

# Methodist Church Consulting Members on Gay Marriage Stance

The **Methodist Church** in England is consulting its 250,000-plus members on whether it should revise its understanding of marriage in light of the new **gay marriage** law.

More than 5,000 churches across Britain will be consulted, and the findings will be submitted to the church's decision-making body after the survey ends in February.

Under the Marriage (Same-Sex Couples) Act, which comes into force next year in England and Wales, both the denomination and the individual minister have to opt in before a **same-sex marriage** can take place on a premises.

"We do urge as many Methodists as possible to respond, thoughtfully and prayerfully, to the consultation in order to help us to gauge the mind of the Church," says Susan Howdle, chairwoman of the Methodist Church's same-sex marriage and civil partnership working party.

At present, the Methodist Church says marriage is "a gift of God" and that God intends it to be "a lifelong union in body, mind and spirit of one man and one woman."

The Church says the consultation is "not a poll on the views of homosexuality amongst Methodists, nor is it asking Methodists to decide whether same-sex marriages should take place in Methodist churches."

Howdle says the working group has consulted with pilot groups, which has helped "identify some of the key implications which the legislation poses" for the church.

Last week, a report from the Church of England said gay unions

should be marked by special church services as an act of worship.

The Church claims that such services would not be “blessings” or part of “liturgy,” but others say it would mark a huge shift away from the Bible’s teaching.

And vicar and blogger Peter Ould says, “The problem with the recommendations as they stand is that they give priests a carte-blanche to have public services affirming sexual relationships outside of marriage.”