters within town limits for individuals suddenly without a safe home. Along with providing food, clothes, shoes, financial assistance, and small kitchen items, The Rock works with individuals displaced due to life circumstances to provide a temporary place of shelter in one trailer and one RV parked on the back of the church’s property - more than 400 feet from any resident property. The church uses the trailer/RVs as a temporary solution and part of a holistic effort to get people back on their feet as quickly as possible. It also partnered with the Red Cross to use its main building to provide emergency shelter during severe winter storms or other sudden emergencies. But now the town is demanding the church stop providing temporary shelter to single moms and others suddenly displaced.

In the motion, attorneys state, “The Town’s shutting down of The Rock Church’s On-Site Temporary Shelter Ministry and Red Cross Partnership is not only deeply cruel, but it also violates The Rock Church’s fundamental free-exercise rights, as protected by the Religious Land Use and Institutionalized Persons Act (“RLUIPA”), 42 U.S.C. § 2000cc *et seq.*, and the Free Exercise Clause of the First Amendment. The Church now respectfully moves for a preliminary injunction against the Town, so that it may continue to serve the homeless and displaced in the Town during the pendency of this lawsuit.”

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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.

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