

Minister in gay furore: I can do a better job

Churchman revealed his thoughts to committee

By Cameron Brooks - Published: 26/01/2009

A gay minister at the centre of a major row which threatens to divide the Church of Scotland says coming to terms with his sexuality has made him "better" at his job.

The Rev Scott Rennie, whose provisional appointment at Queen's Cross Church in Aberdeen outraged some evangelicals, claims he is now more able to connect with people than ever before.

The 36-year-old – divorced from Ruth with whom he has a daughter Rachel – revealed his thoughts to the nomination committee at Queen's Cross Church.

A booklet produced by the church says he re-evaluated his life after the breakdown of his marriage and the death of someone close to him.

"It has allowed Scott to come to terms with his sexuality, something he had long resisted and wrestled with due to his conservative church roots.

"He and Ruth remain the best of friends (and) both love their daughter Rachel and many happy days are spent together still.

"Scott feels these challenges and changes in life have undoubtedly made him a better minister and pastor, more compassionate and understanding of the complexities of people's real lives."

The booklet says Aberdeen-born Mr Rennie now shares a committed relationship with his Christian partner David – thought to be a religious and moral education teacher at a secondary school.

Mr Rennie, a Dons fan and Liberal Democrat member, is currently minister at Brechin Cathedral in Angus.

The congregation and office bearers at Queen's Cross Church overwhelmingly support his appointment. He is regarded as one of Scotland's best young preachers.

Joint session clerk Professor Trevor Salmon says Mr Rennie has the qualities required to build upon the tradition of excellent ministry.

Aberdeen Presbytery voted to instal the ex-Bankhead Academy pupil and Aberdeen University graduate by 60 votes to 24 on January 6.

But 12 members, including ministers Louis Kinsey of St Columba's, Bridge of Don; Peter Dickson of High Holburn; Hugh Wallace of Newhills; and Nigel Parker of Bucksburn Stoneywood, lodged an appeal because they did not approve of his lifestyle.

Mr Kinsey described the decision to appoint Mr Rennie as "heartbreaking".

Evangelical organisation Forward Together claims the dissenters represent the majority of Church of Scotland members and the situation represents the biggest "crisis" facing the Kirk since 1843.

The appeal is being examined by a church committee. If it is upheld, it will be referred to the Kirk's General Assembly in May.