

Methodist Leaders Rebuke Bishop Who Held Gay Marriage, Call for Charges

A retired bishop in the United Methodist Church (UMC) conducted a same-sex marriage celebration in Cedar Point, Ala., on Oct. 26. On Friday, bishops of the UMC publicly rebuked the retired bishop, Melvin Talbert.

The UMC Council of Bishops statement calls for charges to be filed against Talbert for both “conducting a ceremony to celebrate the marriage of a same gender couple” and “undermining the ministry of a colleague.” Conducting such ceremonies is expressly prohibited in the church’s governing Book of Discipline, which all ordained UMC clergy have vowed to uphold. [Click here to read the full statement.](#)

“I commend our Council of Bishops for their willingness to issue such an unprecedented public rebuke of one of their renegade members and declare that it is finally time for him to face some consequences,” says John Lomperis, the Institute on Religion and Democracy’s United Methodist action director. “Now the relevant bishops need to provide continued leadership in processing the charges against Talbert so that he is truly held accountable.

“Talbert represents the fading liberal old guard of United Methodism. This action demonstrates that the future of our denomination is not with the church-killing radicals but rather with a new generation of more faithful, global leadership committed to biblically grounded ministry for ALL people.”

“No one forced Talbert to become a bishop,” Lomperis notes. “But when individuals choose to accept election as bishop, they choose to make a covenant with God and the rest of the

church to uphold our code of conduct. If our bishops cannot be trusted to keep their word to God and the church, we have no basis left for unity as a denomination. Thankfully, our Council of Bishops has made clear that they want to have integrity in our life together, despite strong pressure to do otherwise.

“The Old and New Testaments plus 2,000 years of consistent Christian teaching could hardly be clearer on how sex is a gift to only be expressed within certain boundaries. United Methodist General Conferences have affirmed this by a growing margin, so that observers on both sides agree that future change is unlikely.

“Recent protests of this standard do not reflect liberal momentum but rather liberal desperation over the ongoing reorientation of the United Methodist Church towards biblical faithfulness.”