

# **After gay vote, UCC loses, gains churches: Reaction to affirmation of same-sex marriage**

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Since United Church of Christ delegates in July affirmed their support for same-gender marriage, the denomination has lost a total of 16 congregations from nine different regions—close to the number of 20 that officials expected.

The UCC, however, also has taken on new congregations. “In October alone, six existing churches joined the UCC, which may be a single month’s record,” wrote UCC news director Ben Guess on the UCC Web site.

In an e-mail to the Century Guess added that the UCC still “grieves the loss of any and every congregation that votes to withdraw.” The generally liberal denomination is “concerned about the loss of churches,” he said.

As of November 3, a telephone survey from UCC’s Cleveland headquarters to its regional conferences found, 16 churches had left. That number may climb. “End-of-the-year reports will be the only true measure of where we stand,” Guess said.

The Cathedral of Hope in Dallas, once the flagship congregation of the gay-oriented Metropolitan Community Churches, has sought affiliation and is awaiting a vote by the UCC’s North Texas Association. The 4,300-member church would become the UCC’s third-largest congregation after the 9,000-member Trinity UCC in Chicago and the 5,500-member Victory UCC in Stone Mountain, Georgia.

In Minneapolis, the 2,000-member Plymouth Congregational Church has planned forums about the UCC in anticipation of its vote in May, according to Guess. The UCC’s next General Synod will be in 2007 when delegates will celebrate the 50th anniversary of the merger of Congregational Christian Churches with the Evangelical and Reformed Church.