

Methodist court says no to clergy performing same-sex weddings: Judicial Council rejects resolutions by West-coast conferences

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The United Methodist Church's highest court has ruled that clergy may not officiate at same-sex unions, even in states where such marriages are legal.

The church's nine-member Judicial Council rejected separate resolutions passed by the California-Nevada and California-Pacific conferences that voiced support for clergy who officiate at such unions.

Last year, the denomination upheld rules in its Book of Discipline, or constitution, that Methodist churches cannot be used to host same-sex unions and that clergy are prohibited from officiating at them.

The latest court ruling rejected a California-Nevada resolution that supported retired clergy who volunteered to conduct gay weddings, and a California-Pacific resolution upholding the "pastoral need and prophetic authority" of clergy to do so.

Between May and November 2008, California allowed same-sex couples to marry until voters banned the practice with a constitutional amendment.

"An annual conference may not legally negate, ignore or violate provisions of the Discipline with which they disagree, even when the disagreements are based on conscientious objections to the provisions," the court ruled, according to United Methodist News Service.

In a separate case, the court said it found no reason to halt construction of the planned George W. Bush Presidential Center at Southern Methodist University, a church-owned school in Dallas.

Critics contend that the library complex and affiliated policy center will promote policies that the United Methodist Church officially opposed, including the Iraq war. The former president and his wife, Laura, are both United Methodists.

The court said there is nothing in the lease agreement with SMU that violates church law. *-Religion News Service*