2189 - Ruling on renting churches

the question

In many parts of the USA, the Muslims cannot find any suitable place to perform salaat al-jumu'ah (Friday prayers) except in some churches where they are able to rent space cheaply or for free. But some students have stirred up a controversy as to whether it is correct to offer salaah in churches, because of the report from Ibn 'Umar about preventing people from praying in churches, synagogues, graveyards and places where sacrifices are made to other than Allaah. On this basis, some of the Muslims have stopped coming to Jumu'ah prayers. Could you please tell us the correct ruling on this matter, so that we may resolve the differences between the Muslims in this community?
Jazaakum Allaahu khayran (may Allaah reward you with good).

Detailed answer

Praise be to Allah.

If it is possible to find an alternative place in which to pray, then it is not permitted to pray in churches and similar places, because these are the places of worship of the kuffaar, where they worship other than Allaah, and because of the statues and pictures that they contain. (But if it is not possible to find anywhere else, it is permissible to pray in them, out of necessity). 'Umar (may Allaah be pleased with him) said: "We do not enter your churches because of the statues and pictures that are in them." Ibn 'Abbaas (may Allaah be pleased with them both) used to pray in churches except for those in which there were statues and pictures. (Reported by al-Bukhaari, 1/112)