

Faith-based Messaging – Lutheran

Mainers United for Marriage Press Conference
Comments by Pastor Elaine Hewes, Lutheran (ELCA)
RCAD Board Member,
Bangor, ME, July 18, 2012

Good afternoon. I am Pastor Elaine Hewes, pastor of Redeemer Lutheran Church in Bangor, here this afternoon in my role as a board member of the Religious Coalition Against Discrimination, a state-wide organization of people from a variety of faith traditions whose mission it is to educate and publicly advocate for the civil and human rights of all people, including lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender persons. To that end, I am gratified to be here this afternoon to celebrate RCAD's partnership with Equality Maine and with the many other statewide organizations that support marriage equality for all persons, regardless of their sexual identities.

The Religious Coalition Against Discrimination includes persons from twenty different Christian denominations, including Congregationalists, Methodists, Episcopalians, Lutherans, Unitarians, Quakers, Baptists and Catholics, as well as persons from the Jewish community. 350 Mainers from this diverse group of faith traditions have signed RCAD's affirmation in support of marriage equality, specifically as related to the referendum question, which will be on the November ballot. These Mainers come from every part of the state, calling 158 different towns in Maine "home."

I want to publicly recognize and celebrate this breadth of support for marriage equality from so many faith traditions because sometimes it's difficult for folks for whom faith, Scripture and the Judeo-Christian heritage is important, to figure out just where to stand on this issue. Sometimes it's helpful to know that there are many faithful people who support marriage equality not **despite** the teachings and the values inherent in their faith traditions, but **because** that's where they believe the teachings and values of their faith traditions ask them to stand.

I certainly know this to be true for myself. It is my faith in a God of unconditional, covenantal *relationship* that leads me to believe that this same gift of *relationship* is what forms the basis of human meaning, joy, and fullness of life. There is no clearer image of God's relationship with us than that of a relationship in which two persons promise their unconditional love and support to one another, "for richer and for poorer, in sickness and in health, for as long as they both shall live." As a person of faith I believe I am called to support and foster all such committed relationships, not only because it is a justice issue, but because such relationships are beneficial for the larger community and give us a glimpse of the fullness of life for which God longs for all of us.

There are many many stories in the Christian scriptures which remind us that the heart of our faith is rooted in relationship, in justice, in the gifts of caring and sharing and accompanying love. It is these stories, these images that compel me and call me to work on behalf of marriage equality. It is my faith that motivates me, and the God of unconditional love who invites me into this work.

I am grateful for all of my faith partners in the Religious Coalition Against Discrimination as we seek to speak of ways our faith informs our actions and our commitments. And I am grateful for our partnership with the many other civic organizations who share with us this vision of a "fullness of life" for all. Thank you.