



An Open Letter from Illinois Clergy and Faith Leaders on Marriage

We represent people of faith from a variety of communities across our state, and we strongly support the Illinois Religious Freedom and Marriage Fairness Act. We dedicate our lives to fostering faith and compassion, and we work daily to promote justice and fairness for all. Standing on these beliefs, we think that it is morally just to grant equal opportunities and responsibilities to loving, committed same-sex couples. There can be no justification for the law treating people differently on the basis of sexual orientation or gender identity.

We accept our gay and lesbian brothers and sisters and recognize that their families need equal recognition and protections. We believe all Illinois couples should have the same civil protections and urge our public officials to support measures to achieve equality.

There are differences among our many religious traditions. Some recognize and bless same-sex unions, and some do not. The important thing is that the Religious Freedom and Marriage Fairness Act protects religious freedom and guarantees that all faiths will decide which marriages should be consecrated and solemnized within their tradition.

The sacred writings and traditions that we follow carry the messages of love, justice and inclusion. The very basis of marriage is to protect the family, strengthen our communities and advocate compassion. No couple should be excluded from that.

We want to promote the common good – that which is best for individuals, couples, families, children, and society. As people of faith and as citizens of Illinois, we ask you to stand for freedom for all of our citizens and support the freedom to marry. It's not only a matter of equality – it's a matter of conscience and justice.

Signed,

BAPTIST

CHICAGO

Rev. Jacki Belile, Living Well Ministries, American

Rev. Doris Green, AIDS Foundation of Chicago and Evangelical Free Baptist

Rev. Dr. Larry Greenfield, American Baptist Churches of Metro Chicago, American

Rev. Susan Johnson, Hyde Park Union Church, American and United Church of Christ
Rev. David Weasley, The Night Ministry, Grace Baptist Church, American

EVANSTON

Rev. Ann Louise Haak, American
Rev. Dr. Douglas Sharp, Lake Street Church, American

CATHOLIC

CHICAGO

Sr. Mary Kay Flanigan, OSF, Roman
(Former Priest) Michael Herman, Roman
Dcn. Bill Mages, St. Mary of the Woods, Roman
Br. Brian McLaughlin, SVD, Roman
The Staff at 8th Day Center for Justice, Roman
The Very Rev. Fr. Donn Meilke, St. Thomas Mission, Orthodox
Christopher Pett-President, Dignity Chicago, Roman
Rev. Dcn. Benjamin Roe, St. Thomas Mission, Orthodox

CHURCH OF THE BRETHREN

SPRINGFIELD

Pastor Kreston Lipscomb, First Church of the Brethren

CONSERVATIVE JUDAISM

CHICAGO

Rabbi Lizzi Heydemann, Aitz Hayim, Mishkan Chicago
Rabbi Michael Siegel, Anshe Emet Synagogue
Rabbi Zachary Silver, Anshe Emet Synagogue

EVANSTON

Rabbi Amitai Adler, Aitz Hayim Center for Jewish Living

GLENCOE

Cantor David Landau, Aitz Hayim Center for Jewish Living

NORTHFIELD

Rabbi Debra Newman Kamin, Am Yisrael Conservative Congregation
Cantor Stuart Simon, Am Yisrael Conservative Congregation

RIVER FOREST

Rabbi Robin Damsky, West Suburban Temple Har Zion

DISCIPLES OF CHRIST

CHAMPAIGN

Jen Tayabji, Illinois Disciples Foundation

NORMAL

Rev. Bob Ryder, New Covenant Community Church

Rev. Susan Ryder, New Covenant Community Church

SPRINGFIELD

Rev. Dawn Victor, Christian Church

EPISCOPAL

ARLINGTON HEIGHTS

Rev. M.E. Eccles, St. Simon's Episcopal Church

BARRINGTON

Rev. Patrick Raymond, St. Michael's Episcopal Church

BELVIDERE

Rev. Dr. Joyce Beaulieu, Church of the Holy Trinity

BOLINGBROOK

Rev. Heidi Haverkamp, Church of St. Benedict

CHICAGO

Rev. Dr. Edward Curtis, Grace Episcopal Church

The Rev. Scott Elliott, Episcopal Diocese of Chicago

Rev. Tyrone Fowlkes, Director of Spiritual Formation, UCAN

Rev. Jacqueline Lynn, St. James Cathedral

Rev. Dr. Mary Milano, OP, Saint Alban's Episcopal Church

Rev. Dr. Bonnie Anne Perry, All Saint's Episcopal Church

Rev. Dr. Robert Petite, St. Anna's Chapel, Montgomery Place

Lay Chaplain John Sattelmaier, All Saint's Episcopal Church

The Very Rev. Joy Rogers, St. James Cathedral

Rev. Stan Sloan, Episcopal Diocese of Chicago, Chicago House

Rev. Jim Steen, Episcopal Diocese of Chicago - Diocesan Staff

The Rev. Kara Wagner Sherer, St. John's Episcopal Church

The Rev. Robert T. Yeager, St. Andrew's Episcopal Church

CLARENDON HILLS

Rev. Aimee Delevett, Church of the Holy Nativity

ELMHURST

Rev. Steve Martz, Church of Our Saviour Episcopal

EVANSTON

Rev. Joan Barr Smith, St. Mark's Episcopal Church

Rev. Debra Bullock, St. Mark's Episcopal Church

Rev. Charles de Kay, St. Matthew's Episcopal Church

The Very Rev. Dr. Jeannette DeFriest, St. Luke's Episcopal Church

Rev. Roger Ferlo, Seabury-Western Theological Seminary

Rev. Susan Harlow, Seabury-Western Theological Seminary, People's Church of Chicago

