

**Statement from Living Stream Ministry and the Local Churches
Texas Supreme Court Decision Concerning
Harvest House v. Local Church/Living Stream Ministry
December 12, 2006**

On August 2, 2006, Living Stream Ministry (LSM) and 93 local churches petitioned the Texas Supreme Court to review the decision of the Texas Court of Appeals concerning the libel case brought by these churches and LSM against Harvest House Publishers and authors John Ankerberg and John Weldon regarding the book *Encyclopedia of Cults and New Religions* (ECNR). On December 1, 2006 the Court declined to consider that request.

The plaintiff churches and LSM felt constrained to petition the Texas Supreme Court because the decision of the Texas Appeals Court was seriously flawed and did not take into consideration the evidence or facts of the case. The ruling of the Appeals Court was based on faulty technical, legal grounds, and not on the facts of the case, which we continue to believe would be very compelling if ever presented to a jury. Furthermore, that ruling also raised issues that could have far-reaching implications for all manner of Christian and other religious groups in the future by creating a vehicle whereby libel and defamation can be protected under the guise of “religious speech.” This potential still exists, and it may in fact be strengthened by the ruling of the Texas Supreme Court. Therefore, we plan to ask the Texas Supreme Court to reconsider their decision within the next few days. Beyond that, we are still prayerfully considering whether or not to appeal this case to the next level.

We believe that from the beginning we have followed the Lord’s leading and regard all that has happened as being under His sovereign hand. Throughout this process, He has led us to gratifying fraternity and fellowship with many other followers of Christ who have patiently and earnestly looked into both the complex legal aspects of this case and the teachings and practices of the local churches.

Several of these are well-respected Christian leaders, and a number have been severely criticized—both publicly and privately—for taking a principled and courageous stand with us for the truth. We have been encouraged by and are grateful for their steadfast support in this effort—even at great personal cost. To all our friends and supporters who have stood with us both publicly and behind the scenes, we offer our deepest gratitude.

While we are disappointed by the Texas Supreme Court’s unwillingness to consider this case further, neither that decision nor the previous ruling of the Texas Court of Appeals vindicate or validate the things written in *ECNR*. The Supreme Court has chosen simply not to consider the matter. As for the Appeals Court, their primary conclusion was that the complained of language in the book could not be construed as applying to the local churches or Living Stream Ministry. Harvest House has also publicly stated that they never intended for the abhorrent conduct detailed in the introduction to apply to Living Stream Ministry or the local churches.

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Yet, the fact remains that many people have attributed, and will continue to attribute, the egregious accusations made in the book's introduction to Living Stream Ministry and the local churches. As a result, many believers, especially in countries that do not enjoy the same degree of religious freedom that we do in America, are suffering for their faith.

Therefore, we respectfully call upon Harvest House to align their actions with their public statements and do the right thing. If they sincerely believe, as they have repeatedly proclaimed, that the things written in *ECNR* were not intended to apply to Living Stream Ministry and the local churches, they should remove any mention of Living Stream Ministry and the local churches from *ECNR* and any future publications that make similar allegations. We hope that they would take this action for the sake of the unity of Body of Christ and for the welfare of innocent believers everywhere who have suffered as an unintended result of that book. We also hope our brothers and sisters throughout the Christian community will join us in this plea.