

The Church Within A Church Movement, Inc.

P.O. Box 578524, Chicago, IL 60657-8524 www.cwac.us

Press Release: September 30, 2009

MEDIA CONTACT:

Cathy Knight, Executive Director, (773) 248-3225; justchurch@cwac.us
Chicago, IL

Pro-gay Methodist minister receives Justice Award and an apology from the Bishop who punished him

Ten years ago, the Reverend Greg Dell officiated at the union of two men who were members of his congregation, Broadway United Methodist Church in Chicago. Last weekend he was honored for his prophetic leadership and received an apology from the Bishop who tried him, resulting in a one year suspension a decade ago.

On September 26, 2009, in Chicago, Illinois, at the second awards event of Church Within A Church, the Rev. Greg Dell received the Gilbert H. Caldwell Justice Ministry award for his advocacy for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people in the church and society—as well as his work for justice at the intersection of race, class, gender and orientation.

As the award was bestowed, conveners read a letter of apology from Bishop Jack Tuell. Besides overseeing the trial, Bishop Tuell was the leader of group of bishops who wrote the words that have excluded gay people from full participation in the United Methodist Church for the last 37 years. Bishop Tuell previously apologized for his actions at Claremont United Methodist Church and on line at the Affirmation web site.

Bishop Tuell wrote, “Gregory Dell epitomizes the values of the United Methodist ordained ministry at its best. Over a decade ago, when faced with choosing between maintaining his pastoral integrity or surrendering it, he chose at great personal and professional cost, to uphold it. Those of us who were a part of that misbegotten judicial proceeding will never forget Greg’s dignity, courage, and good spirit as he was dealt such an unfair blow by the church which he had served so faithfully and loved so dearly over the years. He is a genuine Hero of the Faith.”

“It takes a mature, well-grounded leader to publicly admit that he was wrong,” said the Rev. Gil Caldwell. “Bishop Tuell has stepped up, changed his mind and apologized for the harm he did. It’s time for the whole church to change—to respect all differences in our human family.”

President Emeritus Donald Messer of Iliff School of Theology sent an open letter of tribute to Greg Dell and said, “Prophets by the very nature and definition of the term never get honored by the communities of faith they seek to reform... I salute you as one of United Methodism’s prophets of justice and inclusiveness. Some day others – and their descendants – will hang their heads in shame, but your family and friends will point to your legacy with pride, celebrating your vision and courage.”

“We have a vision of what the church will be—fully inclusive and fully welcoming,” said Cathy Knight, executive director of Church Within A Church. “We started as a grassroots response to discriminatory actions of the United Methodist Church. Today, we are challenging the racism and heterosexism of the church and are leading the church to live tomorrow today. In 2008 we sponsored two extraordinary ordinations and we are planning additional ordinations and church plants for the near future.”

Church Within A Church is a progressive Methodist movement dedicated to BEing the fully inclusive church and to model what the United Methodist Church can be.

###