

## COLUMBUS NEWS BRIEF #1

**“Suing Church” At It Again (Columbus, OH)**—After learning from past experiences suing Christian publishers, it was only a matter of time before followers of the Living Stream Ministry began solving disputes against churches in the same way. Columbus-based followers of the Living Stream have sued the church in Columbus, the local fellowship of which they were a part. The group alleges unfair treatment in being told by church leadership that they had to leave. Recently, the Columbus church issued a statement clarifying that they did not view themselves as part of the Living Stream network of churches and would not follow its policies and agendas. They felt the beliefs being promoted sounded cult-like and had produced a hostile environment within the congregation. Said Columbus elder Mike Puskas, *“The Living Stream group among us had become a separate church within our church, receiving directions, values, and goals not from local leadership, but from their headquarters in southern California. No church can survive such a thing. When it became a choice between letting these people stay or seeing the church become increasingly dysfunctional, we chose not to let them stay.”*

## COLUMBUS NEWS BRIEF #2

**Religious Suing Saga Continues** (Columbus, OH)—John Myer looked across the courtroom to where seven people were seated who were suing his church. *“They were softly praying and some were reading their Bibles,”* he said. *“It was surreal. I wondered: Can they be praying to and reading about the same God who said Christians shouldn’t sue one another?”* Yet to these Christians, ardent followers of the California-based Living Stream Ministry, no such contradiction exists. For weeks they have aggressively launched legal motions against the non-denominational “Church in Columbus.” Their actions came after congregational discipline had been exercised against the group, barring them from any further access to the church. The LSM group explained: *“We are left with no recourse but seek legal counsel.”* *“Really?”* one church member wryly said. *“Why not rather be wronged?”* [quoting the Apostle Paul]. Notwithstanding such simple logic, over several decades the Living Stream Ministry has repeatedly used litigious actions, successfully suing Christian publishers who portrayed them as a cult. Their latest case against Harvest House Publishers, however, was recently overturned in the Texas Court of Appeals. That defeat came after the Living Stream spent more than thirteen million dollars on the case. It is unclear whether the Ministry’s followers will now begin to casually use legal action against churches they disagree with. However some find the possibility disturbing. One non-Christian, hearing about events unfolding in Columbus, was stunned, saying, *“I went around my office and polled people about whether they could ever bring themselves to sue their own church. Every single person recoiled at the suggestion. Typical Christians find such tactics pretty low.”*