GALENA

Rev. Dr. Gloria Hopewell, Grace Episcopal Church

GLEN ELLYN

Rev. George Smith, St. Mark's Episcopal Church

GURNEE

Rev. Jane Schaefer, Annunciation of Our Lady Episcopal Church

HARVEY

The Rev. Rod Reinhart, St. Clement's Episcopal Church

HIGHLAND PARK

Rev. Andrea Mysen, Trinity Episcopal Church

NORTHBROOK

Rev. Lee Gaede, St. Giles Episcopal Church

PARK RIDGE

Rev. Sarah D. Odderstol

ROCKFORD

Rev. Pamela Hillenbrand, Emmanuel Episcopal Church

WAUCONDA

Rev. Martha Gillette, Church of the Holy Apostles

WAUKEGAN

Rev. Eileen Shanley-Roberts, Christ Episcopal Church

WOODSTOCK

Rev. Patricia Conley, St. Ann's Episcopal Church

LUTHERAN

ARLINGTON HEIGHTS

Rev. Dan Hoeger, Our Saviors Lutheran Church, ELCA

BERWYN

Rev. David Ethan Olson, Retired, St. James Lutheran Church, ELCA

BOLINGBROOK

Pastor Paul Carlson, New Life Lutheran Church, ELCA

CHAMPAIGN

Dr. Esther Portnoy, St. Andrew's Lutheran Church, ELCA

CHICAGO

Bishop Wayne Miller, ELCA Metropolitan Chicago Synod

Emily Abrahamson, Lutheran School of Theology

Rev. Dr. Klaus Peter Adam, Lutheran School of Theology

Rev. Joan Beck, Lutheran School of Theology

Rev. Dr. Kim L. Beckmann, ELCA

Pastor Liala Beukema, Lake View Lutheran Church, ELCA

Rev. Dr. Kathleen Billman, Lutheran School of Theology

Rev. Erik C. Christensen, St. Luke's Lutheran Church of Logan Square, ELCA

Rev. Michael Fick, Ebenezer Lutheran Church, ELCA

Jeff Fitzkappes, Lutheran School of Theology

Rev. Fred Kinsey, Unity Evangelical Lutheran Church, ELCA

Rev. Dr. Sherman Hicks, Resurrection Lutheran Church, ELCA

Cheryl Hoth, Lutheran School of Theology

Rev. Dr. Ralph Klein, Lutheran School of Theology and Bethlehem Evangelical Lutheran Church

Dr. Esther Menn, Lutheran School of Theology and Augustana Lutheran Church

Rev. Dr. Ray Pickett, Lutheran School of Theology

Pastor Craig Mueller, Holy Trinity Lutheran Church, ELCA

Rev. John Roberts, Unity Lutheran Church, ELCA

Pastor Julie Ryan, Christ the Mediator Lutheran Church, ELCA
Rev. Seminarian Kyle Severson, Holy Trinity Lutheran Church, ELCA
Pastor Michelle Sevig, Holy Trinity Lutheran Church, ELCA
Marji Shannon, Lutheran School of Theology
Dr. Benjamin Stewart, Lutheran School of Theology and Holy Trinity Lutheran Church

CHICAGO HEIGHTS

Rev. Patrick Shebeck, Prince of Peace Lutheran, ELCA

CRYSTAL LAKE

Rev. Carrie Smith, Bethany Lutheran Church, ELCA
Rev. Dr. Robert Smith, Bethany Lutheran Church, ELCA

ELGIN

Pastor Keith Fry, Christ the Lord Lutheran Church, ELCA

EVANSTON

Pastor Lloyd Kittlaus, University Lutheran Church, ELCA
Rev. Betty Landis, St. Paul's Lutheran Church, ELCA

EVERGREEN PARK

Rev. Harlan Frank Showers, United by Faith Lutheran Church, ELCA

GLEN ELLYN

Pastor Jim Honig, Faith Lutheran Church, ELCA

LINCOLNWOOD

Rev. Patrick McGuire, St. John's Lutheran Church

MARYVILLE

Rev. William Veith, Our Lord's Lutheran Church, ELCA

NEPONSET

Rev. Dawn Keenan, Zion Lutheran Church, ELCA

NORTHFIELD

Rev. Dennis Kelly, Lutheran Church of the Ascension, ELCA

OAK PARK

Rev. Dennis Bushkofsky, United Lutheran Church, ELCA
Pastor Kathy Nolte, Good Shepherd Lutheran Church, ELCA

