

Limitations Won't Stop Oregon Church From Feeding the Homeless

One Oregon church is claiming its religious liberties have been violated after city officials restricted the number of times its benevolent ministry can feed the homeless.

St. Timothy's Episcopal Church in Brookings announced in late January it filed a lawsuit against the city in response to a new ordinance approved by the town council, NPR reported this week. The new rule requires a permit for "benevolent meal service" and restricts it to no more than twice a week.

As churches are the only nonprofits offering meals to the homeless, according to Oregon Public Broadcasting, ministers at St. Timothy's have argued it is a violation of congregants' religious freedoms. The Episcopal church stated Jan. 28 the ordinance places limits on "the congregation's free expression of their Christian faith."

Prior to the new rule, the Rev. Bernie Lindley and his fellow church members provided meals, showers and a food bank for the city's homeless population. The church also held a COVID-19 vaccination clinic for those down on their luck.

Those services, though, were concerning to Brookings residents. Those living nearby St. Timothy's claimed there has been an uptick in trespassing and other disturbances since the church began offering aid to the homeless. As a result, locals filed a petition with the city council, urging members to restrict the church's benevolent ministry.

Council members did just that, which prompted the lawsuit by the church and the Episcopal Diocese of Oregon.

“We’ve been serving our community here for decades and picking up the slack where the need exists and no one else is stepping in,” Lindley said in a statement. “We have no intention of stopping now and we’re prepared to hold fast to our beliefs. We won’t abandon the people of Brookings who need our help, even when we’re being threatened.”

Per *Newsweek*, the newly approved municipal code states: “Organizations or individuals providing benevolent meal services may serve meals to the public up to two days per week between the hours of 9:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m. No benevolent meal service shall last more than three hours per day.”

But, as the reverend said, the church is fighting back.

To read the entire article, visit our content partners at .
{eo}

Reprinted with permission from . Copyright © 2022 The Christian Broadcasting Network Inc. All rights reserved.

Read articles like this one and other Spirit-led content in our new platform, CHARISMA PLUS.