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## Good News movement applauds Dell verdict, penalty

By United Methodist News Service

Good News, an evangelical renewal movement within the United Methodist Church, is applauding both the guilty verdict and the penalty in the March 25-26 church trial of Chicago pastor Greg Dell.

By a 10-3 vote at the trial in Downers Grove, Ill., Dell was found guilty of disobeying the order and discipline of the United Methodist Church by performing a union ceremony for two men at Broadway United Methodist Church, where he is pastor. The trial court suspended Dell, effective July 5, until he promises not to conduct such same-sex ceremonies or until the denomination's policy against them changes.

"It is clear that the church does not set policy related to important matters of church discipline by resorting to ecclesiastical disobedience . . . (but ) at our quadrennial general conferences," the Good News group said, in a statement issued March 30 in Wilmore, Ky.

If the denomination's *Book of Discipline* had not been upheld, Good News leaders said, "we would have had nothing binding the covenant community together."

The issue of same-sex union is "only symptomatic of a different theological mindset that exists within the denomination," said the Rev. Phil Granger, Kokomo (Ind.) district superintendent and chairman of the Good News board of directors.

The trial court's decision strengthened the church "by clarifying and emphasizing the relationship that clergy have to the denomination and to one another," he said.

Dell elevated the concept of "pastoral care" above all biblical and disciplinary mandates, Granger said.

The Good News leaders disagreed with Chicago Area Bishop C. Joseph Sprague, who commented after the trial that there had been no winners.

"It appears to us that biblical truth and the *Book of Discipline* of the United Methodist Church have won," the statement said. "The trial was about pastoral accountability to the laws of the denomination, and that too was affirmed by the trial verdict.

"We regret, along with Bishop Sprague, the needed expenditure of time, energy and nearly \$100,000 on the trial," the statement continued. "That, however, may be the cost

of holding a church together and maintaining accountability to its polity."

Contacted by United Methodist News Service, Patricia Miller of the denomination's Confessing Movement, said her organization had not released a formal response but that she was "pleased with the verdict." Miller is executive director of the movement, which was organized in April 1994. The organization's purpose is "to contend for the apostolic faith within the United Methodist Church."