PARK RIDGE

Rev. Dan Schwick, St. Luke's Lutheran Church, ELCA

ROCKFORD

Rev. Kenneth Storck, Gloria Dei Lutheran Church, ELCA

ROCK ISLAND

Pastor Stacie Fidler, St. John's Lutheran Church, ELCA

ROMEVILLE

Rev. Suzanne Anderson-Hurdle, Good Shepherd Lutheran Church, ELCA

WHEATON

Rev. Melody Eastman, St. Paul Lutheran Church, ELCA

MENNONITE

CHICAGO

Pastor Megan Ramer, Chicago Community Mennonite Church

EVANSTON

Pastor Mitchell C. Brown, Evanston Mennonite Church

METROPOLITAN COMMUNITY CHURCH

BROOKFIELD

Rev. Danny Spears, Holy Covenant Metropolitan Community Church

Rev. Peter Trabaris, Holy Covenant Metropolitan Community Church

Rev. Karon Van Gelder, Holy Covenant Metropolitan Community Church

CHICAGO

Rev. Rachelle Brown, A Church for Me

Rev. Gordon R. McCoy, Cluster Lead

SPRINGFIELD

Rev. Dr. Tony Thieman, Heartland Metropolitan Community Church

MORMON

SYCAMORE

Former Mormon Bishop, Kevin Kloosterman, Sycamore Chapel

MULTI-DENOMINATIONAL

CHICAGO

Rev. John C. Modschiedler, Hyde Park and Kenwood Interfaith Council, University Church

EVANSTON

Rev. Marcia Heeter, Lake Street Church

PRESBYTERIAN

ARLINGTON HEIGHTS

Rev. Beth Freese Dammers, First Presbyterian Church of Arlington Heights

CHICAGO

Rev. Jocelyn Cadwallader, Lake View Presbyterian Church

Rev. Victoria G. Curtiss, Fourth Presbyterian Church

Rev. Dr. Jeffrey Doane, Emeritus, Lincoln Park Presbyterian Church

Rev. Dr. Edwin Dykstra, Lakeview Presbyterian

Rev. Dr. Jan Edmiston, Chicago Prebytery

Rev. Amy Heinrich, Chicago Prebytery

Rev. Hardy Kim, Fourth Presbyterian Church

Rev. Michael Kirby, Good Shepherd Presbyterian Church

Rev. Nanette Sawyer, Grace Commons

Rev. Joyce Shin, Fourth Presbyterian Church

Rev. Dr. Stu Smith, Lake View Presbyterian Church

Rev. John Vest, Fourth Presbyterian Church

Rev. Dr. Christine Vogel, Fourth Presbyterian Church

CRYSTAL LAKE

Rev. John Dillon, Crystal Lake Presbyterian-Ridgefield

GENEVA

Rev. Bart Roush, Fox Valley Presbyterian Church

NAPERVILLE

Rev. David Bebb Jones, Pastor Emeritus at Presbyterian Church of Western Springs and Parish Associate at Knox Presbyterian Church of Naperville

WINNETKA

Rev. David Lower, Winnetka Presbyterian Church

RECONSTRUCTIONIST JUDAISM

CHICAGO

Rabbi Jordan Bendat-Appell, Center for Jewish Mindfulness

NAPERVILLE

Rabbi Marc Rudolph, Congregation Beth Shalom

REFORM JUDAISM

BUFFALO GROVE

Cantor Cheryl Wunch, Congregation Beth Am

CHICAGO

Rabbi Batsheva Appel, K.A.M. Isaiah Israel Congregation

Rabbi Shoshanah Conover, Temple Sholom

Rabbi Larry Edwards, Congregation Or Chadash

Cantor Aviva Katzman, Temple Sholom

Rabbi Dr. Peter S. Knobel, Temple Sholom

Rabbi Michael Zedek, Emanuel Congregation

EVANSTON

Rabbi Andrea London, Beth Emet: The Free Synagogue

GLENCOE

Rabbi Bruce Elder, Congregation Hakafa

Rabbi Wendi Geffen, North Shore Congregation Israel

HIGHLAND PARK

Cantor Michael Davis, Lakeside Congregation for Reform Judaism Children's Center

Rabbi Anne Persin, Congregation B'nai Torah

HOFFMAN ESTATES

Cantorial Soloist Ilana Axel, Beth Tikvah Congregation

Rabbi Taron Tachman, Beth Tikvah Congregation

HOMWOOD

Rabbi Ellen Dreyfus, B'nai Yehuda Beth Sholom

LONG GROVE

Rabbi Alison Abrams, Temple Chai

Rabbi Stephen Hart, Temple Chai

Cantor Scott Simon, Temple Chai

NORTHBROOK

Rabbi Sidney Helbraun, Temple Beth El

Rabbi Toby Manewith, Temple Beth El

NORTHFIELD

Rabbi Paul Cohen, Temple Jeremiah

OAK PARK

Rabbi Max Weiss, Oak Park Temple B'nai Abraham Zion

SKOKIE

Rabbi Amy Memis-Foler, Temple Judea Mizpah

WILMETTE

Rabbi Samuel Gordon, Congregation Sukkat Shalom

RELIGIOUS SCIENCE

CARY

Rev. Anne Muelleman, Center for Spiritual Evolution/ McHenry County Church of Religious Science

