

“Living Lovingly”:

Talking About Marriage Equality
From a Faith Perspective



A study guide for congregations
California Council of Churches

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Talking About Marriage Equality From a Faith Perspective

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Each individual's journey through life is unique. Some will make this journey alone, others in loving relationships maybe in marriage or other forms of commitment. We need to ponder our own choices and try to understand the choices of others. Love has many shapes and colors and is not finite. It can not be measured or defined in terms of sexual orientation.

- Quaker Meeting, New Zealand, Statement of Affirmation and Reconciliation

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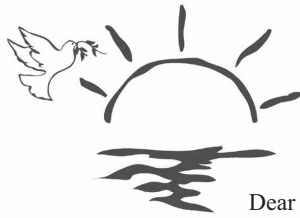
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Letter from the Executive Director



California Council of CHURCHES

Dear friends in the California Faith Community,

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Recent events have converged to make the freedom to marry a concern to all people in California. The California Council of Churches and IMPACT have long stood strong against discrimination against any of God’s children. At the same time, we recognize that many churches and people of faith believe they must oppose the freedom to marry based on what they have been taught the Bible has to say on the subject. Therefore, we have produced this study guide to help congregations in California struggling with differences of opinion on the subject of marriage equality to discuss the biblical texts, theology, church traditions, and civil rights from a place of compassion and love of neighbor — the central elements of Jesus’ teachings.

An important point for this study is the distinction between marriage as a civil ceremony and a religious ceremony or sacrament. We call on all people to acknowledge the secular civil right even as churches wrestle with the sacramental issues. We can agree to guarantee civil rights even as denominations deliberate with the issue of marriage equality as an element of church law/rites/blessings. Equal protection under the law, tolerance and respect for diversity, and defining one’s own views while permitting other views, are consistent with authentic religious commitments where we all can live in a world of differences and ambiguities while still respecting other people’s secular rights.

It is very important for communities of faith of all perspectives to understand that there is no law or pressure that any individual or faith community will be forced to perform marriages against their beliefs. Conversely, there is pressure to deny churches and individuals to have or bless same-sex unions. Separation of church and state requires us to respect differences in each denomination or church. Those seeking to permit same-sex marriage must have equal standing with those that do not. To forbid such marriages across the board infringes on the religious liberty of clergy and congregations whose faith requires them to perform this pastoral care. It is anti-democratic to impose one religious viewpoint on everyone else.

In fact, the CA Supreme Court decision states this very clearly:

“[A]ffording same-sex couples the opportunity to obtain the designation of marriage will not impinge upon the religious freedom of any religious organization, official, or any other person; no religion will be required to change its religious policies or practices with regard to same-sex couples, and no religious officiant will be required to solemnize a marriage in contravention of his or her religious beliefs. (Cal. Const., art. I, § 4.)

— In re MARRIAGE CASES, S147999, page 117

We are not able to cover every issue of concern to people of faith in the depth we would like in this brief study guide. If you or members of your congregation would like more information on any of these issues, there are many excellent resources available to you, many of which are listed in the Resources section.

It is my prayer that people of faith throughout California will engage in open and honest conversation about this important issue from a place of compassion, love, and grace.

In partnership for faithful discipleship,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Rick Schlosser". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal line extending from the end.

The Rev. Dr. Rick Schlosser
Executive Director

Introduction

Welcome to this study provided by the California Council of Churches,
“Living Lovingly: Talking About Marriage Equality from a Faith Perspective.”

What could be more affirming of love than the commitment of two adult persons to share their lives together, to give sacrificially to one another, to promise to love and respect one another for all of their days? It is the stuff of which romantic movies are made! Yet there is a portion of each of our communities who are denied the right to confirm this love through marriage.

In the United States only 2 out of 50 states have given legal status to the marriage of both heterosexual and homosexual couples. These states are California and Massachusetts. And this legal status remains precarious.

A study published in the Journal of the American Academy of Pediatrics, entitled *The Effects of Marriage, Civil Union, and Domestic Partnership Laws on the Health and Well-being of Children* found that:

- * Same-sex couples live in 99.3% of all US counties.
- * Same-sex couples are raising children in at least 96% of all US counties.
- * Nearly one quarter of all same-sex couples are raising children.

