

# Leaseholders seek temporary restraining order on Glorieta sale

September 6, 2013

ALBUQUERQUE, N.M.—An Arkansas couple who own a house on land leased from [Glorieta Conference Center](#) filed a lawsuit in U.S. District Court seeking a temporary restraining order or injunction to prevent the [transfer of property](#) from [LifeWay Christian Resources](#) to Glorieta 2.0.

Kirk and Susie Tompkins of Little Rock, Ark., allege LifeWay lacks authority to dispose of the conference center without the approval of messengers at two consecutive annual meetings of the Southern Baptist Convention annual.

The legal complaint—filed Sept. 4 in the U.S. District Court in Albuquerque, N.M.—asserts the original 1950 warranty deed grants the conference center property to the SBC Executive Committee, and no other transfer of deed is on record. The suit names as defendants a long list of officers and employees of the SBC Executive Committee, LifeWay and Glorieta 2.0.

## **Opened in 1952**

Glorieta Baptist Assembly opened as Southern Baptists' second national conference center in 1952 and has been operated since then by the Sunday School Board of the Southern Baptist Convention, which changed its name to LifeWay in 1998.

The conference center reported financial difficulty for more than two decades, and LifeWay agreed to sell the property for \$1 to Glorieta 2.0 in a deal scheduled to close this month.

The suit alleges LifeWay acted in violation of the SBC charter when its trustees voted to transfer property to Glorieta 2.0, which the court documents characterize as “a non-Baptist, non-related group of businessmen operating for profit children’s camps not legally affiliated with SBC or LifeWay.” Individuals involved in Glorieta 2.0 also operate Camp Eagle in Rocksprings, in Southwest Texas.

### **Leaseholders’ options**

Glorieta 2.0 gave current leaseholders three options regarding their houses:

- A one-time buyout for \$30 per square foot, with a minimum \$40,000 and maximum \$100,000 payment, regardless of the appraised value.
- A new 12-year lease. At the end of the lease, the building would go to Glorieta 2.0 for no compensation.
- Donate the building to Glorieta 2.0.

The legal complaint characterizes those options as unfair and unreasonable.

As of Sept. 5, LifeWay had not received notice of the suit from the court, said Marty King, director of corporate communications.

“However, we are confident Southern Baptist Convention approval is not required for the transaction,” King said. “LifeWay’s bylaws do require approval for such action by our SBC-elected board of trustees. LifeWay’s trustees approved disposition of the Glorieta property two years ago and sale to Glorieta 2.0 for a camping ministry later this year.

“We will review the court document when we receive it and respond to the court.”

## **Filing as individuals**

The lawsuit includes as exhibits signed affidavits by several other leaseholder families who registered dissatisfaction with the actions of LifeWay and Glorieta 2.0. However, Tompkins emphasized he and his wife filed the legal action as individuals, and they are not seeking monetary damages.

“We don’t harbor any ill will. We just want truth and justice,” he said.

About 65 individuals and organizations own houses built on property leased from Glorieta.

Before filing the complaint, Tompkins sent an Aug. 17 injunction letter to leaders of the SBC Executive Committee, LifeWay Christian Resources and Glorieta 2.0 demanding the parties involved “cease and desist all actions involving any disposal of Glorieta Conference Center.” The letter gave notice of “appropriate lawful action” if all parties failed to confirm in writing by Aug. 31 they were halting the transfer of property.

Tompkins said he received an email from Augie Boto, general counsel and executive vice president for the SBC Executive Committee, but no further correspondence.

In his email to Tompkins, Boto wrote: “We presently see no legal basis for the proposition that Executive Committee or convention permission is required before LifeWay may dispose of the Glorieta property.”

In response to questions from the *Baptist Standard*, Boto underscored that LifeWay, not the SBC Executive Committee, owns Glorieta.

“The only sale of property by an entity of the Convention which would need Convention approval—in one meeting—would be if the entity proposed to sell all or substantially all of its property. This sale does not rise to that

level," he said.

Boto added his belief that that the lawsuit is "without any legal merit, and that the court will concur."

*Editor's Note: The article was edited and the last five paragraphs added at 5:30 p.m. on Sept. 6, after the article originally was posted.*