OAK PARK

Rev. Mary Beth Speer, Oak Park Church of Religious Science

RENEWAL JUDAISM

DEERFIELD

Rabbi Jodi Kornfeld, Beth Chaverim Humanistic Jewish Community

UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST

BLOOMINGTON

Rev. Jackie Clement, Unitarian Universalist Church of Bloomington-Normal

Rev. Dr. Ruth Gnagey, Unitarian Universalist Church of Bloomington-Normal

CARBONDALE

Carbondale Unitarian Fellowship

CHICAGO

Rev. Dr. Lee Barker, President & Professor of Ministry at Meadville Lombard Theological School

Rev. Dr. Clare Butterfield, Unity Temple Unitarian Universalist Congregation

Rev. Rudra Dundzila, Second Unitarian Church of Chicago

Rev. Dr. Neil Gerdes, Meadville Lombard Theological School, St. Thomas the Apostle RC Church

Dr. Michael Hogue, Meadville Lombard Theological School

Rev. Adam Robersmith, Second Unitarian Church

Rev. Dr. John W. Tolley, Meadville Lombard Theological School

DECATUR

Rev. Larry Hutchison, Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Decatur

ELGIN

Rev. Daniel Brosier, Unitarian Universalist Church of Elgin

MCHENRY

Rev. Sean P. Dennison, Unitarian Universalist Congregation

OAK PARK

Rev. Emily Gage, Unity Temple Unitarian Universalist Congregation

PALATINE

Rev. Hilary J Krivchenia, Countryside Church Unitarian Universalist

PEORIA

Rev. Michael Brown, Unitarian Universalist Church

Intern Minister Erin Dajka, Unitarian Universalist Church

ROCKFORD

Rev. Dr. Matthew Johnson-Doyle, The Unitarian Universalist Church

STOCKTON

Rev. Erik David Carlson, Unitarian Universalist Church of Stockton

SPRINGFIELD

Minister Emeritu Berkley Moore, Abraham Lincoln Unitarian Universalist Church

Intern Minister Lynnda White, Abraham Lincoln Unitarian Universalist Church

Rev. Martin Woulfe, Abraham Lincoln Unitarian Universalist Church

UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

ALGONQUIN

Rev. Donald Schmidt, First Congregational Church of Algonquin

ARLINGTON HEIGHTS

Rev. Jeffrey L Phillips, St. John's United Church of Christ

Rev. Dr. Rex E Piercy, Congregational United Church of Christ

AURORA

Rev. Gary McCann, New England Congregational Church

BARRINGTON HILLS

Rev. Mark Agnini

BERWYN

Rev. Kelly Brouwer, United Church of Christ

CAHOKIA

Rev. Carol Shanks, Bethel United Church of Christ

CANTON

Rev. Sue Harrington, First Congregational United Church of Christ

CARBONDALE

Rev. Sonja Ingebritsen, Church of the Good Shepherd

CARPENTERSVILLE

Rev. James Benzing, First Congregational United Church of Christ

CHAMPAIGN

Rev. Christie Callahan

Rev. Laurie Hill, St. Peter's United Church of Christ

Rev. Leah Robberts-Mosser, Community United Church of Christ

CHICAGO

Rev. David K Antieau, St. Nicolai United Church of Christ

Rev. Barbara Bolsen, Night Ministry, Epiphany United Church of Christ

Rev. William Bordonaro, Bethany United Church of Christ

Rev. Jeffrey Carlson, St. Paul's United Church of Christ

Rev. Clint Collins, Wellington Avenue United Church of Christ

Rev. Jason Coulter, Ravenswood United Church of Christ

Dr. W. Scott Haldeman, Chicago Theological Seminary

Rev. Dr. Alice Hunt, Chicago Theological Seminary, Trinity United Church of Christ

Rev. Benjamin Ledell Reynolds, First Church of the Brethren

Rev. Kevin McLemore, Epiphany United Church of Christ

Rev. Jorge Morales, Illinois Conference

Rev. Marilyn Pagán-Banks, Wellington Avenue United Church of Christ
Rev. Vertie Powers, United Church of Christ in Kenwood
Rev. Dr. Susan Thistlethwaite, Chicago Theological Seminary
Rev. Kevin Tindell, New Dimensions
Rev. Oscar Varnadoe III, Trinity United Church of Christ

CRYSTAL LAKE

Rev. Mary Cramer, First Congregational Church
Rev. David Inglis, First Congregational Church of Crystal Lake
Rev. Lynda Vackar, First Congregational Church

DEERFIELD

Rev. Roger Dart, Congregational Church in Deerfield
Rev. Susan Chamberlin-Smith, Trinity United Church of Christ Deerfield

DEKALB

Rev. Dr. Joseph Gastiger, First Congregational Church of Christ
Rev. Judy Harris, First Congregational United Church of Christ

DOWNERS GROVE

Rev. Kirk Moore, St. Paul's United Church of Christ
Rev. Scott Oberle, First Congregational Church of Christ

ELGIN

Rev. Paige Wolfanger, St. Paul's United Church of Christ

ELMHURST

Rev. Jeanne Murawski, St Peter's United Church of Christ
Rev. Gordon Smith, Bethel United Church of Christ

