

Christian Leader: Presbyterian Gay Marriage Decision Will 'Accelerate Its Already Fast-Paced Demise'

Presbyterians have voted to allow their pastors to preside over marriages between people of the same sex in states where it is legal.

The move follows a 2010 vote in which the Presbyterian Church (.) removed a clause requiring pastors to practice fidelity in marriage or chastity in singleness, triggering a mass exodus of traditionalists from the denomination.

The Presbyterian Church (.), whose General Assembly starts this week in Detroit, has mirrored the decline of other oldline Protestant denominations. The latest membership statistics show a loss of 89,296 in 2013, preceded by a loss of 102,791 in 2012.

PCUSA membership is now down to 1,760,200, and at the current rate it could have no members in less than 20 years.

Christian Leaders React

This unprecedented move isn't without its opponents within the evangelical community. One of them is Mark Tooley, president of the Christian conservative think tank Institute on Religion and Democracy.

"By overturning natural marriage the PCUSA is only accelerating its already fast-paced demise. It will become even smaller, whiter and older," commented Tooley.

"Only declining denominations reject historic Christian standards and in nearly every case that rejection reinforces

the decline. Who respects a church that only echoes the secular world?"

"Many faithful have already quit the PCUSA and many more now will. But some faithful will remain. May the Holy Spirit bless their witness and lay the groundwork for the PCUSA's return some day to the teachings of the global church," said Tooley.