

## SABBATH WEEKEND PACKET

### PART 2

Samples of Opinion Editorials,  
Letters to the Editor and  
Other Public Faith Messaging  
Other Resources available from RCAD

RCAD, in conjunction with  
Mainers United for Marriage,  
Will assist in drafting, messaging, and  
Identifying press outlets to send  
Letters and Op-Eds

We also urge Clergy and Faith Leaders  
To participate in public gatherings and press conferences  
By developing your own “Faith Message” based on  
Your own journey.

## SAMPLE Op-Ed—United Methodist

Secretary of State urged to include religious exemption language in ballot question on same-sex marriage.

By The Rev. Don Rudalevige, United Methodist Church, Retired

Secretary of State Charlie Summers, the Republican candidate for the United States Senate, is currently considering the wording of a ballot question that voters will answer this fall.

The citizen's initiative would allow same-sex couples to receive a marriage license while also ensuring that no clergy, church, religious denomination or religious organization would be held liable or put at-risk their tax exempt status for not hosting or performing such a wedding.

The Secretary has proposed the following question: "Do you want to allow same-sex couples to marry?"

Though the question may have been drafted in an attempt to be concise, its silence on religious freedom leaves the question unclear.

Because it leaves out any reference to the religious exemption in the proposed law, the question is inaccurate and has the potential to confuse voters and prompt them to vote in a way that is opposite of their intentions. The wording by the Secretary of State is clearly inadequate.

While the proposed law allows marriage licenses to same-sex couples in Maine, it also guarantees protection to religious organizations and maintains the tax-exempt status of any religious institution that does not support such marriages. Because protection of religious freedom is a basic part of this initiative, it ought to be included in the ballot question.

My own denomination, United Methodist, does not, to my sadness, allow Clergy to participate in these marriages, but it is vital to me and to all who value religious freedom, that they be allowed to maintain that position without sanction. The initiative supports such freedom and that fact will not change, regardless of the wording that the Secretary of State chooses.

And it will remain central to the debate around the issue from now until November. Opponents of the freedom to marry incorrectly claim that "churches and religious organizations could lose their tax exempt status" if they don't agree to solemnize marriages for same-sex couples.

In addition to the Constitutional protection given to Religious institutions, the citizen's initiative makes clear that such a loss is not possible. To state otherwise is to deliberately mislead the public, especially religious persons.

The language, straight from the proposed law that voters will actually consider, says: "This chapter does not require any member of the clergy to perform or any church, religious denomination, or other religious institution to host any marriage in violation of the religious beliefs of that member of the clergy, church, religious denomination or other religious institution. The refusal to perform or host a marriage under this subsection cannot be the basis for a lawsuit or liability and does not affect the tax-exempt status of the church, religious denomination, or other religious institution."

As explicitly stated by the language of the initiative, religious freedom and tax-exempt status of religious institutions will not be compromised. With the inclusion of the right for religious institutions to refuse to host marriages that are in violation of their religious beliefs, this law provides new protections to religious institutions that are not in current law.

Whether the Secretary of State includes it in the question or not, the ability of clergy, churches, religious denominations and religious institutions will be protected if voters vote "yes" and agree to allow same-sex couples to receive a marriage license. That will not change.

Maine voters deserve to have the effects of this initiative accurately reflected in a representative ballot question. Clergy and churches will be free to follow their conscience and the teachings of their faith and can freely choose to host and perform any marriage. And they will be free to say no.

*TAGLINE: The Rev. Donald J. Rudalevige, Retired United Methodist Pastor and District Superintendent and board member, Religious Coalition Against Discrimination*  
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## 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.

## **SAMPLE OP-ED**

### **My Take: The Christian Case for Gay Marriage**

By **Mark Osler**, Special to CNN

*Editor's Note: **Mark Osler** is a Professor of Law at the University of St. Thomas in Minneapolis, Minnesota.*

I am a Christian, and I am in favor of gay marriage. The reason I am for gay marriage is because of my faith.

What I see in the Bible's accounts of Jesus and his followers is an insistence that we don't have the moral authority to deny others the blessing of holy institutions like baptism, communion, and marriage. God, through the Holy Spirit, infuses those moments with life, and it is not ours to either give or deny to others.

A clear instruction on this comes from Simon Peter, the "rock" on whom the church is built. Peter is a captivating figure in the Christian story. Jesus plucks him out of a fishing boat to become a disciple, and time and again he represents us all in learning at the feet of Christ.

During their time together, Peter is often naïve and clueless – he is a follower, constantly learning.

After Jesus is crucified, though, a different Peter emerges, one who is forceful and bold. This is the Peter we see in the Acts of the Apostles, during a fevered debate over whether or not Gentiles should be baptized. Peter was harshly criticized for even eating a meal with those who were uncircumcised; that is, those who did not follow the commands of the Old Testament.

### **CNN's Belief Blog: The faith angles behind the biggest stories**

Peter, though, is strong in confronting those who would deny the sacrament of baptism to the Gentiles, and argues for an acceptance of believers who do not follow the circumcision rules of Leviticus (which is also where we find a condemnation of homosexuality).

