

Mennonites Take Steps Toward Gay Ordination

On Sunday a regional body of Mountain States Mennonites licensed the first lesbian in a committed same-sex relationship, the first step toward ordination.

Theda Good's licensure was celebrated by some Mennonite Church USA clergy and greeted with dismay by others.

Good was licensed for ministry as pastor of nurture and fellowship at First Mennonite Church of Denver, where she is currently on the staff. Originally from Lancaster, Pa., Good is a graduate of Eastern Mennonite Seminary in Harrisonburg, Va.

Whether the Mountain States Conference of the Mennonite Church will approve Good's ordination isn't clear. Good declined to be interviewed.

The Mennonite Church USA's articles of faith include a provision that states: "We believe that God intends marriage to be a covenant between one man and one woman for life."

Karl Landis, pastor of Mount Joy Mennonite Church in Mount Joy, Pa., said he expects the move to pose a dilemma and "rough sailing for relationships among conference leaders."

On the other hand, "Theda's ordination is another step towards a more affirming position," said Joanna Harader, pastor of Peace Mennonite Church in Lawrence, Kan.

Keith Weaver, moderator of the Lancaster Mennonite Conference, said he isn't sure what lies ahead. "Now the struggle is how we live together?" he asked. Those who have convictions about the historic understanding of the church (with regard to marriage) are very concerned about this action."

The Mennonite Church USA, the nation's largest Mennonite body, is the result of the 2002 merger of the Mennonite Church and the General Conference Mennonite Church.

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