



Office of the City Clerk

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Legislation Text

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RESOLUTION

WHEREAS, Reverend Gregory R. Dell, 70 years of age, retired clergy member of Broadway United Methodist Church in Chicago, passed away on Sunday, Oct. 30, 2016 from complications of Parkinson's disease; and,

WHEREAS, The Chicago City Council has been informed of his passing by Chicago City LGBT Caucus; and,

WHEREAS, Gregory was born to Anthony and Jeannette (Bingham) Dell in suburban Blue Island in 1945 and grew up in Midlothian with sisters Gloria & Laura, during the turbulent civil rights era of the 60's; and,

WHEREAS, Gregory participated in the marches and efforts to challenge racism in Chicago neighborhoods led by the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.; and,

WHEREAS, Gregory enrolled Illinois Wesleyan in 1963, graduating with honors in 1967, with degrees in religion and philosophy, before heading to Duke University, where he graduated in 1970 magna cum laude from Duke Divinity School.; and,

WHEREAS, Gregory married the love of his life, Jade Luerssen, in August 1967, and she became his full partner in his activism. They have a son Jason, a daughter-in-law Tonya, and two beloved granddaughters Olivia and Ramona; and,

WHEREAS, Reverend Dell was ordained in 1968 and began serving churches in Northern Illinois two years later, his appointments included congregations in Naperville, Minooka, Evanston, Oak Park, and in the Lake View Community of Chicago; and,

WHEREAS, in March 1999, Reverend Dell was subjected to a nationally publicized church trial that resulted from charges filed against him within the United Methodist Church for conducting a Service of Holy Union for two gay men from his Broadway United Methodist Church congregation; and,

WHEREAS, as the second United Methodist minister in the United States to be penalized for the violation, Reverend Dell could have had the suspension lifted if he pledged not to do it again, but he refused and the result of the trial was a yearlong suspension from his pastoral duties; and,

WHEREAS, Reverend Dell was inducted into the Chicago Gay and Lesbian Hall of Fame in 2008 for his support of recognizing the unions of same-sex couples in the face of a church trial and suspension from his pastoral duties, and for his ongoing support of social justice for sexual and other minorities; and,

WHEREAS, Reverend Dell has received numerous awards, including a Chicago Commission on Human Relations award in 2000 and honorary doctorates from Illinois Wesleyan University (2000) and Chicago Theological Seminary (2007); and,

WHEREAS, in 2009, Reverend Dell received the Gilbert H. Caldwell Justice Ministry award for his advocacy for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered people in the church and society - as well as his work for justice at the intersection of race, class, gender and orientation; and,

WHEREAS, although Reverend Dell was forced by illness to take early retirement from pastoral ministry in mid- 2007, it did not stop him from his mission as he attended several protests on behalf of transgender rights in his wheelchair in July, August and September of this year; and,

WHEREAS, while his ministry focused on peace, justice, and the celebration of human diversity, including a commitment to the inclusion of LGBTQI persons in faith communities, Greg, to his family - was an avid fisherman, scuba diver, private pilot, and delighted in spending time with his family; and he will always be remembered as "Bubba" by his granddaughters; and,

WHEREAS, on Sunday, November 20, 2016, at 1:30pm at the Alice Millar Chapel at Northwestern University, a celebration of his life will be held, so all can remember his lifetime of good works, his legacy of major efforts, his mentorship and his friendship; and,

WHEREAS, throughout his career, Reverend Dell has served as an exemplary ally to LGBT communities in Chicago and beyond and as a model activist for social justice; now therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED that we, the Mayor and members of the City Council of the City of Chicago, assembled this 16th day of November 2016, do hereby honor the life and memory of Revered Gregory Dell and extend our heartfelt condolences to his family; and,

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that a suitable copy of this resolution be presented to the family of Reverend Gregory Dell.

Deborah Mell Alderman, 31st Ward