

Proposed Resolution for: MARRIAGE EQUALITY FOR COUPLES REGARDLESS OF GENDER

- 1.) **Title of Resolution:** Marriage Equality for Couples Regardless of Gender
- 2.) **Date:** February 26, 2010
- 3.) **Name of Submitting Body:** Open and Affirming/Lesbian, Gay, Bi-sexual and Transgender (ONA/LGBT) Team. Minnesota Conference, United Church of Christ (Team Members include Leslie Amundson, Marc Blakesley, Rev. Howard Bell, Martin Erickson, Kathleen Remund, Gretchen Roesler, and Rex Weideranders) and:
Rev. Obadiah Ballinger, 1618 Eustis St. #11, St. Paul, MN 55108; Rev. Paul Bauch, 2109 Lenwood Dr. SW, Rochester, MN 55902; Rev. Kayla Bonewell, 171 Grandeville Rd SW #113, Rochester, MN 55902; Rev. Sarah Campbell, 3804 40th Ave S, Minneapolis, MN 55406; Rev. Dr. Jann Cather Weaver, 3000 Fifth St., N.W., New Brighton, MN 55112; Rev. Laurie Crelly, 20032 Ideal Way, Lakeville, MN 55044; Rev. Thomas George, 5645 Green Circle Dr., Minnetonka, MN 55437; Rev. Glen N. Herrington-Hall, 1436 Sheldon St., St. Paul MN 55108; Rev. Jennie Ott, 1206 6th St. NE, Minneapolis, MN 55413; Rev. Don Portwood, 117 Portland Ave #601, Minneapolis, MN 55401; Rev. Carolyn Pressler, 149 Windsor Ct., St. Paul, MN 55112; and Rev. Rebecca Voelkel, 4815 15th Ave S., Minneapolis, MN 55417.
The Spokesperson is Martin Erickson, Chair, ONA/LGBT Team.
- 4.) **Summary Statement of Intent:** The intent of this resolution is to place the 2010 Annual Meeting of the Minnesota Conference UCC on record as supportive of marriage equality for couples regardless of gender. Its focus is on the UCC Minnesota Conference's prophetic voice to its member churches and to the general public, particularly in the State of Minnesota.
- 5.) **Background and Supporting Statement:** The United Church of Christ (UCC) declares that it is called in ministry and prophetic witness to be a church of "firsts." The Fifteenth General Synod's (1985) resolution, "Calling on United Church of Christ Congregations to Declare Themselves Open and Affirming" is one example. The UCC was the first Christian denomination to affirm marriage equality for couples regardless of gender in a resolution passed at the Twenty-fifth General Synod (2005). The Minnesota Conference, UCC, declared itself to be "Open and Affirming" by a 2008 Annual Meeting resolution.

New Testament scriptures contain no words of Jesus condemning homosexuality. Rather, Jesus' words, life and ministry provide a model of radically inclusive love and abundant welcome for all. No cultural perspective during Biblical times directly applies to today's context related to (LGBT) persons living in committed relationships. At the 2009 ONA Gathering of the Minnesota Conference UCC, Rev. Dr. Carolyn Pressler and Rev. Sue Ebbers, Professors at United Theological Seminary of the Twin Cities, provided examples of loving alternative families from Scripture and lifted up unique contributions same-gender couples can make to the church. In modern context, the most vocal voice in opposition to same-gender loving couples has been identified with one element within the Christian church. It was most prominently visible in the passage of Proposition 8 in the State of California, an initiative banning recognition of same-gender marriages. This initiative has contributed to misunderstanding, polarization, and increasing hostility toward LGBT people. The resolution we propose calls upon the Minnesota Conference UCC to be a prophetic voice of inclusivity, radical hospitality, and advocacy for same-gender loving couples by supporting marriage equality.

- 1 WHEREAS the life and example of Jesus of Nazareth provides a model of radically inclusive love and
- 2 abundant welcome for all: and
- 3 WHEREAS recognition of marriage carries with it significant access to institutional support, rights and
- 4 benefits; and

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5 WHEREAS access to civil contracts of marriage, which strengthen the union of committed couples by
6 adding to their economic, emotional and social stability, is a civil right currently denied to same-gender
7 couples; and

8 WHEREAS children of families headed by same-gender couples should receive all legal rights and
9 protections; and

10 WHEREAS legislation to ban recognition of same-gender marriages undermines the civil liberties of caring
11 committed couples participating in civil, state-sanctioned aspects of marriage; and contributes to a climate
12 of misunderstanding and polarization, increasing hostility against lesbian, gay, bi-sexual and transgender
13 persons; and

14 WHEREAS the Twenty-fifth General Synod of the United Church of Christ (2005) passed the "Equal
15 Marriage Rights for All" resolution which affirmed "equal marriage rights for couples regardless of gender;"
16 and

17 WHEREAS the Minnesota Conference of the United Church of Christ passed a "Resolution to be an Open
18 and Affirming Conference" at its 2008 Annual Meeting, resolving to "continue a committed, prayerful and
19 respectful dialogue with one another" and to be in "covenant with God and one another to seek God's
20 guidance for greater Biblical and theological understanding of important issues;" and

21 WHEREAS the Minnesota Conference resolved to "study and be in conversation about...the sacredness of
22 all relationships;" and

23 WHEREAS the Minnesota Conference also resolved to "struggle to be: a Body of Christ in which there is no
24 dissension, but where members may have the same care for one another, so that if one member suffers,
25 all suffer together with it, and if one member is honored, all rejoice together with it." (1 Corinthians 12:26-
26 27); and

27 WHEREAS at least three local churches in the Minnesota Conference of the United Church of Christ have
28 passed wedding policies in support of marriage equality for couples regardless of gender; and

29 WHEREAS bills have been introduced into the Minnesota State Legislature for the purpose of initiating
30 fruitful debate on this issue;

31 THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that we, the members of the Minnesota Conference of the United Church of
32 Christ, declare that we affirm and support marriage equality for couples regardless of gender; and

33 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Minnesota Conference of the United Church of Christ encourages its
34 member churches to engage in serious, respectful, and prayerful discussion of the covenantal relationship
35 of marriage and equal marriage rights for couples regardless of gender; and, if led by God's guidance, to
36 take action in support of marriage equality for couples regardless of gender; and

37 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Minnesota Conference of the United Church of Christ calls upon its
38 member churches, after prayerful biblical, theological, and historical study, to consider adopting wedding
39 policies that do not discriminate against couples based on gender; and

40 LET IT FINALLY BE RESOLVED that the Conference Minister of the Minnesota Conference of the United
41 Church of Christ, be instructed to communicate to members of the Minnesota State Legislature and to the
42 general public that the delegates of the 2010 Annual Meeting of the Minnesota Conference of the United
43 Church of Christ affirm our support for marriage equality for couples regardless of gender.