

PA Church Heads to Court After Township Won't Let Them Build a Chapel

A Pennsylvania church is fighting for its right to build a chapel on its own property, alleging township officials are imposing unreasonable restrictions on the church and refusing to grant permits to allow them to build.

The non-profit First Liberty Institute, Troutman Pepper Locke, and the Independence Law Center have filed a lawsuit on behalf of Holy Trinity Ukrainian Catholic Church in Pennsylvania.

According to First Liberty, when the church was ready to begin construction to expand on its 41-acre parcel of land, Collier Township refused to approve most of the plans the church proposed. The legal group claims officials added unlawful restrictions, such as limiting how long and when church bells could ring, for whom memorial services could be held, and the size and height of buildings.

Additionally, the township has reportedly allowed establishments such as amusement parks, ice rinks, fitness centers, and country clubs to operate in the same zoning district, but will not allow the same for houses of worship. One mile from the church's property is a 19-acre campus that belongs to a local carpenters union, and it includes classrooms, conference rooms, offices, a cafeteria, an event space, and a meeting room with seating for 400 people.

"The Township has shown clear discrimination in applying strict limitations on the church but giving free rein to

comparable secular activities and neighboring organizations,” said Jeremy Dys, Senior Counsel for First Liberty. “Religious freedom means precious little if religious organizations cannot use their property for religious purposes.”

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