

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.

Thank you from Greg Dell

A thank you doesn't begin to say it. Receiving the Gilbert H. Caldwell justice ministry award was a humbling, affirming, energizing event of extraordinary power. Everything from the Friday night reception through the Saturday morning worship service, to the Saturday night banquet created for Jade and me was one of the most powerful experiences of our lives. For that experience to take place in the midst of The Church Within A Church annual visioning, challenging, and celebration gathering only heightened the honor. The whole weekend felt like "church". To be in the midst of a community of the faithful who are committed to the vision of a truly inclusive, justice committed church was an inspiration beyond any of our expectations. The power of life and resurrection, overcoming the blasphemy of bigotry and injustice was in every moment.

To be "inspired" is literally to be filled with the Spirit. That Spirit was present in every note of music, every tribute, every workshop, every discussion, and every person who was present or who had sent greetings and commitments of prayer and support. It was almost impossible not to be inspired!

I said at the beginning of these paragraphs that "a thank you doesn't begin to say it." But that doesn't relieve me of the desire to thank every one of those who planned, facilitated, or served in the design or actuating of the weekend. The shortcoming of trying to list those persons by name is the possibility that someone's name would inadvertently be absent from the list. Nevertheless, I would be remiss if I didn't offer a word of special thanks to Cathy Knight our Executive Director for her inspired leadership, to Kevin Johnson and Vernice Thorn our national co-conveners for their patience, vision, faithfulness, and strength, and to Gil Caldwell, whose name identifies the award and who has served for me personally as mentor, colleague, friend, and even playmate!

May Church Within A Church continue to thrive and give witness to a gospel of blessing and good news for all the world.

Thank you for the honor, and for giving me the opportunity to put my very fallible self to service in such a grand adventure!