

# Lesbian minister to remain on leave: Karen Dammann

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The lesbian United Methodist minister who was acquitted on charges that she violated a ban on “self-avowed practicing” gay clergy will remain on family leave for another year, a church official said. Karen Dammann did not seek an appointment from her bishop to return to active ministry at Ellensburg United Methodist Church in Washington state, her district superintendent told the Associated Press.

“Karen is still a pastor in good standing with the conference,” said Ron Hines. “It was her choice that she continue on family leave.” Methodist clergy are eligible each summer for appointments from their bishops; under church rules, family leave qualifies as a legitimate “status” for clergy.

Dammann’s acquittal in March, which outraged church conservatives, prompted delegates at the denomination’s recent General Conference to tighten church rules on gay clergy to prevent a similar verdict in the future. The church’s highest court ruled it had no jurisdiction to overturn the controversial verdict, but made clear that “the practice of homosexuality is a chargeable offense” in other cases.

Dammann is currently living with her partner, Meredith Savage, whom she married in Oregon in February. The couple is caring for their adopted son, who has a respiratory disease. *-Religion News Service*