

Few pastors asked to perform marriages for same-sex couples

by [Adelle M. Banks](#) in the [November 8, 2016](#) issue

A survey shows that since gay marriage was made legal in 2015, Protestant pastors have rarely been asked to officiate at such ceremonies.

More than 100,000 same-sex weddings have occurred since the Supreme Court ruling. But only 11 percent of senior church pastors, both mainline and evangelical, report having been asked to perform such a rite, according to a poll by LifeWay Research.

Mainline Protestant clergy were three times as likely as evangelical pastors to have been asked. Presbyterian or Reformed clergy are most likely—26 percent—to have received a request to marry a same-sex couple, while Baptist pastors, at 1 percent, are the least likely.

Pastors 55 and older were twice as likely as their younger counterparts to be asked to perform a same-sex ceremony.

“Most couples, if they want a church wedding, will ask a pastor they know or who they think will support them,” said Scott McConnell, executive director of LifeWay Research. “For same-sex couples, this appears to be an older Presbyterian pastor.”

Researchers for the evangelical research firm based in Nashville, Tennessee, also found that fewer than half of Protestant senior pastors say their churches permit LGBT people to serve, even in limited ways.

Despite the stereotypes of evangelicals being antigay, researchers found that fewer than half of evangelical pastors actually forbid LGBT people from serving in their churches. And mainline pastors, often viewed as LGBT-affirming, were split on whether LGBT people can serve.

Forty-four percent of all pastors surveyed said LGBT people are welcome in “helping or serving roles.” Fewer said they could hold more prominent public positions, such as leadership roles (33 percent), teaching (32 percent), or leading worship (32 percent).

The findings, based on a phone survey of 1,000 Protestant pastors from March 9–24, had an overall margin of error of plus or minus 3.2 percentage points. —Religion News Service

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