

This Protestant Denomination Just Blessed Same-Sex Marriage

France's United Protestant Church (EPUdF) voted on Sunday to allow pastors to bless same-sex marriages, two years after Paris legalized gay nuptials amid protests backed by the majority Roman Catholic Church.

The EPUdF, created in 2012 in a merger of France's Lutheran and Reformed churches, said its synod also agreed that individual pastors or parishes can decide whether or not they will organize such blessings.

Protestants make up about two percent of the population in France, and two-thirds of them are evangelicals and mostly against same-sex marriage. About two-thirds of the French identify themselves as Catholic, although regular church attendance is in the single figure percentages.

"The synod has decided to take a step forward in accompanying people and these couples by opening the possibility of celebrating liturgical blessings if they want," said Laurent Schlumberger, president of the United Protestant Church.

The vote produced a large majority for the blessings, but Schlumberger acknowledged that "different opinions remain in our Church on this question."

Blessing or marrying same-sex couples has been a divisive issue in Protestant churches, with some liberal ones – such as those in Sweden and Denmark—fully approving gay weddings and others only offering a blessing service that is different than that for traditional marriage.

Conservative Protestant churches, especially evangelicals,

oppose same-sex marriage as against Biblical teaching.

Roman Catholicism, the largest global church representing just over half the world's 2.2 billion Christians, also opposes same-sex marriage.

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