

# OneKirk

## Press Release

OneKirk Working Group  
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### **Assembly backs Aberdeen Presbytery**

*Rev Scott Rennie to be allowed to proceed to induction at Queen's Cross Church*

The General Assembly of the Church of Scotland met on Saturday 23 May 2009 to hear the case of *Aitken and Others v Presbytery of Aberdeen*.

The final vote carried 326 v 267 in favour of Aberdeen Presbytery to allow the induction of Scott Rennie's call to Queen's Cross Church. In doing so, the Church upheld the right of congregations to call their own minister. The Church of Scotland is a broad Church, with a wide variety of theological viewpoints, and so each congregation must choose their minister to reflect its own vision of ministry. While we are all committed to the authority of Scripture, different individuals and congregations interpret the Bible differently. In respecting Queen's Cross' prayerful and considered decision to call Rev Rennie as their minister, the General Assembly has acknowledged the importance of a congregation's discernment in choosing who God is calling to lead them.

Just as the ordination of women has enriched the Church's ministry and witness, gay and lesbian Christians have and will continue to serve God and their communities through the Church of Scotland. Up until now their ministries have been overshadowed by fear and the need for pretence. In upholding Scott Rennie's call, as an openly gay man, the General Assembly has taken an important first step in acknowledging that all are welcomed and valued, irrespective of sexual orientation.

Throughout much of history, both society and the church have expected gay and lesbian individuals to hide who they are. This has led to deceit and fear, and has often resulted in damaged health, lives and relationships. By forcing people to hide their sexual orientation, we force people into situations that are unnatural, while failing to challenge prejudices that exist in the heterosexual majority. We are often wary of what is beyond our experience. In supporting Aberdeen Presbytery, the General Assembly has begun to create an environment in which more open and honest dialogue can take place, and individuals within the Church can more easily learn from and understand each other.

In being honest about his sexuality, Scott Rennie has made it easier for other gay and lesbian Christians to be honest about their sexuality as well. In affirming Scott's calling and ministry as a Church of Scotland minister, the General Assembly has taken an important step towards lifting a barrier felt by many people – a fear that they will not be accepted in the Church for who they are. On Saturday, the General Assembly has demonstrated its ability to be inclusive, compassionate and welcoming. While the Church must continue this dialogue, as disagreement remains, this decision demonstrates the Church's ability to confront difficult issues respectfully and to show leadership on issues concerning discrimination and equality.

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