

Lesbian pastor to stand trial: Violated United Methodist ban

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Though she previously escaped church court proceedings after outing herself to her bishop, a lesbian Methodist minister will stand trial for violating the church's ban on "self-avowed practicing" gay clergy. Karen Dammann, pastor of First United Methodist Church in Ellensburg, Washington, has been ordered to face charges brought January 12 by a Pacific Northwest investigation committee that had earlier declined to file charges.

Dammann's case eventually reached the church's highest court, the Judicial Council, which said two lower courts had erred in voiding charges against her. Dammann, who told Bishop Elias Galvan in 2001 that she was living in a "partnered, covenanted homosexual relationship," could lose her ministerial credentials if nine of the 13 pastors on the jury vote to convict her.

"The overwhelming majority of the church is supportive of Karen's ministry and wants her to continue as their pastor," Elaine Stanovsky, assistant to Galvan, told United Methodist News Service. The bishop supports Dammann but was required by church rules to pursue prosecution. *-Religion News Service*