

METRO

Church hires ousted pastor as organizer

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The Rev. Gregory Dell, suspended by Methodist authorities for disobedience after performing a same-sex union here, has been hired by members of his church to be a national organizer on issues of sexual orientation.

But members of the Broadway United Methodist Church, 3344 N. Broadway, are on a "collision course" with the United Methodist denomination, a church prosecutor warned Tuesday.

The Rev. Scott Field said that allowing Dell to stay in the church-owned parsonage as executive director of All Things Charity, an advocacy group, could prompt the national church to take administrative actions to enforce its rulings on its own property.

"It's a game of chicken, seeing who will swerve first," said Field, a member of the church prosecution team.

Dell, who has refused to stop performing same-sex ceremonies, said he viewed his national job as a temporary solution.

"I'd still rather be a pastor, but this is going to be working," Dell said Tuesday. "It's all very legitimate. The suspension was very clear."

A United Methodist Trial Court decided March 26 to suspend Dell

indefinitely starting July 5 for officiating a service for two gay men last September at the church.

Dell argued he was fulfilling his pastoral duties because a third of the 180 members are gay or lesbian. He and his supporters have until Friday to decide whether to appeal the ruling, which calls for him to remain suspended until he agrees to stop performing same-sex rituals.

For now, Dell plans to assume the duties as executive director of All Things Charity on July 6.

An interim pastor will be appointed to fill the vacancy, but will be given a housing allowance rather than keys to the



Rev. Gregory Dell

parsonage under the terms of this offer. Dell and his wife will continue to live in church property next to the church. Part of Dell's salary will come from \$30,000 remaining in his Justice Fund, which also helped pay for his defense last month.

"This is a way to keep [Rev. Dell] whole," said Courtney Cosgrove, a spokeswoman for the Broadway church.

About 50 members of the congregation voted unanimously on April 14 to create a job with All Things Charity, which was begun two years ago, but has no full-time employees, Cosgrove said. Both Bishop C. Joseph Sprague and other local church leadership have endorsed the plan.