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# Task Force on Missionaries & Cults

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a project of the

**Jewish Community Relations Council of New York, Inc.**

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**www.TForce.org**

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## Sample Letter to Publishers of Telephone Directories

Dear Phone Directory Publisher,

I write to you in my capacity as \_\_\_\_\_. It has been brought to our attention that \_\_\_\_\_, a Christian house of worship, is erroneously listed under the heading of “Synagogues” in the most recent edition of your phone directory.

We understand that this placement may have been a simple oversight, due to confusion stemming from the “Jewish sounding” name of this congregation. In fact, Congregation \_\_\_\_\_ is just one of many “Hebrew-Christian” congregations which make use of Jewish symbols, prayers and customs to attract Jewish people to their services.

Our organization strongly supports the rights of individuals and groups to proclaim and practice their religion. We are, however, deeply troubled that \_\_\_\_\_ is classified in the “Synagogue” section of your directory. In fact, it is not just our organization which strongly disapproves of such categorization – **the leadership of all streams of Judaism - Conservative, Orthodox, Reconstructionist and Reform - have publicly and unequivocally stated that although the “Hebrew-Christian” movement “...claims to be a form of Judaism, it is not. It is nothing more than a disguised effort to missionize Jews and convert them to Christianity.”<sup>1</sup>**

Indeed, we were quite gratified to learn that **Verizon recently saw fit to remove the entry of a local “Hebrew-Christian” house of worship from the “Synagogue” listings in its Washington D.C. area directories** and place it under a separate heading which made no mention of “Synagogue” or “Jewish”.

You will also be interested to know that **respected Christian leaders** of the Roman Catholic Church, national Baptist and other Protestant groups have publicly decried the misappropriation of Jewish symbols and rituals by the “Hebrew-Christian” community. **They label their efforts for what they truly are: “...a denigration of the integrity of**

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<sup>1</sup>*Meeting the Challenge*: a document authored by Professor Lawrence Schiffman, Chair of Judaic Studies at New York University. *Meeting the Challenge* was endorsed by the leaders of the four Jewish seminaries – Conservative, Orthodox, Reconstructionist and Reform. Available from the Task Force on Missionaries and Cults, Jewish Community Relations Council of NY, Inc.

**Judaism”<sup>2</sup>**

The numerous member organizations of the CRC of \_\_\_\_\_ are proud of our country’s strong guarantees of religious freedom and expression. In no way do we desire that entries of “Hebrew-Christian” congregations be censored from your publication.

In light of the above citations however, we strongly feel that the classification of Congregation \_\_\_\_\_ under the “Synagogue” heading of your directory clearly violates your *Advertising Standards & Regulations* which state that your company stands against “deceptive” and “offensive” advertising.\*

In the interest of accuracy and to maintain the integrity of our faith, we respectfully request that Congregation \_\_\_\_\_ be removed from the “Synagogue” category of your phone directory and classified under a more appropriate heading.

Thank you very much for your time and consideration. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

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\*According to the *Bell Atlantic Advertising Standards & Regulations, Manhattan Yellow Pages, 2001*. Check your local phone directory for similar statements.

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<sup>2</sup>*Truth in Advertising*: “in-house” document quoting statements of the Interfaith Conference of Metropolitan Washington, D.C. and the newspaper *Catholic New York*. Available from the Task Force on Missionaries and Cults, Jewish Community Relations Council of New York, Inc.