



FACT SHEET

Southside Community Church / FEMA

SUMMARY

Attorneys with the Alliance Defense Fund sent a letter to the Federal Emergency Management Agency after it denied disaster relief to Greene County, Ark., churches following severe winter storms. ADF is asking FEMA to rectify its discriminatory refusal to provide equitable service to churches, which violates the Equal Protection Clause of the U.S. Constitution.

FACTS

- On Jan. 26, 2009, President Obama declared Greene County a federal disaster area after ice storms hit the area.
- The federal declarations led to approval for FEMA assistance in areas affected by the storms.
- FEMA did not arrive in Greene County until approximately a month after the declaration.
- In the interim, area churches mobilized community relief efforts.
- ADF client Pastor Charles Stoddard of Southside Community Church in Paragould, Ark., led an effort to clean up the neighborhood and provide services to the community long before FEMA arrived. (Pastor Stoddard previously led a team to New Orleans, La., to provide relief following Hurricane Katrina while the government was floundering in its response.)
- Another church, First Baptist Church, also in Paragould, opened its doors to 200-300 people as an emergency shelter because of the storms in Greene County, again, long before FEMA arrived.
- When FEMA finally did arrive, it decided, without asking permission, to use Southside Community Church's parking lot. The church did not mind, as it was very willing to be of assistance.
- An announcement was published in local media that all debris collected in the community should be piled roadside for FEMA collection.
- Southside and other churches followed those instructions.
- FEMA refused to pick up debris at churches, telling Southside representatives that they would not because churches are a "commercial business."
- FEMA continued to use the church parking lot as a partial base of operations.

CONTACT

Alliance Defense Fund Media Relations

Phone: (480) 444-0020, ext. 17102 / E-mail: adfmedia@telladf.org / Web: www.telladf.org/pressroom

ABOUT ADF

ADF is a legal alliance of Christian attorneys and like-minded organizations defending the right of people to freely live out their faith. Launched in 1994, ADF employs a unique combination of [strategy, training, funding, and litigation](#) to protect and preserve religious liberty, the sanctity of life, marriage, and the family.