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# Methodists Reinstate Lesbian Minister

Saturday, April 30, 2005

The conviction of a lesbian minister in the United Methodist Church has been reversed by an appeals panel, [The New York Times](#) reports. The Rev. Irene Elizabeth Stroud was removed from the ministry after a Methodist court had found her guilty of violating the *Book of Discipline* of the United Methodist Church by announcing that she was in a lesbian relationship with another woman. The *Book of Discipline* states that homosexuality is incompatible with the teachings of Jesus and excludes “practicing homosexuals” from the ordained ministry. Following the sad example of other liberal church courts, this panel, which voted 8-1 to reverse the conviction, ignored the clear instruction of the church. In this case, the panel declared that the denomination had never defined the phrase “practicing homosexual.” By now, all must know that a determined band of homosexual activists will not rest until homosexuality is normalized, even in the ministry. They will ignore the clear teachings of Scripture, the discipline of their churches, and the integrity of the English language. When “practicing homosexual” needs further definition, sanity has left the room. Rev. Ira Gallaway of [The Confessing Movement](#) within the United Methodist Church released the following [statement](#): “The Northeastern Jurisdiction Committee on Appeals has refused to follow the teaching of Scripture, two-thousand years of Judeo-Christian tradition, and the clear teaching of The Book of Doctrine and Discipline of The United Methodist Church with regard to homosexual practice. Beth Stroud is a self-avowed practicing lesbian living in a relationship with another woman by her own testimony. By reversing the Clergy Court verdict, the Jurisdictional Committee has brought great harm to The United Methodist Church. Surely the Judicial Council will take a careful look at this action and reverse this decision. The Council has already ruled in 2004 that a clergy person found to be a practicing homosexual by a Church trial may not be appointed to serve as a United Methodist pastor. How tragic that a radical minority within The United Methodist Church seem determined to divide the Church.” Tragic, indeed—but the tragedy is not limited to one denomination. Furthermore, the UMC language is abundantly clear. It’s [Book of Discipline](#) reads as follows: “While persons set apart by the Church for ordained ministry are subject to all the frailties of the human condition and the pressures of society, they are required to maintain the highest standards of holy living in the world. The practice of homosexuality is incompatible with Christian teaching. Therefore self-avowed practicing homosexuals are not to be certified as candidates, ordained as ministers, or appointed to serve in The United Methodist Church.” In a footnote, the text stipulates a definition: “‘Self-avowed practicing homosexual’ is understood to mean that a person openly acknowledges to a bishop, district superintendent, district committee of ordained ministry, board of ordained ministry, or clergy session that the person is a practicing homosexual.”

For background on this controversy, see my earlier commentary, “[United Methodists Reach a Verdict](#),” from December 8, 2004.

UPDATE: Here are links to the text of the [Committee on Appeals](#) decision, Official UMC [news coverage](#), and a statement from the [First United Methodist Church of Germantown, PA](#).

