

Trinity Lutheran Decision Protects Children and Religious Liberty

Monday, the U.S. Supreme Court issued a 7-2 decision in favor of a church daycare in one of the year's most significant religious liberty cases.

The case, *Trinity Lutheran Church of Columbia v. Comer*, involved a religious preschool that was rejected from a state program that provides reimbursement grants to purchase rubberized surface material (tire scraps) for children's playgrounds. The preschool was ultimately denied the grant for its playground solely because the playground belongs to a religious organization.

The ruling notes in the majority opinion that the court has "repeatedly confirmed that denying a generally available benefit solely on account of religious identity imposes a penalty on the free exercise of religion." The ruling concludes that that the "exclusion of Trinity Lutheran from a public benefit for which it is otherwise qualified, solely because it is a church, is odious to our Constitution all the same, and cannot stand."

"Today's decision is a triumph for religious freedom and a victory not just for this church, and not just for people of faith, but for all who believe American citizens should be treated equally by their government," said Russell Moore, president of the Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission, who recently gave an address at Acton University. "This case was about fair play: Do religious organizations have access to the public square or will they be penalized for holding religious convictions? I oppose any establishment or funding of religion, but a house of worship taking advantage of a

universally accessible program does not constitute an establishment.”

For more on the case and the ruling, see here. {eoa}

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