

Frank Schaefer wins final reinstatement with Methodists

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(RNS) Seven years after officiating at the wedding of his gay son, Frank Schaefer has been reinstated as a clergyman in the United Methodist Church.

The denomination's top court upheld a June decision to reinstate Schaefer's ministerial credentials after a trial court defrocked the Pennsylvania pastor last year.

Schaefer appealed and was reinstated by a vote of a regional court, the Northeastern Jurisdiction Committee on Appeals. At that time, Schaefer said, "I will not refuse ministry to anyone. I will never be silent again. I will always speak for my LGBTQ brothers and sisters."

In the ruling released Monday (October 27), the church's top court upheld Schaefer's appeal while acknowledging "some within the church do not support this outcome today," according to United Methodist News Service.

Others are celebrating. The Reconciling Ministries Network executive director Matt Berryman said in a press release that it was "a step on the journey toward justice" for a church that "still has a long way to go."

Schaefer, formerly pastor of Zion United Methodist Church of Iona in Lebanon, Pennsylvania, has since moved to the UMC's California-Pacific Conference where he is assigned to a ministry in Santa Barbara.