

LIBERTY COUNSEL

P.O. Box 540774
Orlando, FL 32854-0774
Tel: 800•671•1776
Fax: 407•875•0770
www.LC.org

P.O. Box 11108
Lynchburg, VA 24506-1108
Tel: 434•592•7000
Fax: 434•592•7700
liberty@LC.org

Reply to: Virginia

December 14, 2006

Via Facsimile and Regular Mail

Orlando Cloisters
Attn: Ulla
757 South Orange Ave
Orlando, FL 32801

Re: Christmas Decorations

Dear Ulla:

Liberty Counsel is a civil liberties litigation, education and policy organization. Our office was contacted by a concerned resident of Orlando Cloisters after receiving a letter from you regarding Christmas decorations in the commons areas. The letter explains that, "Any religious symbols or words associated with Christmas, i.e. angels, nativity scenes, 'Merry Christmas' signs, can not be used in decorating the commons areas." The letter goes on to state that "Christmas trees, Santa Claus, wreaths, Hanuka (sic) Menorahs and 'Season's Greetings' are all acceptable, as these items are not considered religious symbols." In furtherance of the policy outlined in this letter, an employee of the Orlando Cloisters cut the wings off the angel on the Christmas tree.

The letter explicitly and blatantly violates the Fair Housing Act. The Fair Housing Act mandates that you not discriminate in the terms and conditions of housing on the basis of religion. The Act also mandates that you send no communication that in any way discriminates on the basis of religion. Your letter clearly demonstrates a hostility to religion that is prohibited by the Fair Housing Act. The letter also discriminates among religions by allowing a Hanukkah Menorah (a religious symbol), but not allowing any Christian symbols of Christmas. This preference for one religion over another clearly violates the Fair Housing Act. The Fair Housing Act does not require that you cleanse your facility of all religious symbols during Christmas. Indeed, doing so violates the Fair Housing Act by denigrating the religious beliefs of your residents.

We demand that you immediately withdraw your letter of December 7, 2006, and that you replace the Christian symbols of Christmas, including an angel with wings. We also demand that you communicate to the residents that your letter was in error and that all residents are welcome at the Orlando Cloisters regardless of religious belief and that

the Cloisters does not in any way denigrate any religion and will allow religious symbols of Christmas to be displayed in the commons area. Liberty Counsel stands ready to file a federal lawsuit against the Orlando Cloisters if steps are not taken to correct this blatant violation of the Fair Housing Act.

Please contact me immediately at the address and phone number above to confirm that you have taken corrective action to withdraw your letter and will allow the religious symbols of Christmas to be displayed. I look forward to your immediate response.

Sincerely,

Erik W. Stanley
Chief Counsel