

# Fearing Another Lawsuit, Christian Business Owners Stopped Hosting All Weddings. Now Their Business Is Dead.

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Charged with discriminating against a gay couple, the owners of another Christian family-run business are being forced to shut their doors. “We can’t pretend it’s going to get better,” Betty Odgaard told The Daily Signal in an exclusive interview. “There wasn’t enough business.”

Betty and her husband, Richard, are the owners of Görtz Haus Gallery in Grimes, Iowa. In 2002, they purchased the 77-year-old stone church and transformed it into a bistro, flower shop, art gallery and wedding venue. On August 3, 2013, a gay couple from Des Moines asked to rent Görtz Haus for their wedding. Because of their Mennonite faith, the Odgaards told the couple they could not host their wedding. Within 24 hours, the couple filed a discrimination complaint through the Iowa Civil Rights Commission.



“We knew that the business was going to be in trouble almost immediately,” Richard, 69, said. “We had to get rid of the wedding business to avoid another complaint and possibly a higher penalty.” The Odgaards never admitted to any discrimination, but agreed to a \$5,000 settlement.

←Betty and Richard Odgaard, owners of Görtz Haus Gallery in Grimes, Iowa.  
(Photo: Odgaards)

They also returned two non-refundable deposits for couples who, after hearing media reports, didn’t want to use their space for their weddings anymore. “It was just the right thing to do,” Richard said.

## Going On Life Support

After leaving the wedding business, Görtz Haus went on life support. If they continued to offer wedding-related services, the Odgaards knew they could be subject to another discrimination complaint. “We didn’t have a choice,” Betty, 63 said. “We would be targets.”

Around town, Görtz Haus became known as the business that refuses to serve gays. If a group of ladies went to lunch and one disagreed with their opinion not to host same-sex weddings, the entire group boycotted the bistro, the Odgaards explained. “They didn’t come in because the people who are against us are more vocal than the people who are in our court,” Richard said. Betty said the situation drove her into a “really dark depression”—so bad, that she had to seek the help of professionals. “I’m a melancholy artist and no stranger to depression, but this took me down to the darkest I’ve ever been before,” she said.

The case was the first of its kind in Iowa, but it didn’t receive the same sort of media attention as the [bakers in Oregon](#), the [photographers in New Mexico](#) or the [farmers in New York](#).

The couple says that’s because pending litigation prevented them from being able to speak out, further isolating them from their community. “We didn’t get the Chick-fil-A response,” Richard half-heartedly joked.

## Iowa’s Involvement

The Odgaards don’t blame the gay community for shutting them down, but rather, the state of Iowa.

“I think if people in Iowa would have had a chance to vote on this, it would have never have been...

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