

United Methodist pastor will face church trial for being a "self-avowed practicing homosexual."

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(Photo courtesy of the United Methodist News Service)

United Methodist pastor Anna Blaedel will face a church trial for “practices declared by the United Methodist Church to be incompatible with Christian teachings, including . . . being a self-avowed practicing homosexual.”

Blaedel has faced several complaints after announcing at the 2016 Iowa Conference: “I am a self-avowed practicing homosexual.” Blaedel resigned as director of the Wesley Center at the University of Iowa last April during Holy Week.

The original complaint against Blaedel was raised by John Lomperis, based in Chicago, who serves as United Methodist director at the Institute on Religion and Democracy in Washington, D.C. The institute is a member of the Renewal and Reform Coalition in the United Methodist Church, which has lobbied for maintaining church bans on ordaining gay clergy and same-sex marriage.

According to the United Methodist Book of Discipline, the church’s law book, trials should be “regarded as an expedient of last resort.”

Iowa bishop Laurie Haller said in a pastoral statement that she would be appointing a United Methodist bishop from outside the conference as the presiding officer of the judicial process as it moves toward trial. “I would also issue a reminder that a just resolution is possible throughout the entire complaint process, and is, in fact, the preferred option,” Haller said.

Haller said that, as a pastoral leader of the conference, she lamented the fact that for almost 50 years “the United Methodist Church has spent untold time, energy, and money debating human sexuality.”

After the charges were certified by the Iowa Conference, Blaedel wrote on Facebook, “I receive this news with deep sadness and grief. We offered and invited ways to do this differently, and had hoped against hope that this might be an opportunity to create something more just, holy, and loving, together.” —United Methodist News Service