

SURVEY SHOWS LUTHERAN CLERGY SUPPORT ORDINATION OF GAY AND LESBIAN CLERGY

SURVEY SHOWS ELCA CLERGY SUPPORT PERFORMING SAME-SEX MARRIAGES WHERE LEGAL

A majority of clergy who belong to the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) support ordination of gay and lesbian clergy, and a plurality (46%) support performing same-sex marriages in states where they are legal, according to a recent national survey by **Public Religion Research**. The **Clergy Voices Survey** is the most in-depth study ever conducted of Mainline Protestant clergy and contained nearly 60 questions related to lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) issues in the church and society.

“ELCA clergy are generally supportive of a range of rights for gay and lesbian people both inside and outside the church. Nationwide, a majority of ELCA clergy support ordaining gay and lesbian clergy, and only a minority of ELCA clergy opposes performing same-sex marriages in the states where they are legal,” said **Dr. Robert P. Jones, President of Public Religion Research**, who conducted the study. “ELCA clergy also strongly believe that the gospel message requires full inclusion of gay and lesbian members in the life of the church, and support for ordination and participation in marriage ceremonies of gay and lesbian parishioners are concrete expressions of that theological conviction.”

Seven-in-ten ELCA clergy say that the gospel message requires full inclusion of LGBT people in the church, and a majority of ELCA clergy supports ordination of gay and lesbian clergy . A solid majority (54%) of ELCA clergy says that gay and lesbian people should be eligible for ordination with no special requirements. About one-third (32%) says that gay and lesbian people should be eligible for ordination only if they are celibate, and only 14% say gay and lesbian people should not be eligible at all.

A plurality of ELCA clergy support performing civil marriages where legal. By a significant margin, ELCA clergy *disagree* with the statement, “Even if it were legal, I would not be willing to perform a civil union or marriage for a same-sex couple” (46% disagree vs. 37% agree). As a matter of public policy, the overwhelming majority of ELCA clergy support either same-sex marriage (37%) or civil unions (44%), and only 1-in-5 (19%) says there should be no legal recognition for same-sex relationships. ELCA clergy are also strongly supportive of other rights for LGBT families and individuals, such as adoption rights, hate crimes laws, and workplace discrimination protections.

A majority (53%) of ELCA clergy report that their views on LGBT issues are more liberal today than they were a decade ago. One-third (33%) says their views have not changed, and only 14% say they have become more conservative.

The Clergy Voices Survey was conducted by mail among a national random sample of senior clergy serving congregations in the seven largest Mainline Protestant denominations. The survey contained over 250 separate questions and generated 2,658 respondents with a response rate of 44%. The Clergy Voices Survey was funded by the Evelyn and Walter Haas, Jr. Fund. Full results of the study can be found at <http://www.publicreligion.org/research/?id=208>.

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