

Lutherans to allow sexually active gays as clergy

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MINNEAPOLIS — Leaders of the nation's largest Lutheran church voted Friday to allow sexually active gays and lesbians in committed relationships to serve as clergy.

Gays and lesbians are currently allowed to serve as ministers in the [Evangelical Lutheran Church in America](#) only if they remain celibate. The proposal to change that passed with 68 percent approval.

At 4.7 million members and about 10,000 congregations in the United States, the ELCA is one of the largest U.S. Christian denominations yet to take a more gay-friendly stance on clergy.

The final decision on whether to hire gay clergy in committed relationships will lie with individual congregations.

Some critics of the proposal have predicted its passage could cause individual congregations to split off from the ELCA, as has been the case with other [Christian denominations](#), including the [Episcopal Church](#).

The debate over the so-called "ministry recommendations" got under way first thing Friday, and delegate Al Quie, a former Republican governor of Minnesota, proposed an alternative: "Practicing homosexual persons are excluded from rostered leadership in this church."

The proposal, which would have left the church's policy more or less unchanged, failed. Conservatives had lost an important vote Wednesday night when the convention's 1,045 delegates approved by a two-thirds supermajority a "social statement on human sexuality" that said the ELCA could accommodate diverging views on homosexuality.

The Rev. Katrina Foster, a pastor in the Metropolitan New York Synod, pointed out that the church has ordained woman and divorced people in violation of a literal interpretation of scripture.

"We can learn not to define ourselves by negation," Foster said. "By not only saying what we are against, which always seems to be the same — against gay people. We should be against poverty. I wish we were as zealous about that."

http://news.yahoo.com/s/ap/20090821/ap_on_re_us/us_lutherans_gays