

Presbyterians May Ordain Gay Ministers

The Presbyterian Church USA may begin letting gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) people in the pulpit.

In 2010, the Presbyterian Church approved an amendment that would allow LGBT people to seek ordination based on their spiritual call to ministry and their abilities instead of their sexual preferences.

Gay Presbyterian pastors aren't a done deal yet, though. The controversial amendment is now making its way to 173 regional presbyteries across the United States for a vote. These regional presbyteries have the power in their hands to open the door to LGBT ministers or slam it shut. If half of the presbyteries vote to open the door, the amendment stands.

"So far, the majority of Presbyterians are voting to return to the tradition of rooting ordination in a person's call from God and their gifts to engage in ministry," says Janet Edwards, co-moderator of More Light Presbyterians, a group that works toward the full participation of LGBT people of faith in life, ministry, and witness of the Presbyterian Church. "Finally, we may allow faithful and qualified LGBT Presbyterians to serve the church with energy, intelligence, imagination and love."

The amendment to allow LGBT ordination has been considered four times in the past 14 years, but this is the highest level of support the denomination has ever offered. Currently, 48 regional presbyteries have approved the amendment and 34 have not approved it. Many have not yet submitted their votes.

Nine presbyteries, including places like Alabama, Georgia and Oklahoma, have changed their vote to support full inclusion since they last voted in 2009. If the 50 percent, approval

rate is reached, Presbyterians would join the millions of members in Lutheran, Episcopal and United Church of Christ denominations that now allow LGBT people to serve in leadership.

“Presbyterians take great care in how we live together in our denomination. The repeated votes on ordination standards and a commitment to the process shows how strongly we believe that the offices of the Church are called discern the mind of Christ and will of God for the PC (USA),” says Bruce Reyes-Chow, moderator of the 219th General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church. “The consistent movement toward dropping all exclusionary policies tells us that God is still calling the church to its highest calling—the call to love God and neighbor.”