

MEDIA ALERT – UPDATED 3-7-14

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(Please contact if you have accessibility requirements)

**Press Conference Monday, March 10th to
Announce NYAC Resolution in the Case of the Rev. Dr. Thomas Ogletree**

- WHO:** Bishop Clifton Ives, Presiding Elder of the Court, Retired Bishop
Bishop Martin D. McLee, Episcopal Leader of the New York Annual Conference
Rev. Dr. Thomas Ogletree, Respondent
Rev. Timothy Riss, Counsel for the Church
Rev. Scott Campbell, Counsel for the Respondent
Rev. Dr. William S. Shillady, Secretary of the Trial Court
- WHAT:** The Press Conference will announce the settlement in the United Methodist Denomination trial concerning the charges that were brought against Dr. Ogletree for officiating at the same-sex wedding of his son in 2012.
- WHEN:** Monday, March 10, 2014
11 – 11:30am (**Event will begin promptly. Media will have access to press room at 10:15am**)
- WHERE:** New York Annual Conference Center
20 Soundview Avenue, White Plains, NY
- CALL IN:** A Listen-only call-in number is available for those who are unable to attend:
Number: (661) 673-8600
Access Code: 109521#
- INTERVIEWS:** Dr. Ogletree will make a personal statement following the official court announcement. Bishop Ives, Rev. Riss, and Rev. Campbell will be available for interview.
- Rev. Randall Paige, complainant, will be available for comment/interview via email following the press conference: Randall.paige@nyac-umc.com

Bishop S. Clifton Ives was an ordained elder in the Maine Annual Conference when elected to the episcopacy in 1992. From 1992-2004 he was the Resident and Presiding Bishop of the West Virginia Area of the United Methodist Church. During those years he served as President of the General Commission on Religion and Race and as President of the General Board of Church and Society. Following his retirement he returned to Maine and has served as a Board Member of the Maine Council of Churches, as Finance Chair of Hope Gate Way UMC in Portland, Maine and as a founding member of Hope Acts, a non-profit "addressing needs for healthy living, housing security, and a hopeful economic future" while providing "Hospitality, Hope and Healing" for all persons in Portland's urban center. Bishop Ives currently serves on the Council of Bishops Global Health initiative and co-chairs the New England Conference initiative on Imagine No Malaria. Trained to preside at church trials in 2006, he has worked with several conferences and presided at trials on both the East and West Coast.

Rev. Dr. William S. Shillady was appointed the Secretary of the Trial Court for organizing and recording all proceedings in the case of the Dr. Thomas W. Ogletree Trial. He is the Executive Director/CEO of the United Methodist City Society, the New York metro region mission agency of the United Methodist Church. The Society has been serving children, youth and the disadvantaged and disenfranchised people of the New York area for 176 years. Shillady previously served as pastor of the Park Avenue United Methodist Church on the Upper East Side of Manhattan, the Mamaroneck United Methodist Church and the Asbury United Methodist Church in Yonkers. He has served on many boards and agencies both in the United Methodist Church and in the community. He was elected as a delegate to the 2012 General Conference of the United Methodist Church and is known for his expertise on the Discipline. He serves as chair of the Board of Pensions and Health Benefits of the New York Annual Conference and is on the Jurisdictional and Conference Episcopacy Committees. He is a mentor to candidates for ministry and has served on the Board of Ordained Ministry and serves on the District Committee as well. He is an emeritus member of the Board of Visitors of the Duke Divinity School. He is currently a member of the Council of Churches of the City of New York.

The Rev. Scott Campbell is counsel for the Rev. Dr. Ogletree. Scott is the pastor of the Harvard-Epworth United Methodist Church in Cambridge, MA. and an ordained elder in the New England Annual Conference. He teaches United Methodist Polity at Harvard Divinity School and has been involved in legal matters in the church for a number of years. He previously served as counsel for the Rev. Amy DeLong. He is co-chair of the national legal team for the Reconciling Ministries Network and is a three-time delegate to General Conference, having most recently served on the Judicial Administration legislative committee. Rev. Campbell is also currently serving as counsel to the Rev. Steve Heiss, an elder in the Upper New York Annual Conference who is also dealing with a complaint for performing a same gender wedding. He has consulted with the defense teams in a number of other cases around the country, including the recent case involving the Rev. Frank Schaefer.