EVANSTON

Rev. Wayne MacPherson
Rev. Dr. Ann Rosewall, First Congregational Church of Evanston

GENEVA

Rev. Rebecca Clancy, First Congregational Church of Geneva
Rev. C. Erwin, First Congregational Church of Geneva
Rev. Carolyn Fabian, First Congregational Church of Geneva

GLEN ELLYN

Rev. Seth Ethan Carey, First Congregational Church of Glen Ellyn
Rev. Dr. Lillian Daniel, First Congregational Church of Glen Ellyn

HIGHLAND

Rev. Jerry Bennett, Program Coordinator, Illinois South Conference, Illinois Conference United Church of Christ

Rev. Sheldon Culver, St. Paul United Church of Christ

Rev. Carol Currier-Frighetto, St. Paul United Church of Christ

HINSDALE

Reverend Dr. Thom Parrott-Sheffer, Union Church of Hinsdale

INDIAN HEAD PARK

Rev. Dr. Robert von Trebra, Lyonsville Congregational United Church of Christ

JACKSONVILLE

Rev. Jan C. Johnson, Congregational United Church of Christ Jacksonville

KANKAKEE

Rev. Barbara Lohrbach, St. John United Church of Christ Kankakee

Elder Dawn Sanchez, St. John's United Church of Christ Kankakee

LOMBARD

Rev. Dr. Robert Hatfield, First Church of Lombard

NAPERVILLE

Rev. Timothy Sylvia, Hope United Church of Christ

Rev. Mark Winters, First Congregational Church

OAK LAWN

Pastor Peggy McClanahan, Pilgrim Faith United Church of Christ

OAK PARK

Rev. Leah Fowler, First United Church of Oak Park

Rev. Dean Hokel, Pilgrim United Church of Christ

Rev. Dr. Julie Harley, First United Church of Oak Park

Rev. Rob Leveridge, First United Church of Oak Park

Rev. Sally VerSchave Iberg, Pilgrim Congregational Church

OTTAWA

Rev. Dr. Winn Alley, Ottawa United Church of Christ

ROCKFORD

Rev. Dr. Fred Krauss, Second Congregational United Church of Christ
Pastor Michael Simmons, Retired, Spring Creek United Church of Christ

PEORIA

Rev. Kate Feeney-Bastian
Rev. Carole Hoke, Fondulac Congregational Church of Christ
Rev. James Semmelroth Darnell

ROCKFORD

Rev. Ivan Schoen, Spring Creek United Church of Christ
Rev. Dr. J. Michael Solberg, Second Congregational United Church of Christ

SKOKIE

Pastor Jan Smith, St. Peter United Church of Christ

SPRINGFIELD

Rev. Dan Dexter, First Congregational United Church of Christ
Rev. James Hibbett, First Congregation United Church of Christ

WEST CHICAGO

Rev. Denise Griebler, St. Michael's United Church of Christ

WEST DUNDEE

Rev. Aaron James, First Congregational United Church of Christ

UNITED METHODIST

ANTIOCH

Rev. Martha Schmidt, United Methodist Church

ARLINGTON HEIGHTS

Rev. Bonnie Beckonchrist, First United Methodist Church of Arlington Heights
Rev. Betty Jo (B.J.) Birkhahn Rommelfanger, Church of the Incarnation

AUBURN

Rev. Brian Caughlan, United Methodist Church

AURORA

Rev. Alka Lyall, Bethany of Fox Valley United Methodist Church

BARRINGTON

Rev. Robert Wulff, Salem United Methodist Church

BARTONVILLE

Rev. Linda A Richard, Bartonville Methodist Church

BENTON

Rev. Shane Smith, First United Methodist Church

CHATHAM

Rev. Sara Isbell, Chatham United Methodist Church

CHICAGO

Rev. Christian Coon, Urban Village Church

Rev. Gregory Gross, Berry United Methodist

Rev. Trey Hall, Urban Village Church

Pastor Brittany Isaac, Urban Village Church

Rev. Lois McCullen-Parr, Broadway Methodist Church

Rev. April McGlothlin-Eller, United Church of Rogers Park

Rev. Amos Oladipo, Epworth Methodist Church

Rev. Troy Plummer, Retired, Reconciling Ministries

Rev. Preston Price, Urban Village Church

Rev. Wendy Ann Witt, First Methodist Church Chicago Temple

COAL CITY

Rev. Lora Zink, Coal City United Methodist Church

EVANSTON

Rev. Richard Mosley Jr, Hemenway Methodist Church

Rev. Julie Windsor Mitchell, University Christian Ministry at Northwestern University

