

Judge Rules Man Can Hand Out Bibles at Gay Pride Festival

An appeals court in Minnesota has ruled that a Christian man can continue to freely distribute Bibles at a gay pride festival.

A previous ruling from a lower court was reversed, and now Brian Johnson has the freedom to hand out Bibles at the Twin Cities Pride Festival in Minneapolis, as he had been doing for more than a decade.

Johnson distributed Bibles every year from a booth at the festival from 1998 until 2009, when event organizers took issue with his beliefs and barred his stall.

When Johnson returned the following year to give out Bibles without a booth, he was arrested by police for trespassing, and the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board said he must stay outside the confines of the festival.

Johnson took the board to federal court, but a district judge ruled they had made reasonable provision for his Bible distribution.

Johnson then appealed the decision to the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Eighth Circuit, which has now ruled in his favor.

His legal case was backed by the Center for Religious Expression, a religious liberty organization.

Nate Kellum, chief counsel for the group, says, "We are pleased that the appellate court recognizes the fundamental freedoms at stake for Johnson."

He adds, "In a public place during an event open to the public, Johnson has every right to share his views and

contribute to the marketplace of ideas—just like everyone else.”

Recently, two preachers in California arrested for reading the Bible aloud in public were found not guilty by a Superior Court judge.

Pastor Bret Coronado and Mark Mackey were outside a local Department of Motor Vehicles center in February 2011 when a California Highway Patrol officer took Mackey’s Bible away and arrested him.

But a judge ruled that the prosecution’s case against the pair failed to prove the law had been broken.