Rev. Timothy J. Riss has been a full-time United Methodist pastor since 1981. He was appointed to the following churches in New York: Fleischmanns and Halcott Center (1981-1984), Franklin (1984-1990), Catskill (1990-1998), Smithtown (1998-2005), Hicksville (2005-2013) and Poughkeepsie (beginning in 2013). He is active in leadership globally in the denomination, serving as a delegate to every General Conference (the final legislative authority) since 2000 and as a member of the General Board of Global Ministries (which oversees all mission work) since 2008. In 2012 he was nominated for the office of bishop. With Genie Abrams, a City Councilwoman in Newburgh, N.Y., he has three grown children.

Terms of a Just Resolution in the Matter of The Rev. Dr. Thomas W. Ogletree

Preface

The Rev. Dr. Thomas Warren Ogletree presided over the wedding of his son, Thomas Rimbey Ogletree, to Nicholas Haddad on Oct. 20, 2012. The service took place at the Yale Club in New York City. Subsequently, The Rev. Randall C. Paige, pastor of Christ Church in Port Jefferson Station, N.Y., and the Rev. Roy E. Jacobsen, a retired pastor in the New York Annual Conference, filed a complaint against Rev. Ogletree after his son's wedding announcement appeared on Oct. 21, 2012, in *The New York Times*. The complaint triggered a supervisory process conducted by Bishop Martin McLee of the New York Annual Conference and an attempt to find a just resolution among the parties. When this process failed to yield such a resolution in the time period specified by the *The Discipline of the United Methodist Church*, Bishop McLee announced that he would refer the matter to a Counsel for The Church for further investigation.

Bishop McLee appointed the Rev. Timothy J. Riss, pastor of The Poughkeepsie United Methodist Church and an elder in the New York Annual Conference, to represent the Church's interests in all further proceedings. Rev. Riss reviewed the facts in the case and eventually determined that there was sufficient evidence to warrant a charge being filed against Rev. Ogletree for violating ¶2702.1b of the *Discipline*, which prohibits United Methodist pastors from officiating at same gender marriage ceremonies. He drew up a bill of charges, consisting of a single charge that Rev. Ogletree had violated the provisions of ¶2702.1b and presented his findings to Bishop McLee. Bishop McLee accepted Rev. Riss's recommendation to proceed to a trial and then appointed retired United Methodist Bishop S. Clifton Ives to preside over the trial. He also scheduled the trial for March 10, 2014 at First United Methodist Church in Stamford, CT.

On January 29, 2014, at the first meeting among the counsels and Presiding Officer, Bishop Ives, in keeping with *Disciplinary* guidelines, made the decision to return the matter to Bishop McLee for a further attempt at just resolution. This was done with the concurrence of Rev. Riss and the Counsel for Rev. Ogletree, the Rev. Scott Campbell, pastor of Harvard-Epworth United Methodist Church in Cambridge, MA, and with the agreement of Bishop McLee. A meeting was fixed with Bishop McLee and the other parties for the morning of February 6. At that time a verbal agreement on the general terms of a just resolution was achieved. The details of the agreement were subsequently communicated, refined and agreed upon by the Church and the respondent via email and conference calls. The terms of this agreement follow.

Agreement for a Just Resolution

After a process of dialogue spanning nearly two months, the persons signing this document have entered into a ***Just Resolution Agreement*** in the matter of the Rev. Dr. Thomas W. Ogletree and the New York Annual Conference. The comments of the Rev. Randall C. Paige and the Rev. Roy E. Jacobsen, the original complainants, were received and considered as part of the just resolution negotiations. They are entered as a part of the record of this process. The terms of the agreement are:

1. Dr. Ogletree agrees to forego his constitutionally guaranteed right to a trial by his peers.

2. Dr. Ogletree agrees to make himself available, health permitting, for at least one public forum to be convened by the office of Bishop Martin McLee to reflect theologically, spiritually and ecclesiastically on the nature of the covenant that binds us together in the United Methodist Church.