ELMHURST

Rev. Dr. Norma Lee Kerns, First United Methodist Church of Elmhurst

GLEN ELLYN

Rev. Elizabeth Bowes, Glen Ellyn First United Methodist Church

HINCKLEY

Rev. Laura Crites, First United Methodist Church of Hinckley

ITASCA

Rev. Sherrie Lowly, Bethany United Methodist Church

LAKE BLUFF

Rev. David Aslesen, Grace United Methodist Church

LAGRANGE

Rev. Addison Shields Jr., First United Methodist Church

LOMBARD

Rev. Luis F. Reyes, First United Methodist Church of Lombard

MACON

Rev. Janet Eggleston, United Methodist Church

MAHOMET

Rev. Jeremiah Thompson, Mahomet United Methodist

MURPHYSBORO

Rev. Sue Bailey, United Methodist Church of Murphysboro

NAPERVILLE

Rev. Donald Niswonger, Grace United Methodist Church

Rev. Lisa Telomen, Grace United Methodist Church

OAK PARK

Pastor Stephanie Escher, UMC Cornerstone

Rev. Marti Scott, Euclid Avenue Methodist Church

PEORIA

Rev. Lauren Padgett, United Methodist Church

PONTIAC

Rev. Scott Carnes, Pontiac First United Methodist Church

RIVERSIDE

Rev. Douglas Asbury, Riverside United Methodist Church

SPRINGFIELD

Rev. Julia Melgreen, Douglas Avenue UMC

SUGAR GROVE

Pastor Victoria Hadaway, Sugar Grove Methodist Church

TUSCOLA

Rev. Seth Schutte, Tuscola United Methodist church

URBANA

Rev. Daniel King Crede, Wesley United Methodist Church

UNITY CHURCH

BATAVIA

Rev. Jan Little, Unity of Fox Valley

CHICAGO

Rev. Russ Sorenson, Unity in Chicago

QUINCY

Rev. Ron Fritts, Unity Spiritual Life Center

ROCKFORD

Donna Addison, Board of Directors, Christ Church Unity of Rockford

OTHER AFFILIATIONS

CHICAGO

Rev. Jerome Adams, First Church of Deliverance

Rev. Dr. Nick Angotti

Rev. Celeste Frazier, Power of Oneness Spiritual Center

Rev. Jamie Frazier, The Lighthouse Church

Rev. Mark Anthony Lord, Bodhi Spiritual Center

Rev. Joette Waters, Wedding Minister/ Bodhi Spiritual Center

OAK BROOK

Rev. William Christiansen, M.Div.

The clergy and faith leaders listed above have signed this letter as individuals and not necessarily as representatives of their congregations.



January 3, 2013

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ:

I am writing today to express my support for the bill currently before the Illinois legislature that would allow same-sex couples to marry legally. As I am sure you are aware, my support for this legislation imposes no duties on you. I cherish the fact that the Episcopal Church trusts its members to arrive at their own conclusions about moral and political issues. I would like to say a few words, however, about how I came to my opinion, in part because I believe I owe it to you as your bishop, and in part because I believe that the Christian argument for legal marriage equality is not well understood.

The state of Illinois and the Christian church face different questions in determining whether it is good and wise to allow same-sex couples to marry. If one believes in equality before the law, it is extremely difficult to justify denying the benefits of civil marriage to

extremely difficult to justify denying the benefits of civil marriage to same-sex couples. Opponents of the current legislation would have to present compelling evidence that marriage equality will harm our state so deeply that we must continue to deny same-sex couples the rights that opposite-sex couples freely claim for ourselves. I do not believe that the experience of states and countries in which same-sex couples are already free to marry legally supports this case. Rather, extending the benefits of civil marriage to same-sex couples has made it easier for them to order their lives together, to care for one another and to raise children in a stable home. Creating stronger, happier households contributes to the common good, and that is enough reason to support any legislation.

The debate over marriage equality, however, is seldom decided entirely on its merits as sensible public policy. Because both church and state claim authority over the institution of marriage, the debate always takes a theological turn. I do not believe the state owes the church any deference in defining civil marriage. But my own convictions about the nature of marriage and the sort of laws that should govern it are inescapably shaped by my Christian faith. I also hope that the current civil and religious debates about marriage equality and the blessing offered by the church to same-sex couples will enrich the understanding of Christians and other people of faith about the nature of all committed life-long relationships.

I believe that marriage is a sacred vocation. The union of two persons in heart, body and mind is a school of holiness, a way of ordering our lives so that we might learn to be more faithful servants of Christ. I also believe that the faithful, loving, and lifelong union of two persons--of the same sex or of opposite sexes--is capable of signifying the never failing love of God in Christ for the church and the world. Such unions can be sources and signs of grace, both for the couple and for the wider community.

As a Christian, I believe that our society needs all of the sources and signs of grace that we can get. As a citizen of the United States, I believe in equal protection under the law. I believe that both ends will be served when marriage equality is the law of the land in Illinois, and I am grateful to be bishop in a church that offers all couples a community of faith, love, support and accountability.

Faithfully,

+Jeff

Jeffrey D. Lee
Bishop of Chicago

<http://myemail.constantcontact.com/A-Letter-from-Bishop-Lee--Marriage-Equality-in-Illinois.html?soid=1107175454157&aid=5JzxdQ2EP4Q>

Bishop's statement on Illinois Marriage Equality Bill

01/10/2013

To the Clergy and Members of the Northern Illinois Annual Conference.
January 10, 2013

Today the new General Assembly of the State of Illinois is expected to discuss and soon vote on the Religious Freedom and Marriage Fairness Act. It is expected that it will pass into law. I want to express my views on it and my support of it as law.

