

Gay minister's future still in doubt

A POWERFUL church of Scotland committee yesterday failed to decide whether a gay Angus minister should be allowed to preach at an Aberdeen church.

The Commission of Assembly convened to examine a complaint aimed at blocking the appointment of the Rev Scott Rennie at Queen's Cross Church in the city.

However after several hours of taking evidence the commission, partly made up of ministers and elders, was unable to decide if the appeal should be upheld.

The matter was therefore passed to the General Assembly in May for a final decision.

Mr Rennie (36) is currently minister at Brechin Cathedral.

He is separated from his wife, with whom he has a child, and now shares the manse with his partner David.

The congregation and office bearers at Queen's Cross church overwhelmingly support his appointment, which was approved by Aberdeen Presbytery by 60 votes to 24.

However, determined to block the move because of their opposition to Mr Rennie's lifestyle, around a dozen members of the presbytery united to lodge a complaint with the church leaders.

Mr Rennie 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.

The evangelical organisation Forward Together takes a different view, however, and claims the dissenters represent the majority of Church of Scotland members, and that the situation represents the biggest crisis facing the kirk since 1843.

"Mr Rennie has openly stated that he is intending taking his male partner with him to live in the Queen's Cross manse," said a spokesman. "This has caused enormous tremors throughout the church as it is aggressively taking the debate on homosexuality on to a new level.

"Forward Together is deeply concerned over this development."

Following yesterday's meeting, a Church of Scotland spokeswoman said the commission had heard from both sides of the argument, with representation from both Aberdeen Presbytery and the dissenters and complainers.

She said, "It was then argued that there was such an important point of principle at stake that the matter should be referred to the General Assembly.

"That motion was narrowly carried by 42 votes to 41," the spokeswoman reported.

In the meantime, she said, Mr Rennie would remain at Brechin Cathedral.

The General Assembly gets under way on May 21.