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Today: Dallas Judge Bars Methodist Conference From Using Highland Park Name

A true story of faith under pressure. Read the first half below, then continue online.

KEY SPIRITUAL TAKEAWAY

"Highland Park United Methodist Church"

(Transliterated from the original Hindi.)

They had gathered only to pray. When prayer itself becomes the target, faith is proved not by words but by staying.

The Story - Part One

A Dallas judge has barred the United Methodist Church's Horizon Texas Conference from using the name "Highland Park United Methodist Church" - for now. Judge Bridgett Whitmore of the 193rd District Court signed the temporary restraining order late on Wednesday afternoon, 18 November, handing the first courtroom win to the 110-year-old congregation that voted last month to walk away from the denomination. The order runs until 4 p.M. On 2 December, and it takes effect once the church posts a $5,000 bond.

The ruling does not settle who owns the name, or the building. But for the next two weeks, only one of the two congregations now claiming the Highland Park heritage may use the name at all - and it is the one that left.

That is the strange heart of this dispute. Two groups of Christians worship a short walk apart, both insisting they are the real Highland Park. One gathers in the gothic sanctuary on Mockingbird Lane, under senior minister Matt Tuggle, after voting overwhelmingly to leave the United Methodist Church. The other meets in Prothro Great Hall on the Southern Methodist University campus, led by the Rev. Andy Lewis, appointed by the bishop to shepherd the members who chose to stay.

What The Dallas Judge's Order Actually Bans

The order is narrow, and it is specific. It bars the Horizon Texas Conference, its officers, agents and attorneys from using "Highland Park United Methodist Church," "Highland Park United Methodists," "Highland Park UMC," "HPUMC," "HPUMC Oasis," or any designation confusingly similar to those marks. It also bars the conference from soliciting or accepting charitible donations under the disputed names - and from running the website hpunitedmethodist.Org in any way that displays them. That website has already been taken down.

Just as important is what the order does not do. In its own words: "This Order does not restrain Plaintiff or any person from gathering for worship, or from operating a congregation under any non-infringing name." Nobody is being locked out of a church. The loyalist congregation can keep meeting and preaching - it simply cannot do so under the Highland Park name while the order stands.

The Turning Point - What Happens Next

The story reaches a life-changing moment that changes everything -- and what seemed like the end is only the middle. Two reports disagree on the numbers, and one question is left unanswered: will the CCTV footage ever come out? Read the full story to find out what happens next.

PERSONAL REFLECTION & DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. When gathering to pray carries a real cost, what keeps a community coming together anyway -- and what would keep you coming?

2. The pastor's sister shielded him with her own body and fainted under the blows. What does costly, self-giving love look like in your own family or church?

3. When justice is delayed and a complaint is withdrawn under threat, how do believers hold on to truth without giving in to fear -- or to hatred?

READ THE FULL STORY

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