I believe in the institution of marriage as the source of emotional and legal stability and security for families and communities.

In May I will have been married for 37 years. I have many friends who are not presently married and have never married, but I believe most of them have wanted to find a lifelong relationship to which they are committed for spiritual, physical and emotional comfort and support.

And I have friends, acquaintances and former parishioners who have been in lifelong relationships with someone but have not been able to have their relationships recognized by the state or the church because they are in a same-sex relationship. In spite of all the same pressures and stresses that heterosexual couples face, they have managed to stay faithful and true to each other, providing stability and strength not only for their families but for their communities and churches.

Marriage also provides stability and security for me in a way that I usually take for granted especially as both my husband and I grow older. We just assume that we can be with each other in the emergency room or that if, God forbid, something happens to the other that we will be provided for through our combined resources. After all, we've built those resources together over the last almost 37 years.

But same-sex couples can't assume the same benefits, not even the benefit of being with each other should there be an emergency or in critical last moments to hold the other's hand...no one should have to be getting permission to be by a loved one's side at a time like that but that is the reality for same-sex couples.

I believe in marriage because it also is the institution that best provides for the well-being of children. I believe that children need to have parents who have the emotional and legal benefits of marriage as well as parents who are active in their lives.

In addition to the benefits of marriage that I have described above, I also believe that the State of Illinois needs to be on the forefront (if #10 of 50 is the forefront) of providing for marriage equality in order to promote economic growth. People look for places to work and start businesses that will attract as many good workers, entrepreneurs and business people as possible and a marriage equality state can provide that added edge to the competitive economic market.

While the United Methodist Church holds that the practice of homosexuality is incompatible with Christian teaching, it also holds the teaching and a long tradition (albeit a struggle every inch of the way) of civil rights. Marriage equality is a civil rights issue; it provides for all what is afforded to some.

The marriage equality act in Illinois does not bind anyone who is licensed by the state to perform marriages to perform a marriage for a same-sex couple (as no one can bind us to perform a marriage for a heterosexual couple). In fact, even though I support this legislation, I can't perform a same-sex marriage as a United Methodist clergy person and as the bishop I can't give permission to any other clergy to do the same. But just because I can't provide the service of marriage to same-sex couples doesn't mean that I should prevent people from being able to commit their lives to each other in the State of Illinois.

Therefore, I believe it is to the benefit of our families, communities and the state of Illinois for the Marriage Equality Bill to become law in our state. Not all United Methodists will agree with my belief on marriage and they are entitled to their own belief. Because I believe in marriage, it's my belief it will be a benefit for this law to pass.

Bishop Sally Dyck

http://www.umcnic.org/n_bishops_statement_on_illinois_marriage_equality_bi.php

REVISED 01-12

A RESOLUTION SUPPORTING THE ILLINOIS RELIGIOUS FREEDOM AND MARRIAGE FAIRNESS ACT

Whereas, the bill called the Religious Freedom and Marriage Fairness Act bill was introduced in the Illinois state General Assembly in February of this year and would provide that "all state laws applicable to marriage apply equally to marriages of same-sex and different-sex couples and their children" and grant them "the same benefits, protections, and responsibilities under law"; and

Whereas, the Religious Freedom and Marriage Fairness Act would also ensure that every religious tradition can decide for itself whether or not to officiate at marriage ceremonies; the Act would not require religious traditions to recognize or solemnize marriages between same-gender partners; and

Whereas, those states, including Illinois, that have created civil union as a means of both providing legal protections while withholding the freedom to marry have recognized that civil union falls far short of marriage with all its tangible and intangible significance in our lives; and

Whereas, the ELCA's Social Statement "Human Sexuality: Gift and Trust" acknowledges the existence within the ELCA of a wide range of conscience-bound beliefs regarding committed same-gender relationships and calls upon "all people to live out their faith in the local and global community of the baptized with profound respect for the conscience-bound belief of the neighbor;" (p.21) yet further states that "While Lutherans hold various convictions regarding lifelong, monogamous, same-gender relationships, this church is united on many critical issues" (p. 19). This church:

1. "supports legislation and policies to protect civil rights and to prohibit discrimination in housing, employment, and public services." (p. 19)
2. "has called upon congregations and members of this church to welcome, care for, and support same-gender couples and their families and to advocate for their legal protection." (p. 19)
3. "will advocate for public policies that support and protect families." (p. 24)
4. recognizes that some faithful Lutherans "conclude that marriage is also the appropriate term to use in describing similar benefits, protection, and support for same-gender couples entering into lifelong, monogamous relationships" and that "they believe that such accountable relationships provide the necessary foundation that supports trust and familial and community thriving;" (p. 18);

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that the Metropolitan Chicago Synod, meeting in Assembly, calls upon congregations and members of this synod to welcome, care for, and support same-gender couples and their families and to advocate for their legal protection; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Metropolitan Chicago Synod, meeting in Assembly, urges the Illinois Legislature and Governor to extend the protections and dignity of marriage to all persons and to protect the freedom of religion for all faith communities and religious organizations; and

REVISED 01-12

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Metropolitan Chicago Synod, meeting in Assembly, urges the synod bishop (or designee) to make the synod's position on this matter known to the state Legislature, the Governor, to the congregations of this synod, and to the public at large.

