

With Illegal Taxes Piling Up, Arizona Church Faces Foreclosure

Loving the homeless is their calling. Now, as a church, they face homelessness themselves.

“Is not this the kind of fasting I have chosen: to loose the chains of injustice and untie the cords of the yoke, to set the oppressed free and break every yoke? Is it not to share your food with the hungry and to provide the poor wanderer with shelter—when you see the naked, to clothe them, and not to turn away from your own flesh and blood? Then your light will break forth like the dawn, and your healing will quickly appear; then your righteousness will go before you, and the glory of the Lord will be your rear guard. Then you will call, and the Lord will answer; you will cry for help, and he will say: Here am I” (Is. 58:6-9, NIV).

Having once been homeless, pastor Mike Hobby and his wife, Linda, felt called by God to establish a church in Quartzsite, Arizona, to minister to the physical needs of the homeless and hurting.

Only miles from the border of California, Quartzsite attracts tens of thousands of RVs and, due to the warm temperatures, numerous homeless who come to sleep in the desert. It's the perfect town for the church named the Isaiah 58 Project of Arizona.

Providing a free clothes closet, place to shower, job counseling, transportation and approximately 13,000 meals every winter season to the homeless, the church of the Isaiah 58 Project lives up to its central Scripture verses, Isaiah 58:6-9, on a shoestring budget of around \$50,000 per year.

But on June 1, this selfless ministry faces foreclosure and, ultimately, homelessness.

Why? The church of the Isaiah 58 Project of Arizona is being illegally taxed.

Even the mayor of Quartzite, the chief of police and the town manager fear the impact on the community from losing this church.

For the past three years, Alliance Defending Freedom attorneys litigated the case, but the Arizona courts have refused to allow the challenge to the illegal tax until the church pays the tax first. Most recently, the Arizona Supreme Court refused to accept the church's challenge.

With interest, the church now owes around \$68,000.

A church that survives on a little more than \$50,000 per year cannot possibly pay a tax bill that exceeds its annual budget. The church would have to close its doors to pay this illegal tax before it could challenge it.

The foreclosure is slated to begin on Sunday. If the church pays off the tax, not only can it survive, but we can challenge the tax and seek a refund. A win in this case would prevent these types of illegal actions in the future.