While same-sex households are in a minority (less than 1% of all households), these households have a significant impact in their communities - raising children, paying taxes, providing leadership, contributing to the volunteer and work force. These are households that long for recognition and the support of the law and of the society, the kind of support promised for all persons in the U.S. Constitution.

In May 2008 the California Supreme Court made the judicial decision, in a 4-3 vote, that the right of marriage belongs to all persons of legal age, without regard to gender. The Court states (in the majority decision authored by Chief Justice Ronald George) “an individual’s sexual orientation - like a person’s race or gender - does not constitute a legitimate basis upon which to deny or withhold legal rights.” At the same time, a constitutional amendment has been placed on the ballot to limit marriage so that only marriage between a man and a woman is valid or recognized in California. This amendment will come to the voters in the November 2008 election. Whatever the outcome, congregations and people of faith will continue to struggle with this issue for a long time.

Many national and regional church bodies find their legislative gatherings are embroiled in debates about homosexuality and church life, including the religious recognition of marriage. With the legal approval of marriage for all persons in California, many churches in California have realized the need to understand more fully their own church’s position on homosexuality and gender-inclusive marriage, and to enter into dialogue to enable a faithful response.

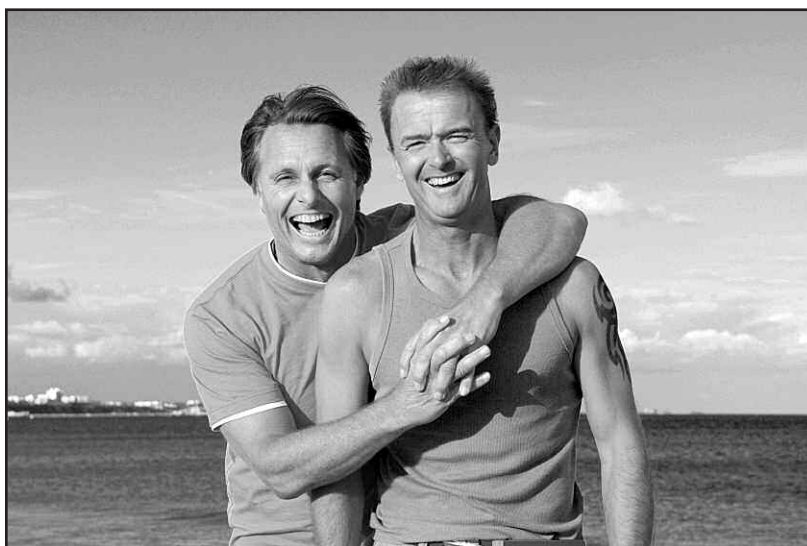
How does a caring and compassionate Christian, believing in the love of God for all of Creation, respond to the current discussion on marriage rights? How do congregations nourish the ability to distinguish civil rights from sacramental concerns? How does a compassionate Christian come to the voting booth? Some church leaders will say one cannot vote for a marriage between same-sex couples and be a

Christian. Some church leaders will say that to deny same-sex marriage is un-Christian and unjust. Both sides want to ‘preserve marriage.’ Contrary to “undermining” the institution of marriage, same-sex couples are affirming marriage as a significant cultural institution for the well being of society.

The California Council of Churches hopes that this Study Guide will help you and other church members engage in a time of active listening and open dialogue about a topic that is critically important to so many people, many of whom are members of our own congregations. We hope this study will guide you through information to inform you and provide you the opportunity to reflect on your own response, and the response of your faith community. The Study will guide us through topics such as

- the meaning of marriage
- understanding the issue as one of being gender inclusive, rather than it being a ‘gay issue’
- the civil rights of the GLBT (gay, lesbian, bi-sexual and transgender) community
- exploring biblical texts and theological reflections on homosexuality, marriage, relationships
- exploring some of the positions of the mainline Christian churches

The Council understands that people of faith will have a diversity of opinions and perspectives, and in this study seeks to respect this diversity, at the same time affirming what it believes to be a stance of faithful justice.



Guidelines for Dialogue

Review the following with your group and write it on a white board or paper for display during the study sessions.

