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## **NEW CHURCH GROUP OPPOSES PROPOSED GAY MARRIAGE BAN**

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A Minister with an Aberdeenshire church is leading calls for tolerance of homosexuality within the Church of Scotland, after setting up a new group opposing the views of an anti-gay faction.

The Rev Kim Cran is one of the founder members of Affirmation Scotland, a "positive, unapologetic alternative" to Forward Together - the group which has asked the Kirk's General Assembly to ban ministers from conducting so-called gay weddings.

They claim it goes against what is said in the Bible.

Mrs Cran, whose son David Mislin is gay, supports a situation which allows ministers and deacons to decide for themselves whether they wish to offer a church blessing of civil partnerships.

The minister of Chapel of Garioch and Blairdaff insists she would be happy to conduct such a ceremony in her church.

She said: "I have not been asked to conduct a gay civil partnership, but I would be happy to.

"My son David is gay, but has been welcomed into our church and community. That is how things should be."

Mrs Cran, who is 47 tomorrow, spoke out after Aberdeen minister the Rev Bob Brown, of Queen's Cross Church, urged the General Assembly to reject the calls of Forward Together.

Mrs Cran, an American who has been minister of the Aberdeenshire community for six years, said she was not supporting the principle of inclusion on purely personal grounds but as a matter of pastoral care.

She set up Affirmation Scotland, and its website [www.affirmationscotland.org.uk](http://www.affirmationscotland.org.uk), with fellow clergyman the Rev Dr George Newlands, to oppose the opinions of Forward Together.

She said: "The prelude to this debate has caused much pain within the gay community, and for those who support a broad, diverse and inclusive Church based on grace and love, not fear and prejudice.

"There are differences of opinion on any issue, but people should be allowed to decide for themselves."

Mrs Cran added: "I do think we have to draw a line on the exclusion of anyone from our Church.

"The ministry is a means of reaching out to people."

Mrs Cran moved to the north-east from upstate New York after marrying an Aberdonian engineer.

She had previously worked as a chaplain in Bellevue Hospital in New York, which became an emergency response and blood donor centre following the terrorist attack on the twin towers of the World Trade Centre.

Her rural church organised a candlelight service and a collection for New York survivors and grieving families following the 2001 attack.

At that time Mrs Cran said local people had helped her through a time of deep distress: "It underlined the fact that love is stronger than hatred."