

Pastor Suspended for Performing Son's Gay Wedding

A Pennsylvania pastor found guilty in a Methodist church trial of officiating at his son's 2007 **same-sex marriage** ceremony was sentenced to two concurrent 30-day suspensions on Tuesday.

The Rev. Frank Schaefer, pastor of the Zion United Methodist church in Lebanon, Pennsylvania, was found guilty on Monday of violating church law and being disobedient by performing the ceremony for his son, Tim, and another man.

The jury of nine men and four women, all **pastors**, voted to sentence Schaefer to two 30-day suspensions, to be served concurrently. He would be defrocked if he violated church law during that time.

"I am glad I'm still the Rev. Frank Schaefer. I gave them every excuse in the book to defrock me immediately," he said after sentencing.

"I am here to tell you that I will not be changing my mind."

Wearing a rainbow-colored stole, Schaefer testified during the sentencing phase that he wanted to minister to lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people. The jury said he would have to determine within 30 days how he could do that and still remain within church law.

His trial is the first of its kind since 2012, when the church's governing body affirmed its stance that homosexuality is incompatible with Christian teachings, according to an article on an official Methodist blog.

It is at least the eighth trial in the past 20 years of a member of the clergy accused of violating church law by performing a **same-sex marriage** or by acknowledging being gay,

the report said.

Schaefer served communion after sentencing, and about 100 supporters sang the hymn “Were You There When They Crucified My Lord?” – which became an anthem during the trial.

The backers tipped over chairs in the makeshift courtroom at a Methodist summer camp about 45 miles northwest of Philadelphia, symbolizing Jesus overturning moneylenders’ tables in the Temple in Jerusalem.

The United Methodist Church has some 12 million members worldwide.

Schaefer testified during the trial that he had informed a district church official that he officiated at the wedding in Massachusetts, which in 2003 became the first U.S. state to permit **gay marriage**.

© 2013 Thomson Reuters. All rights reserved.