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Episcopalians To Allow Local Churches To Bless Gay Unions

By 365gay.com
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MINNEAPOLIS, MINNESOTA -- One day after ratifying the election of the fist gay Episcopal bishop church leaders approved a resolution giving local dioceses the right to bless same-sex unions.

The church's House of Bishops had been asked to create a churchwide liturgy for the ceremonies, but in a effort to quell rising opposition to the election of Bishop V. Gene Robinson(365gay.com story) watered down the plan, dropping the creation of a formal service, and giving individual dioceses the power to decide on their own whether to offer the services.

Many gay Episcopalians nevertheless hailed the measure as a victory. "We have a significant move forward in the church toward the honoring and celebrating of same-sex relationships," said the Rev. Michael Hopkins, president of the gay church group Integrity.

The compromise officially sanctions a practice that is widespread in the church. Same-sex blessings have been performed unofficially in about two-thirds of the 110 U.S. dioceses.

But, a small faction which opposed it said even the weaker resolution does nothing to heal the wounds created by the election of Bishop Robinson.

The Episcopal Church, with 2.3 million members, is one of the smaller faiths in the US, and is the American branch of the Anglican Church.

Conservative wings of the church in the Third World have threatened to disassociate with the Episcopalians over the election of Bishop Robinson and the blessing ceremonies. The group has already isolated an Anglican diocese in Western Canada, and threatened a schism of the appointment of a gay bishop in England, before he rejected the position.

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