

439 Texas Churches Leave United Methodist Church Over LGBTQ Debacle

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Over the weekend, two of the four United Methodist Church (UMC) regional conferences in Texas approved the requests of 439 congregations who had asked to leave the denomination after disagreeing with the UMC over same-sex marriage and the ordination of openly gay pastors.

The Dallas Morning News reports the Texas Annual Conference, based in Houston, granted approval to 294 churches out of its nearly 600. And the Northwest Texas Conference, based in Lubbock, approved the departure of 145 churches from the roughly 200 it encompasses.

In addition, the Central Texas Conference has already allowed 81 of its 185 congregations to depart, and 44 of the Dallas-based North Texas Conference, with 276 churches, are in the process of leaving the UMC.

So far, about 546 of the 1,260 UMC churches in Texas, or about 45% are leaving the UMC, according to The Morning News.

As CBN News reported last month, the UMC is accelerating its moves to become more accepting of LGBTQ lifestyles, leading to more divisions within the denomination and more departures from the group.

Each of the church's five U.S. jurisdictions met separately in November to approve measures where "LGBTQIA people will be protected, affirmed and empowered."

Also, the denomination elected its second openly gay bishop.

Conservatives say the developments will only accelerate their exit from one of the nation's largest Protestant denominations.

Rev. Nathan Lonsdale Bledsoe, the senior pastor at St. Stephen's United Methodist Church in Houston, which is staying in the UMC, told The Texas Tribune the departures from the main denomination "parallels this moment in the broader world."

"It's a hard time to bring people together," he said. "We really reflect the brokenness of the culture and the world."

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