His challenge is stark and stunning: Before ordering that the Gentiles be baptized Peter asks "Can anyone withhold the water for baptizing these people who have received the Holy Spirit just as we have?"

None of us, Peter says, has the moral authority to deny baptism to those who seek it, even if they do not follow the ancient laws. It is the flooding love of the Holy Spirit, which fell over that entire crowd, sinners and saints alike, that directs otherwise.

### **My Take: Bible doesn't condemn homosexuality**

It is not our place, it seems, to sort out who should be denied a bond with God and the Holy Spirit of the kind that we find through baptism, communion, and marriage. The water will flow where it will.

Intriguingly, this rule will apply whether we see homosexuality as a sin or not. The water is for all of us. We see the same thing at the Last Supper, as Jesus gives the bread and wine to all who are there—even to Peter, who Jesus said would deny him, and to Judas, who would betray him.

The question before us now is not whether homosexuality is a sin, but whether being gay should be a bar to baptism or communion or marriage.

## **Your Take: Rethinking the Bible on homosexuality**

The answer is in the Bible. Peter and Jesus offer a strikingly inclusive form of love and engagement. They hold out the symbols of Gods' love to all. How arrogant that we think it is ours to parse out stingily!

I worship at St. Stephens, an Episcopal church in Edina, Minnesota. There is a river that flows around the back and side of that church with a delightful name: Minnehaha Creek. That is where we do baptisms.

The Rector stands in the creek in his robes, the cool water coursing by his feet, and takes an infant into his arms and baptizes her with that same cool water. The congregation sits on the grassy bank and watches, a gentle army.

### **Follow the CNN Belief Blog on Twitter**

At the bottom of the creek, in exactly that spot, is a floor of smooth pebbles. The water rushing by has rubbed off the rough edges, bit by bit, day by day. The pebbles have been transformed by that water into something new.

I suppose that, as Peter put it, someone could try to withhold the waters of baptism there. They could try to stop the river, to keep the water from some of the stones, like a child in the gutter building a barrier against the stream.

It won't last, though. I would say this to those who would withhold the water of baptism, the joy of worship, or the bonds of marriage: You are less strong than the water, which will flow around you, find its path, and gently erode each wall you try to erect.

The redeeming power of that creek, and of the Holy Spirit, is relentless, making us all into something better and new.

*The opinions expressed in this commentary are solely those of Mark Osler.*

## **FAITH-BASED MESSAGING: Methodist**

**TO: The Maine Legislative Committee Regarding Same Gender Marriage**  
**RE: Testimony in support of said legislation**

Dear Legislators:

I am a retired United Methodist Pastor and former District Superintendent for Southern Maine. I have been in ministry 45 years, having served 9 Parishes and three Administrative positions in that time. I am pleased to be able to support the full inclusion of gays and lesbians in our society, including the privilege and obligation of marriage.

I do not understand why my marriage of 44 years is somehow threatened by the desire of same gender couples to join in the same relational state. Indeed, by honoring the estate of marriage, same gender couples are strengthening the institution of marriage rather than weakening it.

Civil marriage would confirm the loving commitment between two persons in what is meant to be a permanent, enduring relationship. It affirms the couple, helps to stabilize the community, and respects the mutuality of covenant. It also helps to topple the stereotype of homosexuals as promiscuous.

In Biblical times, and indeed until very recently, marriage was for procreation and the transmittal of property. It was also hierarchical. Biblical prohibitions of homosexuality must be understood in this light. In addition, it was assumed that homosexuality was a promiscuous choice made by men already in married relationships. These acts were understood to be aberrations from the norm.

In the New Testament, the prohibition changes somewhat, as St. Paul is condemning ritual prostitution in pagan temple worship. Thus, not only is a man violating his marriage relationship, he is also worshipping false gods.

Now, many of us understand marriage to be a meeting of equals coming together in a permanent relationship, for mutual support and strength. Procreation is a choice, not an obligation. Is it too much to suggest that what the opponents of same gender marriage are really threatened by is the erosion of male hierarchical supremacy?

Another change that has taken place since the biblical epoch is our understanding of homosexuality as a given, part of our DNA, not a lustful choice. It appears we are each created with a sexuality along a continuum and each of us finds ourselves somewhere on that continuum, not by choice or even nurture, but by "nature". If we understand God to be a loving Creator, would not such a God love equally all the human creation, whatever their sexual orientation? Can we do less?

Various denominations have taken stances which prohibit same gender marriages. This freedom would not be limited by Legislative action permitting same gender marriages. Churches would retain the freedom to marry whom they will, even as they now define bans on divorce, contraception, etc.

As a Christian Theologian, I must ask, "Whom would God exclude?" I cannot believe that God excludes on the basis of our sexuality expressed in a stable loving relationship; nor should we.

