

Apostasy Watch: Lutheran Church Votes in Favor of Same-Sex Marriage

Norway's Lutheran Church voted on Monday in favor of new ceremonial language that will allow its pastors to conduct same-sex marriages, bringing it into line with several other mainstream Protestant denominations abroad.

Last April the annual conference of the church—to which nearly three-quarters of Norwegians said in 2015 they belonged—backed the principle of same-sex marriages, but did not agree on a wording.

Monday's decision involved modifying the marriage text to make it gender-neutral, removing the words "bride" and "groom." The new liturgy will come into effect on Wednesday.

In 2015 the French Protestant Church allowed gay marriage blessings, while the U.S. Presbyterian Church approved a change in the wording of its constitution to include same-sex marriage.

"I hope that all Churches in the world can be inspired by this new liturgy," said Gard Sandaker-Nilsen, leader of the Open Public Church, a movement within the Lutheran Church that campaigned to change the rules.

Norway became the second country in the world after Denmark to allow same-sex registered partnerships in 1993, and it has allowed civil same-sex marriage since 2009.

Some 73 percent of Norwegians were members of the Lutheran Church in 2015, according to the national statistics agency. The number has gradually declined in recent decades. {eo}