

Presbytery OKs first step for lesbian's ordination: Follows procedure approved in 2006

News in the [February 12, 2008](#) issue

The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) approved in 2006 a procedure for ordaining gay and lesbian candidates for ministry, but the first step in that direction was not taken until a San Francisco regional body did so last month.

Lisa Larges, 44, who has twice been denied ordination because of her sexual orientation, was narrowly approved 167-151 on January 15 by a presbytery committee to move along to other tests of qualifications as soon as April. However, opponents were preparing administrative and church court challenges.

The case marked the first test of a procedure approved by the General Assembly in June 2006 that would allow an ordination candidate to avow his or her conscientious objection to a still-existing policy against ordaining noncelibate gay and lesbian ministerial aspirants.

"The church is a beautiful, messy thing," Larges told Associated Press, adding that she is proud of the decision by the committee.

Pam Byers, executive director of the San Francisco-based Covenant Network of Presbyterians, which favors homosexuals' inclusion in the church, called the vote "wonderful news." She said that one reason it has taken so long for a PCUSA presbytery to apply the new option was that "many presbyteries instantly adopted policies saying in effect that they would not follow the 2006 rule."

In contrast, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, which approved a resolution last summer urging local and regional church bodies to refrain from punishing churches that call partnered homosexual pastor candidates, has seen two lesbians ordained in the past three months.

In Chicago, Bishop Wayne Miller publicly stated in November that he would not discipline Resurrection Lutheran Church, which ordained Jen Rude.

On January 19 in Minneapolis, Jennifer Nagel was ordained and installed as pastor of Salem English Lutheran Church in what was called an “extraordinary” service outside the guidelines for ordinations, which ban ordination of noncelibate gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender people to the ministry. Three retired bishops took part in the service. It was not immediately known what position Bishop Craig Johnson of Minneapolis has taken in the matter.