



CHRISTIAN LEGAL SOCIETY NEWS RELEASE

JUNE 10, 2026 – FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTACT ANN MARIE RÈNE: 703-642-1070, Ext: 404 or ARENE@clsnet.org

CITY OF PHOENIX CRIMINALIZES FEEDING THE HOMELESS

*Christian Legal Society files lawsuit to end ordinance
targeting ministries and the homeless*

PHOENIX, Arizona—On Tuesday, June 2, Christian Legal Society (CLS) filed a lawsuit on behalf of its client, St. Herman’s Table, regarding the City of Phoenix’s recent decision to ban the ministry from feeding the homeless in Cave City Park at Cactus.

CLS also filed an emergency application for a Temporary Restraining Order (TRO), requesting that the court allow St. Herman’s Table to continue serving those in need for the immediate future and until the case could be further heard by the court. Today, the court granted the TRO, which will allow St. Herman’s volunteers to continue to serve for the next fourteen days. CLS is grateful for this development but remains concerned about the City’s ordinance. CLS intends to continue to fight to vindicate the First Amendment rights of our client, so that its volunteers may minister to the needy in the City’s parks without the threat of criminal prosecution.

CLS’ CEO and President David Nammo explained, “The City of Phoenix has hit the trifecta with this ridiculous ordinance. First and foremost, they are hurting those most in need in their community—those most vulnerable, those they were elected to protect—by limiting the ability of homeless people to receive food from local ministries. They are also discriminating against religious ministries in clear violation of the First Amendment, making religiously motivated volunteers criminals for serving those in need. To top it all off, they have created multiple carve outs for other members of the community to host birthday parties and other celebrations. The City of Phoenix should be ashamed.”

St. Herman’s Table is led by a group of volunteers who fulfill their religious calling of almsgiving by feeding those in need in their community every week. St. Herman’s Table sought to avoid this conflict with the city, but on May 6, the Phoenix City Council passed the ordinance that will make these gracious servants criminals for feeding the homeless.

The new law, which went into effect June 7, 2026, requires individuals and organizations distributing meals to the general public within the park to apply for a permit to do so. The City will issue a total of two meal or medical permits *per park* each month to ministries and humanitarian organizations. Failure to obtain a permit is a Class 1 Misdemeanor.

Thankfully, in today’s order, the court concluded that our clients are likely to prevail. Today, the court forbade the City from enforcing the ordinance against our clients through June 24. In addition, the court ordered the parties to confer and respond by June 15 whether a permanent injunction can be determined at the same time as a preliminary injunction.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

St. Herman’s Table’s volunteers visit Cave Creek Park at Cactus every Thursday, where they hand out meals to homeless individuals. St. Herman’s has never been cited by the City for this work. St. Herman’s volunteers leave the park cleaner than they find it and serve everyone with dignity and love.

ST HERMAN’S TABLE V. CITY OF PHOENIX

The City ordinance includes the following exemptions: (1) anyone can distribute food in the park if it goes to family or friends, and (2) birthday parties, wedding receptions and other secular gatherings involving food. Those who meet these exceptions can use picnic tables and seek shelter from the broiling summer sun under the park trees. But anyone who wants to hand out sandwiches and water to their homeless neighbors are relegated to the black asphalt parking lot—assuming they are lucky enough to get one of that month's two permits.

In addition to CLS, St. Herman's Table is represented by local counsel, Chris Charles of Provident Law (Scottsdale). In their lawsuit, St. Herman's is seeking a court order to protect St Herman's Table from criminal enforcement of the ordinance. Although CLS sent a letter to the City raising St. Herman's Table's First Amendment objections to the ordinance, the City refused to agree to delay enforcement against the half dozen volunteers of St. Herman's Table for even two weeks.

###