

Calif. Man Becomes a Pioneer for Gay Mormons

(RNS) Mitch Mayne is not the first openly gay person to hold a key leadership post within the all-volunteer clergy of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, but he may be the first to announce it from the pulpit.

On Sunday (Aug. 28), Mayne was installed as the “executive secretary” to the local Mormon bishop in San Francisco, a job that makes him highly visible as he assists the bishop in nearly every task.

Mayne will work in the church’s Bay Ward, or congregation, which includes San Francisco’s heavily gay Castro neighborhood.

Mayne’s newly appointed bishop, Don Fletcher, said Mayne was chosen specifically to help build bridges between the Bay Area’s Mormon and gay communities. The gap widened when the church lobbied hard for the passage of Proposition 8, which banned gay marriage.

“I want to reach out to gays and let them know that they are welcome in the ward, wherever they’re at,” Fletcher said. “If they are, like Mitch, living the commandments, they’ll be put to work.”

Mayne was in a committed, monogamous relationship with a man that ended a year ago. Since then, Mayne said, he has lived by church standards, and his ecclesiastical leaders found him worthy to serve.

Mayne wrote on his blog, however, that he cannot promise a “lifetime of celibacy.”

“I don’t have a crystal ball or psychic powers,” he said in a phone interview. “I don’t know where the road will lead me, but my intent is to live my life according to the savior’s will, with him by my side. That’s embedded in my DNA as a Mormon.”