Thank you for your attention,  
The Rev. Donald J. Rudalevige  
34 McAuley Road, Cape Elizabeth, Maine 04107

## **SAMPLE OP-ED, Episcopal**

By the Very Rev. Benjamin Shambaugh,  
Dean, the Cathedral of St. Luke (Episcopal), Portland  
Board member, the Religious Coalition Against Discrimination

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The Secretary of State has made his final decision on the wording for a citizen's initiative that will appear on the ballot this fall.

While he did not include language regarding religious exemption, it does not change the fact that the referendum language represents a much more detailed version of the bill which *does* contain a new exemption that will protect the free exercise of religion for every church in the state, whether they support marriage for same-sex couples or not.

The question presented by the Secretary fails to accurately describe the content of the initiative, which voters may not know they are voting on in full.

The proposal has two significant parts. First, it would allow same-sex couples to receive a marriage license. Secondly, it would create a significant exemption that would protect clergy, churches, religious denominations and religious institutions from ever having to perform or host such a marriage.

Unfortunately, the Secretary's proposed question addresses only part of the proposal. It asks: "Do you want to allow the State of Maine to issue marriage licenses to same-sex couples?"

The religious exemption is a critical and integral part of the law, especially for members of the clergy.

It guarantees that no pastor, church or religious institution will face lawsuits, liabilities or threats to their tax exempt status for deciding – in the context of their faith and the rules of their religion – that they do not want to perform or host a wedding ceremony for same-sex couples.

The exemption matters and it should be included in the question voters will see on the ballot.

Opponents of same-sex marriage have rallied to the talking point that because the religious exemption is not included in the question wording, it doesn't exist.

That's not so.

The notion of religious freedom is a powerful political tool. Both supporters and opponents of the citizen's initiative use the language to make their points.

But the proof is in the text.

Section 4 of the citizen's initiative makes clear the intent to protect clergy and churches from any encroachment on their rights to abide by the teachings of their faith when it comes to the solemnization of any marriage.

The initiative says: "Religious exemption. This chapter does not require any member of the clergy to perform or any church, religious denomination or other religious institution to host any marriage in violation of the religious beliefs of that member of the clergy, church, religious denomination or other religious institution."



It goes even further. It also says: “The refusal to perform or host a marriage under this subsection cannot be the basis for a lawsuit or liability and does not affect the tax-exempt status of the church, religious denomination or other religious institution.”

The language in the initiative is straightforward and clear. It makes certain that religion is protected and clergy will have the ability to follow their own conscience and the teachings of their religion. This matters to supporters of same-sex marriage and opponents alike.

I recently served as chair of the Maine deputation to the General Convention of the Episcopal Church and was a member of the committee that presented the resolution authorizing the a service for the blessing of same sex couples. That authorization passed in part because our committee included wording developed after hearings and heartfelt discussions between those on both sides of this issue: “Resolved that it shall be within the discretion of any Member of the Clergy of this Church to decline to preside at any rite of blessing defined herein; and be it further resolved, that this convention honor the theological diversity of this church in regard to matters of human sexuality, and that no bishop, priest, deacon or lay person should be coerced or penalized in any manner, nor suffer any canonical disabilities, as a result of his or her conscientious objection to or support for the 77th General Convention’s action with regard to the Blessing of Same-Sex Relationships.”

My faith, my reading of the scriptures, my commitment to do what Jesus would do, and my goal of sharing glimpses of the kingdom Jesus proclaimed each tell me that we should make sure that all loving, committed couples should have the opportunity to experience the responsibility, obligations and joy that accompany marriage.

Other people of faith – clergy, colleagues and friends of my own denomination included – feel differently. In a similar manner to the General Convention resolution, the citizen’s initiative makes sure that both are protected and that both equality and a diversity of perspective and practice are honored.

While the wording of the question may change, the content of the initiative won’t. The religious exemption is in there. And if voters say “yes” in November, it will become law.

## **SAMPLE Op-Ed, UCC**

Op-ed: Thank God and Well Done, Mr. President By Rev. R. Scott Colglazier  
Originally published on [Advocate.com](http://Advocate.com) July 25 2012

While it's true that many religiously conservative people are shaking their heads in dismay these days that President Obama has made a statement of support for marriage equality, others of us, who are equally committed to a life of faith, are celebrating his groundbreaking statement.

The overdrawn caricature seems to be this: church-going, Bible-reading, sincere people of faith resist gay marriage because it is not explicitly endorsed in their sacred writings, and more to the point, these writings (at least on the surface) seem to condemn same-sex relationships. (How many times can the book of Leviticus be quoted in the 21<sup>st</sup> century?) There is, however, another way of framing this issue from a religious perspective.

As senior minister of First Congregational Church of Los Angeles, the oldest Protestant church in the city, I'm happy to report that there are many people around the country who affirm faith in God, read their Bibles, and attend worship services each week, while at the same time believing that gay and lesbian persons are God's children, and that they should enjoy all the rights and protections that go along with the sacrament of marriage.

