

Church of Scotland moves closer to accepting more gay clergy

by [Martin Revis](#)

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London, May 24 (ENInews)--The church of Scotland, which has been threatened with schism since it confirmed the appointment of an openly homosexual minister two years ago, voted at its general assembly yesterday to move toward the acceptance of gay and lesbian candidates for ordination.

Members of the general assembly, meeting in Edinburgh, voted by 351 to 294 to "consider further the lifting of the moratorium on acceptance for training and ordination of persons in a same sex relationship."

The ban was put in place in 2009 in the wake of the controversy which followed the church's appointment of Scott Rennie, who was living with a male partner in Aberdeen. A special commission was established to explore the issue, and the recommendation for further examination of the matter was contained in the commission's report to assembly yesterday.

The assembly also voted to allow ministers and deacons in same-sex relationships ordained before 2009 to remain in the church and move parishes if they wished.

A statement issued by the church after a lengthy debate on the interpretation of scripture relating to same-sex relationships and the moral implications said: "A theological commission will be set up to bring recommendations to the 2013 general assembly, as well as considering whether ministers should have freedom of conscience to bless civil partnerships and the possible liturgy for such occasions."

David Arnott, Moderator of the general assembly, told reporters: "This direction is one that explores inclusion, but the new theological commission will report in two years time on that matter and decisions have not yet been made."

As seen in live Web coverage of the assembly, The Moderator called for unity despite the contentious issue they faced. "We very much hope that people who disagree with what has been decided will nevertheless remain in the church and work with us as we seek a way forward."

In a spirited debate yesterday, the Rev. Andrew Coghill, said presbyteries would be forced to accept gay ministers and homosexual inductions would multiply the length and breadth of the country. The Rev. Lesley Stewart described such talk as scaremongering, saying she did not expect a rush of openly gay ministers to come forward. Such people had been gracious in maintaining their silence during the two year moratorium.