We are engaging in Dialogue rather than discussion or debate

- in dialogue we each share our own personal observation
- in dialogue we are as committed to listening as we are to speaking
- in dialogue there is no right or wrong answer
- in dialogue we speak truthfully from our experience and are ready to hear the experience of others
- in dialogue we are involved in the open sharing of ideas and feelings, as opposed to being in debate or trying prove a point
- in dialogue everyone is a ‘winner’ - there are no losers
- in dialogue respect is the most important part of the discussion



SESSION I: WHAT IS MARRIAGE AND IS IT FOR ALL?

Session Plan

During this session, participants will:

- Reflect on the meaning and traditions of marriage
- Be introduced to the idea of gender-inclusive marriage
- Understand some of the personal, legal, cultural and religious issues surrounding same-sex marriage
- Understand the difference between civil rights and sacramental issues. Civil rights can exist even as denominations wrestle with the sacramental concerns.
- Have shared in open conversation in a safe setting

Preparations

- Set up room with seating around a table or in a circle
- Have a set of materials available for each person (Information Sheet A, B and copies of the Talking Point “Exploring questions about same-sex marriage”
- Post a copy of the purpose of the study on the wall or write on a board.
- Have a copy of the definition of dialogue on each seat
- Arrange for a DVD player, TV and someone to help you run it if needed; set up and test before the class session
- Place a small file card and pen on each seat
- Have name tags available as people come into the room

Session Outline

Introductions and Overview	12 minutes
Talking Points: What is Marriage?.....	7 minutes
Dialogue - A Personal Reflection on Marriage	10 minutes
Talking Points: Issues of Same Gender Marriage	5 minutes
Dialogue - Models of Marriage	
Option 1 (Information Sheet B)	15 minutes
Option 2 (Information Sheet A)	5 minutes
(Optional Dialogue) DVD and discussion, “For the Bible Tells Me So”	15 minutes
Talking Points: Exploring questions about same-sex marriage.....	15 minutes
Dialogue - Questions and sharing feelings	7 minutes
Assignment for Session 2	1 minute
Closing Circle and Prayer	1 minute

Introductions And Overview

- Welcome participants.
- Open with prayer
- Introduce yourself to group.
- Go over the purpose of the study with the participants - read the Introduction
- Invite each person to introduce him/herself by name, and one question they bring to the study session. Write these questions down as they are spoken (or ask someone else to do so)
- Review the dialogue guidelines with the group (a copy is at each seat).

TALKING POINTS - WHAT IS MARRIAGE?

- What is a family?
- What is marriage?
- Who defines these basic human relationships?

Family, marriage, children, commitment - many would see these aspects of life as personal and intimate dimensions of human relationships, part of the private sector of society. But the topic of marriage and family has entered into the public and political realm in heated and opinionated discussions during the last decade. Phrases like “family values” and “saving marriage” have become political code words.

We know that every society and culture creates guidelines, rules and expectations which address human relationships. Cultural rules addressing relationships are rarely static. In a century of vast cultural change, not only in the Western world but worldwide, the rules for social behavior have undergone significant transformations. Some of these changes have sought to address a more just and equitable treatment of persons in all segments of society: the rights of children, such as in labor and education laws; the changing roles of women, from voting rights to equal access in employment and legal status; the civil rights of all racial and ethnic communities; the changes in employment practices forbidding discrimination of persons with handicapping conditions - all of these have been part of a changing social system, which impact the most basic of human relationships.

What is the role of the religious community in relationship to cultural changes? Does the religious community call for change, resist change, help change happen, provide theological reflection for managing the change or do all of these simultaneously? How one answers these questions has an impact on how one responds to particular issues.

In this study we are focusing on the meaning of marriage in the context of same-sex committed relationships. Churches and other religious communities, with different perspectives on cultural change - based on their history, theology, culture and practice - have varied in their responses as the wider society addresses same-sex marriages.

- Some religious communities find a significant threat to faith, theology and world-view in same-sex marriage.
- Other major religious bodies are actively seeking change based on their theological view of justice and compassion which, like those on the other end of the spectrum of beliefs, stems from scriptural scholarship and interpretation.
- Some faith communities have said little publicly about lesbian and gay persons, in a “don’t ask, don’t tell” model of maintaining traditional cultural norms.

Cowardice asks the question
- is it safe?

Vanity asks the question - is
it popular?

Expediency asks the
question - is it political?

But conscience asks the
question - is it right?

