Churchgoers Disapprove of Gay and Lesbian Pastors

Is it appropriate for gay and lesbian church members to serve as pastors and bishops in a Christian Church? Two thirds (67%) of those who attend Church weekly say no. Just 27% of those faithful worshippers say yes.

Self-identified Evangelical Christians oppose gay and lesbian pastors by an 80% to 15% margin. Other Protestants oppose such pastors by a 2-to-1 margin while Catholics are nearly evenly divided.

The only demographic group to favor gay and lesbian pastors are those who rarely or never attend church. Among this segment of the population, 49% believe such pastors are appropriate. Thirty-nine percent (39%) disagree.

One point of common ground is that the government has no business getting involved in this discussion. Eighty-six percent (86%) of all voters agree that church policy about gay pastors should be decided by churches. Just 7% believe the government should require churches to allow gay and lesbian members in leadership positions.

Three years after the U.S. Episcopal Church roiled congregations by consecrating a gay man as bishop, national conventions of the Episcopal Church and the Presbyterian Church have revisited the issue of gay church leadership. At the Episcopal Church's convention this June, delegates vetoed a proposed moratorium on appointing more gay bishops, but in a technically non-binding resolution urged church leaders to exercise restraint in their appointments?an elliptically worded compromise few are comfortable with.

Among those who attend churches that are growing, just 26% believe it is appropriate to appoint gay and lesbian church leaders. Sixty-six percent (66%) are opposed.

Opinion is more evenly divided in churches with declining attendance. Forty-four percent (44%) of those in declining churches say it is appropriate for gay and lesbian leadership appointments. Forty percent (40%) disagree.

Those who believe the Bible is literally true strongly oppose gay and lesbian pastors. Those who do not view the Bible as literally true strongly favor the appointment of gay and lesbian pastors.

On a related topic, 68% say "marriage" should be defined as a relationship between a man and a woman (and 83% say that's what most people think); 29% say marriage should be so defined to include any two adults. Again, Evangelicals and regular churchgoers tend to be most supportive of traditional views on this question.

Sixty-seven percent (67%) think that voters, not judges or elected officials, should decide the fate of an issue like gay marriage.

Crosstabs
are available for Premium Members.