

'Open hearts . . . open doors' motto stays, say Methodists: Motto remains in spite of church-membership ruling

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Disagreeing with a recent church court ruling, the United Methodist Communication Commission declared that it will continue to employ a motto used in advertising and on local church signs: "Open hearts, open minds, open doors."

Some individuals have asked the commission to withdraw the denominational slogan in light of a decision rendered October 31 by the Methodists' Judicial Council that gays and lesbians have no automatic right to church membership.

"We believe a recent Judicial Council interpretation of church law allowing a pastor to deny membership to a man because of his sexual orientation is contrary to the spirit of the teachings of the church, our history and most importantly the teachings of Jesus, who rejected no one," said a commission statement November 10 by Larry Hollon, general secretary, and Bishop Thomas J. Bickerton, president.

Noting that the Council of Bishops also disagreed unanimously with the ruling, the commission officials added that "it would be a tragic mistake to turn away from the thousands of congregations who have made the promise of [openness] a living reality."