There comes a time when
one must take a position
that is neither safe, popular,
or political; but because
it is right.

— The Rev. Dr. Martin
Luther King, Jr.

Prior to 1977, California Civil Code section 4100 (predecessor to what is now codified at California Family Code section 300) defined marriage as: "a personal relation arising out of a civil context, to which consent of the parties making that contract is necessary." ¹ In 1977 the phrase was added "a civil context between a man and a woman".

¹ Wikipedia, “Marriage”

DIALOGUE - A PERSONAL REFLECTION ON MARRIAGE

- Invite each participant to take the provided index card and ask them to think about a marriage that is important to them, and write the names of the partners. Then, list three strengths of the marriage relationship, as seen by the individual or the couple (5 minutes)
- Ask the group to divide into pairs, and share their responses (without comment or questions). (2 minutes each)
- Invite the group back together, and together make a list naming the qualities of a good marriage. (5 minutes)
- Remind the group that we are not simply talking about an issue but rather about people and the most important relationships of their lives.

TALKING POINTS - WHAT ARE THE ISSUES RAISED BY SAME-SEX MARRIAGE?

Once people get talking about marriage, there are lots of similarities in understanding. Yet where there are differences, same gender marriage tends to take the brunt of the disagreement. Different definitions of the core meaning of marriage lead persons to either advocacy of marriage for all or for the restriction of marriage. Marriage is such a common institution that raising questions about its meaning can be problematic.

Some of the current issues about marriage are legal ones, impacted by the civic arena. These are handled through public debate, in the legislature and courts, and through the voting booth. Legal issues are based in the arena of civil rights, and the ways in which the law protects persons from unjust discrimination and protects innocent persons. With the recent California Supreme Court decision barring marriage restrictions, the legal conversation has entered a whole new level with a proposed constitutional amendment to ban same gender marriage coming to the voters on the November 2008 ballot.

Some of the issues about marriage are religious ones, generating formal and informal theological discussion, but also stirring up deep emotional responses, which need the support of the wider faith community for discernment and decision-making. Religious issues are based in the arena of scriptural tradition, church ‘law’ or tradition, and teaching in the faith community over generations.

The way in which scripture is interpreted in the religious setting is a critical part of the conversation in faith communities. While all Christian communities have a basis in the authority of scripture, the definition of what the ‘authority’ is differs widely. Is scripture absolute, as written and read? Is scripture ‘the Word of God’ and what does that mean? How do we read scripture in the context of culture, both ancient cultures, and through the eyes of our own cultural experience?

A helpful resource on how to approach scripture and read scripture can be found in a presentation by Dr. Paul Hammer, called “Taking the Bible Seriously.” (See Information Sheet D) We will explore the scriptural issues more fully in Session II.

What is the difference between marriage and civil unions?

Civil unions and domestic partnerships are not recognized by the federal government, and do not confer the rights and benefits of marriage guaranteed under federal law. Among other benefits, marriage enables spouses to parent legally together, make emergency medical decisions for one another and their children, petition for the immigration of a foreign-born partners, and inherit assets in the event of death -- rights that civil unions and domestic partnerships do not necessarily provide. Another important benefit of marriage is the dignity it affords same-sex couples and their families. The word “marriage” speaks to love, faithful commitment and recognition by religious institutions and civil society in way that “civil union” does not.

~ *Time to Seek*, p. 20, Religious Institute on Sexual Morality, Justice, and Healing

Evolving Understandings of Marriage

Marriage, wrapped in normality and associated with the status quo, is actually a very fluid institution, with its parameters and rules of behavior changing across cultures and generations. Just think about the ways that marriage may have changed in your own lifetime, let alone across continents and centuries.

Many elders in our communities will remember saying wedding vows that asked the woman to “love, honor and obey” her husband. Few ceremonies include this restrictive vow today. The norm mid-20th century in the U.S. was for middle-class women to stop their careers and education when they married, assuming they would now be ‘homemakers’. Today, the majority of women work outside the home, especially prior to childbearing, and an increasing number of men stay home by choice to care for children. Marriage used to be seen as the way to legitimize relationships, particularly sexually. In the 21st century marriage is culturally less about legitimizing and more about choice, affirmation, and life commitments.

