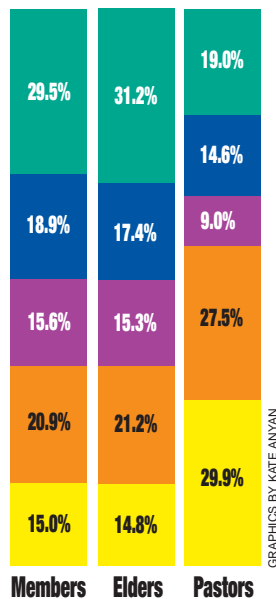
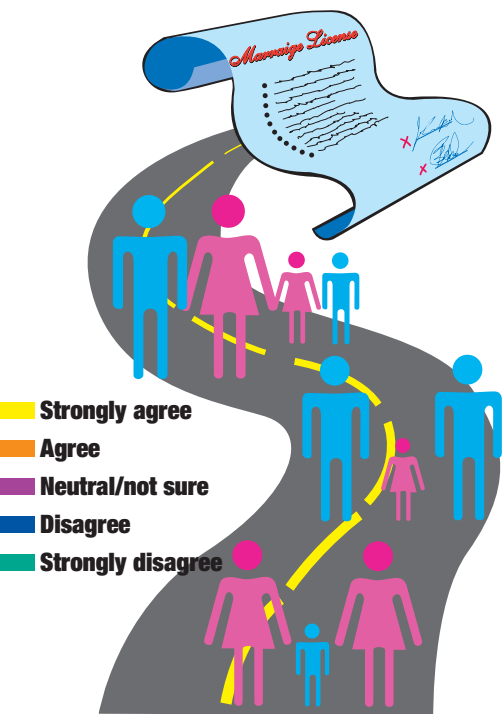


## Gay partners in civil unions should have the same rights as married couples



# GO FIGURE

JACK MARCUM

## What the research shows

The debate in the PCUSA over gay and lesbian ordination parallels a larger societal debate on homosexual rights. Individual Presbyterians have views in both areas.

Presbyterians are part of both church and society. What happens in one sphere has consequences for the other. While faith undoubtedly informs the views of Presbyterians on gay and lesbian issues in the broader culture, it would be naïve to think that opinions on issues in the church are unaffected by trends outside its doors. The controversy over homosexuality and ordination has continued for so long that we may have forgotten that the Presbyterian church, for most of its history, paid little attention to the same-sex behavior of church leaders. Only after homosexuality became a prominent and controversial issue in the larger society in the mid-1970s did Presbyterians act to ban non-celibate gays and lesbians from becoming officers.

Last month I concluded that “the controversy over homosexuality and ordination in the PCUSA is unlikely to disappear in the foreseeable future.” I stand by that conclusion. But I would add one thing. If Presbyterians are any guide, the controversy over gay and lesbian issues in the United States, especially regarding gay marriage, is also unlikely to disappear in the near term. □

## Same-sex partners and adoption

In my August column I presented opinions on gay and lesbian ordination, taken from a recent Presbyterian Panel survey. While this issue has received outsized attention in the PCUSA, other aspects of same-sex relations have also been subjects of debate in the church and in the larger society. This month, I look at Presbyterian opinions on several of these matters, with results from the same 2005 survey.

■ **Same-sex marriages and civil unions.** Only a minority of members (23 percent), elders\* (22 percent), and pastors (35 percent) “strongly agree” or “agree” that “same-sex couples should be allowed to marry.” Somewhat more, especially among pastors, “strongly agree” or “agree” that “gay partners who make a legal commitment to each other should be entitled to the same rights and benefits as couples in traditional marriages” (members, 36 percent; elders, 36 percent; pastors, 58 percent).

■ **Union ceremonies.** Around half of members (49 percent), elders (53 percent), and pastors (47 percent) “strongly agree” or “agree” that “Presbyterian ministers should be prohibited from performing ceremonies that bless the union between two people of the same sex.” Similar but slightly larger percentages (members, 57 percent; elders, 61 percent; pastors, 51 percent) “strongly disagree” or “disagree” that “it should be OK for two people of the same sex to hold a union ceremony in a Presbyterian church.”

■ **Adoption.** Half of pastors (51 percent) “strongly agree” or “agree” that “same-sex couples should be allowed to adopt children.” Among laity, responses are split, with more responding “strongly disagree” or “disagree” (members, 43 percent; elders, 45 percent) than “strongly agree” or “agree” (34 percent; 35 percent).

\*Restricted to elders currently on session.

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