In ways that are progressive, open, and deeply compassionate, such churches welcome women and men into their communities of faith, regardless of their sexual orientation, and believe that everyone should have a right to build a life with his or her partner. Gay people are not merely tolerated in these churches; they serve on boards, volunteer on committees and sing in choirs. In short, they are celebrated. When it comes to human rights, tolerance is never enough. What is called for is nothing less than genuine welcome and acceptance. Additionally, these are communities of faith that bring theological sophistication to their faith experience, recognizing that not all parts of the Bible should be understood literally, and that we should incorporate the best of our cultural progress (science, psychology, medicine, etc.) into our contemporary understanding of faith.

As a clergy person, it has never made sense to me that gays and lesbians are criticized from the Religious Right because of their desire to marry, when in fact, the desire to marry reflects one of the highest moral commitments traditionally admired in the church. I've had the privilege of performing marriage ceremonies for hundreds of couples throughout my ministry, and in each case, these couples sought marriage because they desired to take their relationship to a new level of fidelity. Surely this is a good thing. And if I understand anything about the theology of marriage, it is also a God thing.

I gladly stand, therefore, with clergy around the country who are celebrating the fact that President Obama has stated what many of us have believed for a long time, namely, that all God's children should be allowed to enter into marriage. The fact that our president was willing to evolve his thinking around this issue sets a good example for the country. Life progresses and ideas change, even in the realm of religion. Furthermore, many of us, gay and straight, are going to be paying attention to the campaign rhetoric around this issue.

The day will surely come for our country (and faith communities) when this issue will seem as senseless as old debates about interracial marriage, children of mixed racial heritage, or worse, if people of color actually have a soul. (Yes, this was a real theological debate during the days of American slavery.) I predict that state legislatures will eventually see the light of this human rights issue, and when that day arrives, there will be open-hearted, open-minded clergy ready to perform marriage ceremonies for all

God's children. And in my opinion, that will be a good day for America and a good day for churches all around this country.

*R. SCOTT COLGLAZIER is senior minister of the historical First Congregational Church of Los Angeles and author of the recent book, A Dictionary of Faith: For Open-Hearted, Open-Minded People.*

SAMPLE

## **SAMPLE Letter to the Editor**

**Portland Press Herald, August 4, 2012**

### **Mom and moral compass support marriage equality**

I have learned a lot in the past 12 years. I used to just wonder secretly if our elder son was gay. Some signs were there, but I denied them and buried the thoughts. I didn't know much about homosexuality and it scared me.

It wasn't until his younger brother's wedding that I began to see more clearly. The wedding was in St. Louis. It was a beautiful ceremony on the grounds of a stately mansion. There were gifts and bridesmaids and flowers; an exchange of vows and rings. There was even a horse-drawn carriage to whisk the bride and groom off to the reception and an evening of dining and dancing.

It was a happy time. But our oldest son was in a strange mood. He was not his usual upbeat, fun-loving self. When I asked if something was wrong, he mumbled something and turned away. He seemed confused but said only that he was struggling with the best man toast. He wanted it to be right. I didn't pursue it at the time, but somehow knew. I just knew.

Later, I found the courage to ask and he told me about Jim. They had been together for five years. I came to understand that he was in a loving, committed relationship -- like his brother was.

I have learned so much. Our son did not choose to be gay; he chose to be himself.

Please vote for marriage equality.

*Anita Morrissey*

*Sidney*

## Sample Letter to Editor, Presbyterian (USA)

Submitted to the Portland Press Herald

Rev. Marvin M. Ellison, Professor of Christian Ethics, Bangor Theological Seminary

June 22, 2012

As a lifelong Christian, I support granting marriage licenses to same-sex couples because of my faith and values. I take this stand because I hold fast to the Bible's authoritative guidance. The God of the Bible commands us to love our neighbor as ourselves. One of the best ways to show love, respect, and care for our neighbors, including our gay and lesbian neighbors, is by encouraging committed, responsible partnerships between two persons who love each other and are willing to make their faithful pledge to marry.

As president of Religious Coalition Against Discrimination, a multi-faith network of religious leaders throughout Maine, I recognize that people of faith differ on this question and do so prayerfully and thoughtfully. That's why I'm troubled that Pastor Sandy Williams ("Another View: Civil Marriage and Religious Marriage Are One and the Same," June 22, 2012) speaks disrespectfully of colleagues in ministry as "renegade preachers" and suggests that people of faith who disagree about marriage must belong to "aberrant religious groups."

At Portland's Pride event June 16, more than 120 Roman Catholics marched carrying signs in support of marriage for same-sex couples, including former Governor John Baldacci, Portland Mayor Michael Brennan, and former Lewiston Mayor Larry Gilbert. More than 350 people of faith from 21 congregations representing American Baptists, Episcopalians, Lutherans, Presbyterians, United Methodists, the United Church of Christ, Reform and Conservative Jews, and Unitarian Universalists joined together to march behind the RCAD banner. In fact, so many religious people from numerous congregations were marching along Congress Street that day that a bystander was heard telling another bystander that he thought the parade must be "something religious" because all he could see were church banners up and down the parade route.

People of faith support marriage for same-sex couples by drawing on essential beliefs and values of their religious traditions, first and foremost the conviction that God's love is for all people. In addition, we share a core religious commitment to show hospitality, inclusion, and respect toward others, especially those who have been socially marginalized. Furthermore, in humility we recognize that our calling is not to judge others, but rather to join with them in community.

