

UNITED METHODIST CLERGY TRIALS and DISCIPLINARY ACTIONS
RE: GLBTs (gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender persons) Page 1 of 3 pages

OPEN TRIALS

Rose Mary Denman, August 24, 1987

New Hampshire Annual Conference

Resident bishop: George W. Bashore

Denman felt betrayed by George Bashore, whom Denman had befriended and trusted and who had described her as a good pastor, when she realized she was a lesbian and requested an extension of a one year leave-of-absence in order to transfer her orders to the Unitarian Universalist Association. Denman experienced Bashore's refusal as both arbitrary and unnecessary.

The trial jury found Denman guilty of being a self-avowed, practicing homosexual and suspended her from the exercise of the ministerial office until the next annual conference. Their compassionate penalty allowed her to transfer to the UUA on Nov. 12, 1987.

Let My People In: A Lesbian Minister Tells of Her Struggles to Live Openly and Maintain Her Ministry by Rose Mary Denman, Wm. Morrow and Co., NY, c. 1990.

Jimmy Creech, March 11-13, 1997; November 17-18, 1999

Nebraska Annual Conference

Resident bishop Joel N. Martinez

A courageous parishioner named Adam sensitized Creech to the church's persecution of gays and lesbians. When his subsequent advocacy for GLBT rights garnered national attention, he was denied appointment in North Carolina. Then a D.S. in Nebraska, knowing his commitment to continue his advocacy, invited him to serve historic First UMC, Omaha.

Creech officiated at a same-sex union soon before the 1998 Judicial Council ruled as law the statement in our Discipline prohibiting pastors from doing so. When brought to trial for disobeying church law, the jury found him innocent.

Later Creech briefly returned to Chapel Hill, NC to co-officiate (with a UCC pastor) at a service of union for two lesbians, which was once again reported nationally. New charges of disobeying church law resulted in a second trial and his clergy orders were withdrawn.

Adam's Gift: A Memoir of a Pastor's Calling to Defy the Church's Persecution of Lesbians and Gays, Jimmy Creech, Duke University Press, Durham & London, c. 2011.

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Gregory R. Dell, March 25- 26, 1999

Northern Illinois Annual Conference

Resident bishop: C. Joseph Sprague

The proceedings against Greg Dell came soon after the 1998 Judicial Council ruling prohibiting pastors from officiating at same-sex unions. Thus, it was considered a watershed trial; the first to test whether or not the new ruling would be upheld by the church. Dell was charged with disobeying the new church law and was found guilty after officiating at the union of two gay parishioners. He was suspended indefinitely after refusing to promise to do no more same-sex unions. An appeal found the suspension illegal and it was shortened to one year. He was reappointed to his church in Chicago.

On Thundering Wings: Homosexuality, Love and the Church on Trial, Ermalou McDuffie Roller, GoldenTree Communications, Winterset, Iowa, c. 2010.

Karen Dammann, March 17, 2004

Pacific Northwest Annual Conference

Resident bishop: Elias G. Galvan

A complaint was filed against Dammann after she informed her bishop in February 2001 that she was “living in a partnered, covenanted homosexual relationship.” She was found not guilty of engaging in, “practices incompatible with Christian teaching.”

The following May the Judicial Council ruled that it did not have the authority to review the findings of the court but reaffirmed that a bishop may not appoint a pastor who is a “self-avowed practicing homosexual.”

Irene Elizabeth “Beth” Stroud, December 2, 2004

Eastern Pennsylvania Annual Conference

Resident bishop: Peter D. Weaver

When she acknowledged living in a committed relationship as a lesbian with another woman, Beth Stroud was found guilty of engaging in “practices that are incompatible with Christian teachings” and stripped of her ministerial credentials. She appealed the court’s decision to the Northeastern Jurisdictional Committee on Appeal and on April 29 won her case. The verdict and penalty were reversed and set aside because of two legal errors (a deprivation of due process and trying to convict on a new standard or rule of doctrine.)

The original verdict was reinstated by the Judicial Council of the United Methodist Church in October, 2005

You! A Faith That Fits, Beth Stroud, (the official youth curriculum of the Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches.)

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OTHER DISCIPLINARY ACTIONS

Mark Williams, May 31, 2002
Pacific Northwest Annual Conference
Resident bishop: Elias G. Galvan

Williams was pastor of Woodland Park UMC in Seattle when he went public with his homosexual orientation in 2001 at his annual conference. His congregation supported him and wanted him to continue as their minister. Bishop Galvan filed an official complaint, charging him with “practices declared by The United Methodist Church to be incompatible with Christian teaching.” A committee of investigation voted unanimously that there was insufficient evidence to bring formal charges against Williams.

Karen P. Oliveto, October 4, 2004
California Nevada Annual Conference
Resident bishop: Beverly J. Shamana

In February 2004, when the city of San Francisco announced that it would permit the marriages of same-sex couples, Oliveto, then pastor at Bethany UMC, felt she was, ...”at the epicenter of this historic moment...” 14 same-sex couples within the congregation were married; a specific complaint was lodged against her for performing the wedding of Bill Hinson and Dan Johnson. Although Oliveto felt she had offered hopeful and joyous testimony to the church, she was charged with violating the order and discipline of The United Methodist Church.

Bishop Shamana entered into a supervisory process with Oliveto for the purpose of reconciliation and resolution. This process, consistent with the 2000 Book of Discipline, achieved its purposes.

holy conversations talking about homosexuality: a congregational resource by Karen P. Oliveto, Kelly D. Turney and Traci C. West, Pilgrim Press, c. 2005.

Donald Fado, January 16, 1968
California-Nevada Annual Conference
Resident bishop: Melvin G. Talbert

Bishop Talbert filed a complaint against Fado (along with 67 other pastors) who organized and presided over the holy union of Ellie Charlton, a United Methodist laywoman, and her lesbian partner, Jeanne Barnett, at the Sacramento Convention Center. 1,500 persons witnessed the ceremony, 92 of whom were co-officiating United Methodist pastors. Other clergy participated “in absentia” along with 19 ecumenical representatives. 24 of the UM clergy served outside the jurisdiction of the conference and so were not named in the formal complaint. Those named came to be known as the “Sacramento 68.” On Feb. 11, 1968 the Committee on Investigation refused to bring formal charges.