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EUROPE

Norwegian Bishops OK Gay Pastors

The Bishops' Conference of Norway's dominant Lutheran church voted 6-5 Oct. 2 to allow openly gay pastors. The conference offers advice but does not set policy.

The matter now advances to the Church of Norway's General Synod, where a formal decision can be made. The body next meets Nov. 12 to 27.

Russian Patriarch: Homosexuality Like Kleptomania

Patriarch Alexy II, head of the Russian Orthodox Church and Russia's senior most religious leader, told European MPs on Oct. 1 that homosexuality is like compulsive thieving.

Convention on Human Rights and similar agreements. Forty-seven nations are members.

Decisions are made by the Committee of Ministers, which is composed of the 47 foreign ministers or their deputies. The 640-member Parliamentary Assembly, composed of members of the 47 national parliaments, conducts investigations and makes recommendations. The secretariat, headed by the secretary general, who is elected by the Parliamentary Assembly, employs some 2,000 people recruited from the 47 nations. Other council components include the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities, a voice for Europe's regions and municipalities, and the European Court of Human Rights.

EuroPride Heads to Warsaw

Members of the European Pride Organizers Association, meeting Sept. 20 to 23 in Stockholm, Sweden, selected Warsaw, Poland, as the site for the 2010 EuroPride parade—the first time the event will be staged in Eastern Europe.

The association said the move "sends a strong signal to a part of the continent where equal rights and acceptance of gays, lesbians, bisexuals and transgenders are still minimal."

Polish President Lech Kaczynski, when he was mayor of Warsaw, tried to ban the city's Gay Pride march and ordered police to halt it, saying he opposed "propagating gay orientation."

Just prior to this year's parade, which drew 20,000 marchers, the European Court of Human Rights ruled that Kaczynski's attempt to ban the 2005 parade had violated the European Convention on Human Rights.

"Other cities, such as Moscow and Riga, have to learn that it is unacceptable in Europe to prohibit gays, lesbians, bisexuals and transgenders from appearing in public," said EuroPride president Robert Kastl.

Next year's EuroPride festivities will be in Stockholm, and the 2009 events will take place in Vienna, Austria.

This year's parade and related events in Madrid, Spain, were the largest ever, attracting some 2.3 million people over a 10-day period.

Russian Blood Donation Activists Fined

Six Moscow gay activists arrested outside the Ministry of Health and Social Development while protesting Russia's ban on gay blood donors were each fined \$20 or \$40 Sept. 26.



Patriarch Alexy II, who admitted to loving sinners while hating sins, compared homosexuality to a mental illness.

Speaking to the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe in Strasbourg, Alexy said homosexuality is "an illness [and] distortion of the human personality like kleptomania."

"Why don't we have advertising for kleptomania?" he asked.

Alexy added that "no one should force me and my brothers and sisters in faith to keep quiet when we call something a sin when it is a sin according to the word of God."

He noted, however, that Orthodox Christians must "love sinners despite their sins."

Some MPs from other Orthodox Christian nations applauded the patriarch's remarks.

The Council of Europe, founded in 1949, promotes democratic principles based on the European



EuroPride participants, such as these revelers from 2007's event in Madrid, will take their celebration to Warsaw in 2010.