As a Christian who supports marriage for same-sex couples, I stand with people of faith from many different traditions who value not only marriage, but also religious freedom. The citizen's initiative that would allow same-sex couples to receive a marriage license includes a new addition to Maine law that would ensure that all churches, members of the clergy, denominations, and religious organizations have the freedom to make up their own minds about same-sex marriage without ever jeopardizing their tax-exempt status or running afoul of the law.

While I passionately defend any pastor's freedom not to marry a couple that he or she believes should not marry, I want that same religious freedom protected for myself and other clergy who are prepared to marry couples whom we believe are ready to enter into this holy union. Same-sex couples want to pledge their love and loyalty, ask for their community's support, and seek God's blessing. In response to that act of love, faithfulness, and commitment, many people of faith rejoice and say "Amen."

Rev. Marvin M. Ellison is professor of Christian Ethics at Bangor Theological Seminary, an ordained Presbyterian minister, and President of the Religious Coalition Against Discrimination. [122 Neal St., Portland, Maine 04102 [mellison@bts.edu](mailto:mellison@bts.edu) (207) 775-5758 (mobile)]

## **SAMPLE LETTER TO THE EDITOR**

Portland Press Herald: August 1, 2012 Rev. John McCall, First Congregational, UCC, South Portland  
**Letters to the editor: Readers urge acceptance of gay marriage**

Pastor Sandy Williams of First Baptist Church of Freeport (Another View, "Civil marriage and religious marriage are one and the same," June 22) wants us to believe that religious people have always marched in lockstep and that he knows what all Christians must believe.

Perhaps he's forgotten other teachings -- from the same Holy Scriptures -- that emphasize God's inclusive embrace: "Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love" (1 John 4:7-8). Surely this doesn't refer only to heterosexuals.

We who see marriage equality as a fresh and authentic incarnation of God's love are dismissed as "renegade preachers and aberrant religious groups." I'm one of the growing number of Christians who believe Jesus was all about barrier-breaking as he confronted the religious establishment of his day.

Over 40 years of ordained ministry, I've extended God's blessing to hundreds of couples. Each has promised faithfulness and permanence. That's a high and holy commitment. Our congregation believes making and honoring such promises builds the common good. That's why they've authorized their pastors to extend God's blessing to both straight and gay couples.

Same-gender couples have always lived among us and are a valued presence in our families, communities and congregations. The fact that some religious people condemn them doesn't diminish the truth that same-gender marriage will come in city hall and will be blessed in many of our sanctuaries.

I, for one, "renegade preacher" that I apparently have become, will celebrate that day along with many other people of faith -- and those who may have given up on the narrow and rigid forms of religion that want to push gays and lesbians back into the closet.

*The Rev. John B. McCall*

*First Congregational Church, UCC*

*South Portland*

### **AVAILABLE RESOURCES**

**RCAD has a variety of teaching materials, talking points  
on many issues surrounding Same-sex Marriage  
and resources that you may find helpful as the debate heats up.**

**Our value, shared by Mainers United, is that we are not interested in  
Debating the other side, or debating scripture.  
We are urging people to speak from their hearts,  
and to tell their own  
“Journey Story”**

**To that end, we are enclosing a couple of materials  
we hope will be helpful in doing that.  
We are also including a short piece on  
Delineating Legal Marriage and Civil Unions,  
as this will be a source of confusion  
and debate in the coming weeks.**

# Some Facts About Marriage Equality

## *Why it is so important*

*"History bends not only toward fairness and equality, but also toward common sense. Marriage strengthens couples and families, who in turn help strengthen their communities, one at a time — leading ultimately to a stronger, more robust nation. We will reach a time in this country when we value and protect all families equally."*

*Joe Solmonese President, Human Rights Campaign Foundation*

- 1.** *Same-sex couples live in 99.3 percent of all counties nationwide.*
- 2.** *There are an estimated 3.1 million people living together in same-sex relationships in the United States.*
- 3.** *Fifteen percent of these same-sex couples live in rural settings.*
- 4.** *One out of three lesbian couples is raising children. One out of five gay male couples is raising children.*
- 5.** *Between 1 million and 9 million children are being raised by lesbian, gay and bisexual parents in the United States today.*
- 6.** *At least one same-sex couple is raising children in 96 percent of all counties nationwide.*
- 7.** *The highest percentages of same-sex couples raising children live in the South.*
- 8.** *Nearly one in four same-sex couples includes a partner 55 years old or older, and nearly one in five same-sex couples is composed of two people 55 or older.*
- 9.** *More than one in 10 same-sex couples include a partner 65 years old or older, and nearly one in 10 same-sex couples is composed of two people 65 or older.*
- 10.** *The states with the highest numbers of same-sex senior couples are also the most popular for straight senior couples: California, New York and Florida.*

