

This is a true story.

They had a long and reasonable marriage with the usual conflicts over money and who was responsible for various household chores. But late in life, an issue arose that led to their divorce.

She became convinced that she had a right to the authority and position equal to that of her husband. He believed she had a vital role of importance, but a different one than he. He had the scripture on his side, she had political correctness on her side. Her insistence to obtain and exercise an authority exactly equal to the husband in the family became so stressful that her husband decided to move out of their home, leaving her in charge of what had been their mutual possessions.

Nevertheless, he continued to regard himself as a married man and provided for himself only the most modest personal items while he looked forward to a possible reconciliation. Sadly, his various efforts to discuss the possible modalities of reconciliation were always rebuffed.

Meanwhile, after courting a number of others who upheld her rights, she chose to marry again, taking a new name and a radically altered view of her role in the household. She changed the way she conducted herself in public and the past interests and beliefs she once shared with her first husband she now abandoned.

After her remarriage and the taking of her new name, he was astonished to be served by a lawsuit which forbade him to use his own name. She argued that she had long used his name and even though she no longer intended to use the name of her ex-husband, she had the right to his name because, like the possessions he had left behind, she had obtained the legal right to deprive him of his own name.

The husband in this sad story is the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints. The wife is now known as the Community of Christ.

The male and female heads of the household had a long and productive relationship, until the female side of the church insisted upon taking on the role previously held by male priesthood. This insistence provoked a divorce within the church, with the female side continuing in possession of all the effects of the household, while the male side was dispossessed and became known as the independent Restoration Branches.

These independent Restoration Branches continued to insist that they were a continuation of the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints. This was their heritage and it had been theirs for more than a hundred years. Even though they were not in physical possession of the family properties, they continued to ask for a formal meeting for reconciliation which was never granted.

Meanwhile the female side of the RLDS church courted other organizations, making her commitment to the World Council of Churches and moving that process forward by changing her name to the

Community of Christ.

Imagine the shock of the independent Restoration Branches when the Community of Christ went to court to obtain a legal way to ban the Restorationists from using their own name. The COC then sued two of these branches, declaring that they did not have a lawful right to use the name (RLDS) by which these branch members had been identified for more than a hundred years.

Let us appeal to justice here. This is a simple case of divorce. The Community of Christ is the former wife. The Restoration Branches, the former husband. The wife has retained all property. The husband was willing to move out of the family properties without any legal argument.

After the husband (Restoration Branches) made a plea to the Community of Christ to release the RLDS name to them, the leaders of the Community of Christ asked their lawyers to find a way to prevent the Restoration Branches from using or exercising their right to use their RLDS name.

In 2005-6 the Community of Christ quietly secured a “trademark” designation of the name of the RLDS church, and then attacked these Restoration Branches for using the name through lawsuits. It is clear that the Community of Christ has legally registered the RLDS name in order to prevent Restoration Branches from using it.

These are the facts of the case. What is justice? Members of the local community and members of the Community of Christ ought to be able to see that a grave injustice is being done to the Devon Park branch. It has cost them nearly a half million dollars to defend their right to use the name of the church in which they were baptized and have been members of for their entire lives.

Notice that at the same time as the Community of Christ has declared that the Devon Park members cannot use their RLDS name, they themselves have changed all their recorded membership to the “Community of Christ.” So members of Devon Park branch who were baptized and confirmed members of the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints can request their membership card; but when it is sent to the member, it will declare that they are a member of the Community of Christ. If that is not hypocrisy, it is very close to it.

Members of the local community should expect better from the leadership of the Community of Christ who claim to stand for peace and justice in the world but practice legal warfare on innocent ones they claim are part of their own membership. Members of the Community of Christ ought to be outraged by the leadership attempt to keep the “husband” in this analogy from using his own name and that they have used the money of it’s contributors to do so.

This matter will be argued before a court of appeals this year because the tiny Devon Park branch is determined not to surrender the heritage it has held for decades and not to be bullied by the COC. But we ordinary citizens and church members ought to be able to render a sensible judgment on this matter and pressure those leaders of the COC who pursue the lawsuit to drop it.