

Methodists Forgive Pastor Who Officiated Gay Wedding

A regional appeals committee of the United Methodist Church has reinstated the clergy credentials of a former pastor who was recently defrocked for performing a same-sex union ceremony. Frank Schaefer refused to henceforward respect the church's policies forbidding such ceremonies. Schaefer's Eastern Pennsylvania congregation experienced rapid decline and tumultuous division before his removal from the pulpit late last year.

United Methodist Action Director John Lomperis of the Institution on Religion and Democracy, a Christian conservative thinktank, commented:

This announcement is both disappointing and entirely unsurprising.

This result was a foregone conclusion, given how the appeals committee was a very unrepresentative, liberal-stacked group chaired by a lesbian activist. Committee members had agreed to the job of simply upholding our biblical standards, but instead abused their position to illegitimately impose their personal agendas on the church. Sadly, the increasingly Machiavellian liberal minority of our church has made displaying such a shameless lack of trustworthiness and integrity central to their overall strategy.

It is beyond hypocritical for Mr. Schaefer and his supporters to profess concern with upholding our denomination's standards as part of their integrity-lacking campaign to undermine our standards.

Our church needs trustworthy, selfless pastors who are men and women of integrity and who will compassionately minister to ALL people in the redemptive way our tradition has always

understood biblical Christian ministry. Mr. Schaefer has made clear his disagreement with the doctrinal standards our clergy vow to uphold, but rather than have the integrity to seek a church that would be a better fit, he and his supporters are rather selfishly seeking to force the rest of our global church to dramatically redefine our identity to conform to their more secularized beliefs. Or failing that, Mr. Schaefer is trying to at least cost our church as much damage as possible.

This does not change our denomination's biblical, Christian standards for sexual self-control. While very vocal, Mr. Schaefer and his supporters are only an unrepresentative minority of our global denomination. The UMC's governing General Conferences have affirmed biblical standards for sexual self-control by growing majorities, and this is unlikely to change.

This decision should be appealed to our denomination's 'supreme court,' to Judicial Council, which should once again defrock this unfaithful pastor, as has happened before."