*These facts are based on analyses of the 2000 Census conducted by the Urban Institute and the Human Rights Campaign. The estimated number of people in same-sex relationships has been adjusted by 62 percent to compensate for the widely reported undercount in the Census. (See "Gay and Lesbian Families in the United States: Same-Sex Unmarried Partner Households" at [www.hrc.org](http://www.hrc.org).)*

Taken from "Answers to Questions about Marriage Equality", a publication of the Human Rights Campaign Foundation:  
[www.hrc.org/files/assets/resources/HRC\\_Foundation\\_Answers\\_to\\_Questions\\_About\\_Marriage\\_Equality\\_2009.pdf](http://www.hrc.org/files/assets/resources/HRC_Foundation_Answers_to_Questions_About_Marriage_Equality_2009.pdf)



# ***WHY Some Same-sex Couples Want to Marry!***

*Many same-sex couples want the right to legally marry because they are in love — many, in fact, have spent the last 10, 20 or 50 years with that person — and they want to honor their relationship in the greatest way our society has to offer, by making a public commitment to stand together in good times and bad, through all the joys and challenges family life brings.*

*Many parents want the right to marry because they know it offers children a vital safety net and guarantees protections that unmarried parents cannot provide. And still other people — both gay and straight — are fighting for the right of same-sex couples to marry because they recognize that it is simply not fair to deny some families the protections all other families are eligible to enjoy.*

*Currently in the United States, same-sex couples in long-term, committed relationships pay higher taxes and are denied basic protections and rights granted to married straight couples. Among them:*

**Hospital visitation.** *Married couples have the automatic right to visit each other in the hospital and make medical decisions. Same-sex couples can be denied the right to visit a sick or injured loved one in the hospital.*

**Social Security benefits.** *Married people receive Social Security payments upon the death of a spouse. Despite paying payroll taxes, gay and lesbian partners receive no Social Security survivor benefits — resulting in an average annual income loss of \$5,528 upon the death of a partner.*

**Immigration.** *Americans in bi-national relationships are not permitted to petition for their same-sex partners to immigrate. As a result, they are often forced to separate or move to another country.*

**Health insurance.** *Many public and private employers provide medical coverage to the spouses of their employees, but most employers do not provide coverage to the life partners of gay and lesbian employees. Gay and lesbian employees who do receive health coverage for their partners must pay federal income taxes on the value of the insurance.*

**Estate taxes.** *A married person automatically inherits all the property of his or her deceased spouse without paying estate taxes. A gay or lesbian taxpayer is forced to pay estate taxes on property inherited from a deceased partner.*

**Family leave.** *Married workers are legally entitled to unpaid leave from their jobs to care for an ill spouse. Gay and lesbian workers are not entitled to family leave to care for their partners.*

**Nursing homes.** *Married couples have a legal right to live together in nursing homes. The rights of elderly gay or lesbian couples are an uneven patchwork of state laws.*

**Home protection.** *Laws protect married seniors from being forced to sell their homes to pay high nursing home bills; gay and lesbian seniors have no such protection.*

**Pensions.** *After the death of a worker, most pension plans pay survivor benefits only to a legal spouse of the participant. Gay and lesbian partners are excluded from such pension benefits.*

Taken from “Answers to Questions about Marriage Equality”, a publication of the Human Rights Campaign Foundation:  
[www.hrc.org/files/assets/resources/HRC\\_Foundation\\_Answers\\_to\\_Questions\\_About\\_Marriage\\_Equality\\_2009.pdf](http://www.hrc.org/files/assets/resources/HRC_Foundation_Answers_to_Questions_About_Marriage_Equality_2009.pdf)

# ***WHY Civil Unions or Domestic Partnerships Aren't Enough!***

*Comparing marriage to civil unions or domestic partnerships is a bit like comparing diamonds to rhinestones. One is, quite simply, the real deal; the other is not. Consider:*

*Opposite-sex couples who are eligible to marry may have their marriage performed in any state and have it recognized in every other state in the nation and every country in the world.*

*Couples who are joined in a civil union or domestic partnership have no guarantee that its protections will travel with them to other states.*

*Moreover, even couples who have a civil union or domestic partnership and live in a state that recognizes these relationships receive only second-class protections in comparison to their married friends and neighbors. While they receive state-level protections, they do not receive any of the more than 1,100 federal benefits and protections of marriage.*

*In short, civil unions or domestic partnerships are not separate but equal — they are separate and unequal. And our society has tried separate before. It just doesn't work.*

## **MARRIAGE FOR OPPOSITE-SEX COUPLES**

- *State grants marriage licenses to couples.*
- *Religious Institutions not required to perform marriages.*
- *All states recognize marriages of opposite-sex couples from another state.*
- *Couples receive 1,100 federal benefits.*

## **MARRIAGE FOR SAME-SEX COUPLES:**

- *State grants marriage licenses to couples.*
- *Religious Institutions not required to perform marriages.*
- *Couples receive state-based legal protection and rights that are identical to those of opposite sex couples.*
- *If DOMA was overturned, couples would receive 1,100 federal benefits.*

