

Fallout Continues From Methodist Preacher's Gay Marriage Officiation

On Oct. 20, the Rev. Thomas Ogletree, retired dean of Yale Divinity School and an ordained United Methodist, officiated a wedding between his son and a male partner. The wedding announcement prompted several United Methodist ministers to file a complaint against Ogletree with the local bishop.

"The arguments offered by Dr. Ogletree are rather intellectually shallow and reflect a very sophomoric approach to Scripture," says John Lomperis, director of the Institute on Religion and Democracy's United Methodist Action. "The letter and spirit of the Old and New Testaments—as well as the writings of Methodism's founder, John Wesley—could hardly be clearer about homosexual practice."

The United Methodist Church prohibits same-sex unions. A *New York Times* article brought the controversy into the national spotlight. Lomperis hopes that Bishop Martin D. McLee and the rest of the New York Conference stand by the clear principles in the United Methodist Book of Discipline, which unequivocally defines marriage as between one man and one woman.

"United Methodist disagreements over homosexuality and other forms of extra-marital sex," Lomperis explains, "are driven by far more fundamental divisions between United Methodists who accept a high view of biblical authority, are loyal to United Methodist doctrine, seek to submit all areas of our lives to the lordship of Jesus Christ and play by the rules that are supposed to apply to everybody; and other, nominal United Methodists who openly reject our core doctrine, allow the winds of secular American culture to trump Scripture, and

zealously embrace an 'any means necessary' ethos."

Biblical teachings on marriage and sex have been consistently reaffirmed for the global, more-than-11-million-member United Methodist Church every four years by the governing General Conference, with revisionists' support shrinking so much that at last year's General Conference, they gave up even contesting the denomination's prohibitions on blessing same-sex unions.

"Obviously there are very complex emotional dynamics involved with Dr. Ogletree wanting to be compassionate toward his own son," Lomperis says. "But a basic part of parenting is understanding that not everything your son asks for is actually good for him."

Lomperis goes on to say this is "fundamentally an integrity issue."

He concludes, "Dr. Ogletree freely chose to become a United Methodist minister and vow before God to follow the communal covenants of a global denomination in which theological revisionists now are losing ground. He would have had more integrity if he had followed his wife's reported advice of leaving the United Methodist church for a sexually liberal religious group. Instead, he is bizarrely bragging about not being a man of his word."