

Scottish cardinal resigns as president of Catholic adoption agency

EDINBURGH, Scotland – A Scottish cardinal has resigned as president of a Catholic adoption agency that will comply with British law and consider same-sex couples as parents.

Cardinal Keith O'Brien of St. Andrews and Edinburgh, president of the Bishops' Conference of Scotland, said in a Nov. 21 statement that he had decided to step down from his position at the St. Andrew's Children's Society Ltd. after "careful consideration."

"The interests of children must always be paramount and I would hope that the staff of St. Andrew's Children's Society Ltd. will continue to work to ensure this in the years that lie ahead," the cardinal said.

Monsignor Michael Regan, an Edinburgh priest, also resigned as a board member of the adoption agency, the statement said.

The statement did not say why the cardinal had resigned but media in Scotland reported Nov. 23 that he did not want to be seen to sanction activities contrary to the teachings of the church.

Eleven Catholic adoption agencies in England and Wales and two in Scotland have until Jan. 1 to comply with sexual orientation regulations under Britain's Equality Act 2006. The regulations prohibit discrimination against homosexuals in the provision of goods and services.

Agencies that do not comply with the new law could face civil actions or possibly the loss of public funding on which they depend heavily.

In the last 10 years St. Andrew's has placed more than 230 children for adoption and around 60 children in foster care.

In August, the Edinburgh-based society indicated that it intended to conform with the new regulations. The management committee issued a statement saying the charity had “always operated within the law and to the highest possible standards and it will continue to do this ... when the sexual orientation regulations will apply to us.”

The Catholic adoption agency in Glasgow has indicated it hopes to use laws banning discrimination on religious grounds to continue to remain in the control of the Catholic bishops. It has become the first Catholic adoption agency in the U.K. to successfully change its constitution to specifically state that it is unable to act contrary to the teachings of the church.