## **CIVIL UNIONS AND DOMESTIC PARTNERSHIPS:**

- *State grants civil union/domestic partnerships licenses to couples.*
- *Couples receive legal protections and rights under state laws only; in some instances, these protections and rights are more limited than those that married couples receive.*
- *Civil union/domestic partnerships are not necessarily recognized by other states, and are not necessarily recognized by the federal government.*
- *Religious Institutions not required to perform civil union/domestic ceremonies.*
- *IF DOMA was overturned, couples would see no change in their status.*

Taken from “Answers to Questions about Marriage Equality”, a publication of the Human Rights Campaign Foundation:

[www.hrc.org/files/assets/resources/HRC\\_Foundation\\_Answers\\_to\\_Questions\\_About\\_Marriage\\_Equality\\_2009.pdf](http://www.hrc.org/files/assets/resources/HRC_Foundation_Answers_to_Questions_About_Marriage_Equality_2009.pdf)

# A Guide for Talking about Marriage for Same-Sex Couples

*When it comes to marriage equality, we know that people are more likely to re-think their position if they have genuine conversations with others who listen and then share their own personal journey about embracing equality.*

*Below are tips for talking with conflicted people of faith that may help open their hearts and minds to the full inclusion of LGBT Mainers.*

We hope this guide motivates you to reach out to:

*Listen respectfully to people you know* who are uncertain.

*Share your own journey* as a matter of living out your faith values and commitments.

*Remember that one of the benefits of marriage is the word itself:* “Marriage says a lifelong promise of love and commitment in a way that no other word does.”

**Speak from the heart;** this is *not* a debate about “rights.”

- ✓ Connect with others – and evoke feelings about what it means to find that someone special and make a lifelong promise of marriage.
- ✓ Talk about how your faith values and commitments lead you to support marriage for same-sex couples.
- ✓ Tell a story about how your own mind and heart have changed on this issue.

**Keep the focus on three messages:**

1. ***Marriage is valuable for everyone:***

“Marriage is about loving, committed couples who make a lifelong promise to take care of each other and be responsible, in good times and bad.”

2. ***Couples are hurt when excluded:***

“Denying someone the chance at happiness that comes with being married – just because they’re gay – seems hurtful to me.”

“Imagine that someone told you that you couldn’t marry the person you love? How would that make you feel?”

3. ***We should rely on our shared beliefs and values:***

“I believe in the Golden Rule – in treating others the way I want to be treated. I wouldn’t want anyone to tell me that I couldn’t marry the person I love, and I don’t want to do that to anyone else.”

“My faith teaches me that **God is all-loving**, that Jesus’ ministry is **inclusive and welcoming** of all, and that **our role is not to judge but to be open to others**, especially those on the margins.”

**Be careful with terminology:**

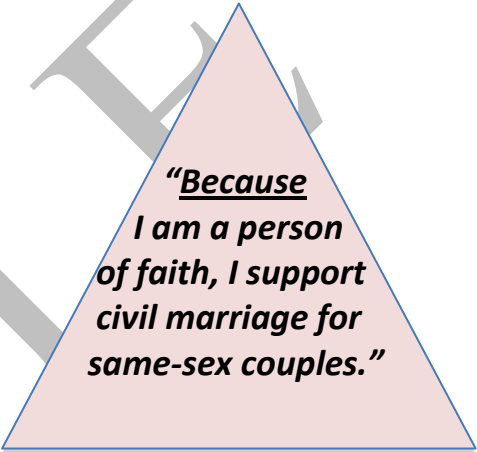
- ✓ **Speak about “marriage for all committed couples” or “marriage for same-sex couples**, avoiding terms like “gay marriage” and “same-sex marriage.”
- ✓ **Speak about how exclusion from marriage hurts Mainers** and talk about the harms that result from the denial of marriage.
- ✓ Avoid the term “marriage equality” because it can be confusing.

**Emphasize the values of marriage:**

Love • Commitment • Responsibility  
Lifelong promise • Taking care of the one you love

**Establish common ground by identifying shared beliefs:**

- ✓ Follow the **Golden Rule** (treating others as you want to be treated)
- ✓ **Love your neighbor** as yourself.
- ✓ **Be the kind of person who doesn’t deny someone else the chance of happiness** in marriage.
- ✓ **Include all Maine families**, including the ones that look different from your own.



***“Because  
I am a person  
of faith, I support  
civil marriage for  
same-sex couples.”***

**Emphasize the positive:**

- ✓ **Emphasize the major themes of inclusion, love, and care for all persons.**  
**Don’t “battle the Bible.”** “Our role is not to judge or exclude.”
- ✓ **Focus on marriage as a committed relationship.**  
**Don’t** talk about marriage as a “right” or a package of benefits.
- ✓ **Emphasize how supporting all Maine families, including those headed by same-sex couples, makes our communities stronger.**  
**Don’t** repeat anti-gay opponents’ fear-based language or frames.
- ✓ **Acknowledge the differences in people’s beliefs.**  
**Don’t** name call or disparage those with whom you may disagree.