Submitted by:

Pastor Daniel Ruen, Grace Lutheran Church, Evanston, Ill.

Pastor Julie Boleyn, Unity Lutheran Church of Berwyn, Berwyn, Ill.

http://www.mcselca.org/assets/01_12_Supporting%20IRF_%26_MFA_FINAL.pdf

**The Metro Chicago Synod encompasses 199 active congregations with 97,807 baptized members.*



Metropolitan Chicago Synod
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
God's work. Our hands.

Marriage Equality and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
Bishop Wayne N. Miller, Metropolitan Chicago Synod

In 2009, in a voting member assembly of our denomination, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) adopted a far-reaching ethical statement on human sexuality entitled *Human Sexuality: Gift and Trust*.

This statement, along with the ministry policy statements that were drawn from it, represents a richly complex study of many current and historical aspects of the relationship between Christian faith and sexual ethics. Because of the careful and sometimes complicated historical and theological nuance of the study, it is both daunting and dangerous for one bishop to try to reduce this church's teaching on sexuality to a few sentences.

Nonetheless, a number of key religious leaders have recently been drawn into the debate in Illinois as to whether or not it is appropriate and advisable for the state to apply the category of "marriage" in an equal way to all monogamous adult couples, regardless of the biological gender of the partners. Because other religious leaders have spoken openly, there is also a danger that silence from ELCA leaders could be interpreted as indifference or cowardice. So, as one bishop of this church, I would like to emphasize a few key points that I hope will shed light on our present teaching.

1. We do not believe that divergent attitudes toward homosexuality can be used to separate faithful Christians from unfaithful Christians or responsible Christians from irresponsible Christians. We do not believe that so-called "natural law" is sufficient grounding for uniform teaching on the matter. We do not agree that same-gender marriage would necessarily be destructive to the moral fiber of our society. Also, we do recognize that the scriptural witness on the subject is sufficiently inconsistent and subject to interpretation to allow faithful and responsible members of our congregations to disagree with one another on this subject and still live together as one faith community.
2. Some of our pastors and congregations believe strongly that "marriage" is a word that should be restricted exclusively to apply to a life-long public covenant between one man and one woman. This is a faithful position in that it upholds an established teaching of Christianity, and it emphasizes the fact that the ELCA social statement has not changed this church's definition of the word, "marriage."
3. Some of our pastors and congregations, however, believe equally strongly that our identity in Christ transcends the usual categories of race, social position, and gender, and that "marriage" is a word that should apply in a completely equivalent way to any life-long public covenant between one adult and another adult, regardless of race, social position, or gender. This is also a faithful position in that it upholds the primary importance of faithfulness to promises, and it emphasizes the role of the church as an

advocate for human rights and equal protection under the law for all people, even if we do not agree with their beliefs on matters of faith and morals.

This divergence of opinion means that there is no single position on the pending Marriage Equality Act in Illinois that can be said, with integrity, to be the position of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

When I became a bishop of this church I took a public oath to be pastor, teacher, and counselor to the whole ELCA, not merely to that portion of the church that agrees with my personal opinions. That is the public promise that I am committed to honor to the very best of my ability, and, because of that promise, I can only commend the members of our congregations to enter into the public debate prayerfully, with thoughtfulness, respect, compassion, and ultimate trust in the guidance of the Holy Spirit as we speak and act. This, in and of itself, will serve as a worthy testimony to what it means to be a Christian in the world.

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http://www.mtselca.org/assets/Marriage_Equality_and_the_ELCA_Miller.pdf

RESOLUTION – Same Sex Marriage

Abraham Lincoln Unitarian Universalist Congregation
745 Woodside Road
Springfield, Illinois 62711

WHEREAS, The Unitarian Universalist Association adopted in 1996 official policy supporting the right to marry for same sex couples; and

WHEREAS, The Unitarian Universalist Association urged its member congregations to proclaim the worth of marriage between any two committed persons and to make this position known in their home communities; and

WHEREAS, the Abraham Lincoln Unitarian Universalist Congregation is a member congregation of the Unitarian Universalist Association; and

WHEREAS, the Abraham Lincoln Unitarian Universalist Congregation sought and received certification by the Unitarian Universalist Association as a “Welcoming Congregation” which signifies its capacity and willingness to engage in public outreach and advocacy to protect the civil and legal rights of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender individuals and families at the state and local levels; and

WHEREAS, the 98th General Assembly of the State of Illinois will soon consider legislation to legalize the marriage of same-sex couples; and

WHEREAS, Enactment of legislation to legalize marriage by same-sex couples in Illinois will require an active advocacy campaign by individuals, groups, association, and organizations in support of such legislation; therefore be it

RESOLVED by the Abraham Lincoln Unitarian Universalist Congregation represented by its Board of Directors hereby supports legislation that makes it legal for members of the same sex to marry so that such couples may enjoy and exercise all of the same rights, benefits and privileges of couples of the opposite sex who are legally married.

