

Meeting held to discuss gay minister - committee to decide if Brechin reverend will be allowed to work in city church

By Cameron Brooks - Published: 24/03/2009

A powerful Church of Scotland committee is meeting tomorrow to consider if a gay minister should be allowed to work at an Aberdeen church.

The Commission of Assembly is examining a complaint aimed at blocking Rev Scott Rennie's appointment at Queen's Cross Church in the west end of the city.

The body, partly made up of ministers and elders, will decide if the appeal should be upheld and passed to the General Assembly in May for further scrutiny.

A spokesman for the Church of Scotland yesterday confirmed the commission would be meeting in Edinburgh to discuss the issue.

Some 12 members of Aberdeen Presbytery objected to Mr Rennie's appointment in January because they do not approve of his lifestyle. The divorced father-of-one shares the manse at Brechin Cathedral, where he currently works, with his partner David.

The congregation and office bearers at Queen's Cross Church overwhelmingly support Mr Rennie's appointment, which was approved by the presbytery by 60 votes to 24.

The 36-year-old, who was born and raised in Aberdeen, is regarded as one of Scotland's best young preachers.

He has said coming to terms with his sexuality has made him better at his job because he is much more able to connect with people than before.

But some Aberdeen Presbytery 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, do not think he should be allowed to preach at Queen's Cross.

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.

Spokesman Ian Watson said the evangelical group believed in sex within marriage and abstinence outwith marriage whether people were gay or not.