

United Methodists postpone Thomas Ogletree's church trial

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(RNS) The trial of a retired United Methodist pastor and former Yale Divinity School dean accused of breaking church law by performing a gay wedding has been delayed indefinitely.

Bishop Clifton Ives, a retired Maine bishop overseeing the trial, and pastors representing the church and the Rev. Thomas Ogletree, all agreed to pursue a "just resolution" before resorting to a trial, said the Rev. William S. Shillady, secretary of the trial court.

Ogletree, 80, faced a church trial March 10 and 11 in Stamford, Conn., for officiating at the 2012 wedding of his son to another man. The church defines marriage as between a man and a woman, and bans clergy from performing and churches from hosting same-sex ceremonies.

The New York Conference of the United Methodist Church, to which Ogletree belongs, announced the postponement Monday (Feb. 10).

Ogletree has repeatedly said he has no regrets about his son's wedding. He has said he considers the church rules to be bad laws, and insists he will not change his mind.

Ogletree's case follows the high-profile defrocking of Frank Schaefer, a former Pennsylvania pastor found guilty of officiating at his son's wedding to another man. Several other church trials on the issue are possible in the near future.

In the wake of the Schaefer case, clergy and bishops have called for an end to church trials, saying they are divisive and expensive.