**Remember:**

- ✓ **Conflicted people of faith need to hear from other people of faith about how their hearts and minds have changed on this issue.**
- ✓ **Be honest, be real, and be supportive of their change process.**

**Religious Coalition Against Discrimination • [www.rcadmaine.org](http://www.rcadmaine.org)**

## **Lots of things Faith Communities Can do to work for Marriage Equality**

**\*\* Make it personal! Add an element of “People You Know (PYK)” conversations to EVERY action listed!!**

### ***Have Courageous Conversations:***

1. Practice Active Listening, Asking & Reflection. When you encounter someone who is not “on board” - pause, ask questions, engage them in the conversation and reflect back to let them know you have heard them. Often, the simple act of being heard makes others much more willing to consider another point of view.
2. Tell your own story often. Share your own personal journey. Practice telling your story in 2 minutes or less!
3. Host “process oriented” monthly (or weekly if you prefer) forums to discuss - not the issue itself - but the ways in which we are handling the conversations. Are we meeting new people? Are we having meaningful interactions?
4. HAVE CONVERSATIONS 5 WITH PEOPLE YOU KNOW!!!

### ***Be a leader in your faith community:***

1. Sign the Religious Affirmation on RCAD’s website, [www.rcadmaine.org](http://www.rcadmaine.org) to publically add your voice to the hundreds of faith leaders and congregants who have agreed to have their name listed as supporters of marriage equality.
2. Get a commitment from your congregation to sign on to the Maine Freedom to Marry Coalition is a broad coalition of groups and people working to win the freedom to marry for same-sex couples in Maine, [www.mainersunited.org/pages/coalition](http://www.mainersunited.org/pages/coalition)
3. Find, read and become familiar with your congregation’s policy or statement on “Open and Affirming”. Or “Welcoming.” If there is none... now is the PERFECT time to start that conversation in motion! If you have one, ask that it be prominently featured in the upcoming bulletin and newsletter. Organize a “vote of support” for marriage equality within the congregation.
4. Time set apart from the routine is a way to recognize and honor a special occasion, extraordinary work done, or just the very moment in which we find ourselves. Holding a special service - or a time of blessing before a service - can be a powerful moment of thanks, rejuvenation and reward. Consider holding one for couples - all couples - to honor the commitment they have made to each other; for LGBT couples who are feeling the additional judgment and scrutiny of the greater community as we discuss their lives; for all those working to end discrimination.
5. Orchestrate a monthly sermon about some aspect of the marriage equality campaign: political justice, love your neighbor, etc.
6. Invite guest clergy to preach an inclusion or radical welcome sermon.

7. Organize a special coffee hour, adult bible study or potluck supper in a private home to discuss "marriage", and all its implications with an invited guest to serve as a conversation facilitator. Possibly could be a regular gathering!
8. Host Bible study classes that illuminate importance of relationships. Create and sustain a Family and Youth Support Network within your congregation.  
Offer regular pastoral care for people who have had conversations or encounters with unsupportive and/or apathetic people - a chance to vent or be sad.
9. Highlight work done by your congregation which is a part of the greater social justice movement. For example, food pantry, soup kitchen, animal shelter, elder care, etc. Discuss how this work stems from, or interweaves with, faith. Bring this conversation around to faith informing acceptance and equality for all. Publish in your newsletter and send to your local newspaper.
10. Actively practice "automatic inclusion". Whenever preparing a special service (religious holiday, Mother's Day, etc.) consciously scan all materials to be certain that all members of the congregation are represented. For example, make an extra effort to have a family with same-sex parents and their children participate in the important rituals of your faith; be certain there are photos included on the bulletin boards, etc.
11. Engage the social justice or peace and justice committee in conversation - and action - on this issue. If your place of worship does not yet have one, start one!
12. Letters to the Editor are one of the most read items in the paper. Plan to have a regular rotation of letters going in to your local papers.
13. Put talking points and resources about same-sex marriage in the bulletin, other publications or on-line newsletters

***Have forums, events, gatherings:***

1. Host a "Fish Bowl Forum" on what it means to be one of the gay & lesbian couples the opposition talks about. Encourage those attending to continue connecting with each other as a means of support.
2. Highlight work done by your congregation that is a part of the greater social justice movement. For example, food pantry, soup kitchen, animal shelter, elder care, etc. Discuss how this work stems from, or interweaves with, faith. Bring this conversation around to faith informing acceptance and equality for all. Publish in your newsletter and send to your local newspaper.
3. Coordinate educational forums: invite speakers, do outreach inside and outside your congregation; coordinate with other educational forums in other worship spaces
4. Organize people in your congregation to join RCAD in marching in a Pride parade or be involved in Pride activities.

For more ideas, assistance and/or resources call or write:

RCAD: Lucky Hollander, Executive Director, [lhollander@rcadmaine.org](mailto:lhollander@rcadmaine.org), (207) 615-6779

**For more information on how you or your congregation can help the Campaign to support the marriage referendum call or write:**

**EqualityMaine/Mainers United for Marriage, Rev. Sue Gabrielson, Faith Organizer, [revsue@yeson1maine.org](mailto:revsue@yeson1maine.org), (207) 432-9245**