



Written by [Raven Clabough](#) on May 11, 2011

Presbyterian Church USA Approves Gay Clergy

On Tuesday, the Louisville-based Presbyterian Church (USA) — the largest Presbyterian denomination in the country — ruled that it will ordain homosexual men and women, and also ratified a proposal that removes the celibacy requirement for unmarried clergy. According to *The Blaze*, the decision is the “latest mainline Protestant move toward accepting gay relationships.”



The proposal was endorsed by the Presbyterian national assembly last year, but required the approval of a majority of the denomination’s 173 regional church bodies. Prior to Tuesday, the vote stood at 86-62, just one vote shy of the necessary majority in support of ratification. The 87th vote came during a meeting on Tuesday night.

The measure removes language in the church constitution that required clergy to “live in fidelity within the covenant of marriage between a man and a woman, or chastity in singleness.” The new provision asks ministers to “submit joyfully to the Lordship of Jesus Christ in all aspects of life.” The new policy, which reverses a 14-year-old ban of gay clergy members, will take effect on July 10, after all the regional churches have submitted their vote.

The *Huffington Post* [explains](#) the significance of the decision:

What makes this moment even more significant is that unlike the Episcopal Church, the United Church of Christ and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America which all adopted similar policies through top-level governing bodies alone, the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) requires one additional step: ratification by a majority of the individual presbyteries. We have seen ministers and elders in presbyteries like Central Nebraska, Eastern Oklahoma, Middle Tennessee and North Alabama cast the majority of their votes for inclusion. Everyday clergy and lay leaders in areas that have traditionally skewed older, and more conservative — many of whom voted “no” in previous years when this question was brought to them — have voted “yes” this time.

The Blaze writes of the contentious debate involved in the vote:

Differences over the Bible and homosexuality have split Protestant groups nationally and worldwide for years. Within the Presbyterian Church [USA], about 100 of the 11,000 congregations had already broken away ahead of the vote, but a group of large theologically conservative congregations, which calls itself Fellowship, has decided to remain in the denomination for now.

Reverend Andy Lindahl of Austin, Minnesota, who voted against the proposal, said, “I believe we are fundamentally created in God’s image, not in the image of our sexual preference. And we must all hold



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to the same standard of moral purity.”

The biblical website [gotquestions.org](#) notes, “The Bible consistently tells us that homosexual activity is a sin.” Citing a variety of verses — Genesis 19:1-13; Leviticus 18:22; 20:13; and Romans 1:26-27 — the website asserts that the Bible “teaches specifically that homosexuality is a result of denying and disobeying God.” It adds, “When people continue in sin and unbelief, God ‘gives them over’ to even more wicked and depraved sin in order to show them the futility and hopelessness of life apart from God.”

For example, I Corinthians 6:9 declares that homosexual “offenders” will not inherit the kingdom of God.

Further using biblical references, [gotquestions.org](#) explains:

God does not create a person with homosexual desires. The Bible tells us that people become homosexuals because of sin and ultimately because of their own choice. A person may be born with a greater susceptibility to homosexuality, just as some people are born with a tendency to violence and other sins. That does not excuse the person’s choosing to sin by giving in to sinful desires. If a person is born with greater susceptibility to anger/rage, does that make it right for him to give in to those desires? Of course not! The same is true with homosexuality.

Regardless of the biblical opposition to the PCUSA’s decision, the amendment [passed](#). However, though the constitution has been changed, each regional body is still permitted to decide whom it may ordain, and most analysts expect that some will continue to reject homosexual and lesbian candidates.

PCA moderator Cindy Bolbach indicates, “This amendment does not require any session of presbytery to ordain a gay and lesbian person. It leaves it up to the discretion of the local body, which knows the person best.”

According to the PCUSA website, there are 11,000 congregations nationwide, with about 2.8 million members.

Photo: Homosexual supportive rainbow flag above the entrance to a Presbyterian church.



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