



## Focus on Religious Freedom

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***"You will never do anything in the world without courage.  
It is the greatest quality of the mind next to honor." - Aristotle***

### **Some With Courage Are Defending Religious Freedom...Continued**

The U.S. Supreme Court ruled in favor of former Georgia college student, Chile Uzuegbunam, who was prevented from expressing religious views in a free-speech zone on campus. In an 8-1 decision, Justice Clarence Thomas wrote that the student "experienced a complete violation of his constitutional rights when respondents enforced their speech policies against him."<sup>(1)</sup> The student wanted to speak with interested students about his faith but was silenced by a security officer until he obtained a special permit for a "designated speech area." "When Uzuegbunam reserved a zone and again tried to share his faith, officials ordered him to stop because someone complained," said his Alliance Defending Freedom(ADF) attorney.<sup>(2)</sup>

"Groups representing diverse ideological viewpoints (atheist, Jewish, Catholic & Muslim) supported our client because the threat to our constitutionally protected freedoms doesn't stop with free speech rights on a college campus," said Kristen Waggoner, ADF attorney.<sup>(3)</sup>

Hundreds of Canadian Christians gathered at the GraceLife Church in Edmonton, Alberta on Sunday, April 11, to protest and tear down a chain link fence that government officials erected to prevent worshipping. Alberta Health Services(AHS) had closed the building and access roads were closed by the Royal Canadian Mounted Police. AHS said the church would remain closed until they "can demonstrate the ability to comply with Alberta's chief medical officer of health restrictions."<sup>(4)</sup> In February, Pastor James Coates was charged with breaching COVID health guidelines that limited services to 15% of capacity and not enforcing masks and distancing regulations. He spent 35 days in custody and paid a fine.

The worshippers peacefully gathered to sing hymns and listen to Bible readings outside, but the crowd grew, and some started to remove the fence. Riot police dispersed the crowd. "I'm very disappointed to see this kind of draconian and aggressive enforcement of health orders ... It shows a very aggressive government that is not answering questions about its policies, but wants to push its weight around and try to make an example of GraceLife Church," said a JCCF attorney.<sup>(5)</sup>

The Indiana legislature sent a bill to Gov. Eric Holcomb that would classify religious services as essential during declared disaster emergencies and would prevent the government imposing any restrictions on religious services. "Religious organizations provide essential services that are necessary for the health and welfare of the public during a disaster emergency," the bill reads.<sup>(6)</sup>

"I hope its another 500 years before we ever have another disaster ... like what our state and nation have experienced this last year," said State Sen. Eric Koch. "But should that arise, this (bill) should protect that very enshrined right in our Constitution."<sup>(7)</sup>

(catholicnewsagency.com, 3/8/21(1); wnd.com, 3/8/21(2)(3); callingalchristians.net, 4/11/21(4(5)); cna.com, 4/13/21(6); apsnews.com, 4/8/21(7);

***"In the world you have tribulation, but take courage; I have overcome the world."***

John 16:33