3. Bishop McLee calls for and commits to a cessation of church trials for conducting ceremonies which celebrate homosexual unions or performing same-sex wedding ceremonies and instead will offer a process of theological, spiritual and ecclesiastical conversation. His statement is attached to this document.

4. Bishop McLee will convene within six months a public forum dealing with matters of human sexuality and the United Methodist Church.
 - a. The purpose of this forum will be to contribute to healing within the body and greater understanding among those who are affiliated with the New York Annual Conference. The Bishop intends that persons would listen deeply to one another in an atmosphere of Christian respect.

 - b. This forum shall reflect a variety of different opinions and understandings.

 - c. Dr. Ogletree, representatives from MIND (Methodists in New Directions), the Wesley Fellowship, and other such parties as the Bishop shall determine shall be invited to participate in this forum.

d. The Bishop shall report on his plans for this forum and the results of this forum to the Committee on the Episcopacy of the New York Annual Conference. This Committee shall have the authority to modify the timeline for this forum if necessary.

5. The Parties recognize that certain limited third parties involved in legal consultation may be privy to the circumstances and terms of the Just Resolution proceedings. Notwithstanding those limited disclosures, the Just Resolution negotiations themselves are to be considered confidential. It is understood that the parties with whom such limited disclosure is shared are bound by the same confidentiality as the signatories to this agreement.

AGREED AND RATIFIED

March 10, 2014

For the Church:

Bishop Martin D. McLee
New York Annual Conference of The United Methodist Church
Rev. Robert Walker
Assistant to the Bishop
The New York Annual Conference of The United Methodist Church
Rev. Timothy J. Riss
Counsel for the Church
Rev. Lynda Bates-Steppe
Assistant Counsel for the Church

For the Respondent:

Rev. Dr. Thomas W. Ogletree
Rev. William Scott Campbell
Counsel for Respondent
Rev. Paul Fleck
Assistant Counsel for Respondent

Entered this tenth day of March, 2014

Bishop S. Clifton Ives
Presiding Officer
Rev. Dr. William S. Shillady
Secretary of the Court

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Statement by Bishop Martin McLee of the New York Annual Conference

I am grateful to report that the matter concerning the Reverend Dr. Thomas W. Ogletree will not result in a church trial as a just resolution has been achieved. The just resolution provisions of the Book of Discipline are clear in voicing just resolution as the preferred response in Judicial Administration. Church trials produce no winners. While many insist on the trial procedure for many reasons, I offer that trials are not the way forward. Church trials disrupt annual conference life, they drain dedicated Episcopal and staff time. Church trials result in harmful polarization and continue the harm brought upon our gay and lesbian brothers and sisters. The burdensome cost of trials combine to negate any benefit in the ongoing debate on matters relating to human sexuality.

As the Bishop of the New York Annual Conference, in consideration of my responsibility to provide spiritual, pastoral and temporal oversight for those committed to my care, I call for and commit to a cessation of church trials for conducting ceremonies which celebrate homosexual unions or performing same-gender wedding ceremonies and instead offer a process of theological, spiritual and ecclesiastical conversation. I understand that nothing in this agreement deprives any clergyperson of his or her constitutionally guaranteed right to a trial.

In the next few months I will invite the Reverend Dr. Ogletree to join others from varying perspectives to a public forum on the true nature of the covenant that binds us together. Clearly there continues to be multiple perspectives on matters of human sexuality and the response of the church. While this forum may not resolve this ongoing challenge, it will provide an opportunity for healing and a chance for open and honest dialogue.

God bless us all as we seek to be light and life in a time of theological challenge.

All my prayers,

Bishop Martin McLee

Statement by the Rev. Dr. Thomas Ogletree

In recognition of Bishop Martin McLee's publicly stated intention to approach the matter of marriage equality in a non-judicial manner, but instead to offer a process of theological, spiritual and ecclesiastical reflection, I hereby relinquish my right to a trial on the charge that has been brought against me for officiating at a same gender wedding ceremony. I further agree to make myself available, health permitting, to participate in the above-mentioned Forum that Bishop McLee will convene.

Dr. Thomas W. Ogletree