Marriage is a cultural institution, whether we speak of ancient Israel, Jewish traditions at the time of Jesus, ancient Greek or Rome, the Middle Ages, the time of the Reformation, or 21st Century California. Each is to be understood within its history, its social value systems, its understanding of economics, its understanding of the role of women and men, its understanding of sexuality and reproduction.



In fact, an important aspect of the biblical writings is the way scripture can challenge scripture and point to an ongoing interpretive process. The canonical context points to both content and process, and thus the Bible canonizes both the writings themselves and the dynamically continuing process of interpretation. In Matthew's witness, Jesus himself carried on that process repeatedly with the words, "You have heard that it was said ... but I say to you." He can challenge ancient texts with fresh interpretive power. As we compare biblical writings, we can see this interpretive process continuing at many points. In other words, it is quite biblical to challenge the Bible. For example, we would certainly want to challenge this text: "Happy shall they be who take your little ones and dash them against the rocks!" (Ps. 137:9). It holds even for the Bible (as someone has said), "None of us is entirely useless. Even the worst of us can serve as horrible examples." The great authenticity of the Bible is that it's all there, the good and the bad, the glory and tragedy of human life. It's no put up job where everything fits into a simplistic mold. As we do Bible study, we do so in the canonical context of the whole Bible. — Dr. Paul Hammer.

“Living Lovingly” Talking About Marriage Equality From a Faith Perspective

DIALOGUE² (OPTION 1).....*Information Sheet B-1 and B-2*

Divide the group up into about 6 groups of 2 or 3 people. Give each person an example of marriage from Information Sheet D-1. You can photocopy and cut up the examples so each group has one. Distribute one copy of Information Sheet D-2 to each group. Ask them to refer to the example of marriage they have been given, and record their answers to the question: What are the underlying attitudes and beliefs in this kind of marriage?

DIALOGUE (OPTION 2)*Information Sheet A*

Provide each participant with the Viewpoints questionnaire (Information Sheet A). Ask the participants to very quickly respond to each question as you answer it with their immediate response (gut response). Ask them to keep the questionnaire as a reference during the discussion today, and then to hand them in without names at the end for tallying, to be reported the next session. There will be no common discussion - this is an exercise to get the ‘feelings’ acknowledged.

(OPTIONAL) DIALOGUE - DVD AND CONVERSATION ON “*For the Bible Tells Me So*”

See Information Sheet C

TALKING POINTS: EXPLORING QUESTIONS ABOUT SAME-SEX MARRIAGE

- Duplicate the talking points in this section for the participants and distribute
- Option One - Do a presentation of these talking points to the group. You may want to hand out the information at the beginning, so they can follow along, or wait until the end, when it is time for discussion.
- Option Two - Break into 5 groups, distribute the Talking Points, and ask each group to read the material for their section, discuss and summarize, and then present it to the group.



In 1978, the United States Supreme Court declared marriage to be "of fundamental importance to all individuals". The court described marriage as "one of the 'basic civil rights of man'" and "the most important relation in life." The court also noted that "the right to marry is part of the fundamental 'right to privacy'" in the U.S. Constitution.

² with thanks to the UUC and their excellent study guide *What Is Marriage For? - A Leader's Guide*.

1. *Is marriage a fundamental right?*

- The United States Supreme Court has held consistently that marriage is a fundamental right. Some would argue that this fundamental right to marry has been understood to be between a man and a woman, and thus would not be valid for same-sex marriages. Others would argue that restricting marriage is a social policy ill considered and contrary to the freedoms guaranteed in the U.S. Constitution.

Marriage is a basic human right. You cannot tell people they cannot fall in love. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. used to say when people talked about interracial marriage, and I quote, “Races do not fall in love and get married. Individuals fall in love and get married.” —Testimony of Rep. John Lewis of Georgia before Congress on the Defense of Marriage Act, 7/1/96

2. *Why are same-sex couples seeking the right to marry? What are their concerns? Didn't rights get settled with Civil Unions and Domestic Partnership?*

- Persons supporting same-sex marriage are concerned that gay/lesbian persons should have the right to make their relationship public and legal, just as other persons are free to do.
- Gay/lesbian persons have long been in committed relationships with no legal protection, and have encountered many problems because they lacked legal status in their relationships.
- Civil unions have been compared to the “separate but equal” provisions that were dismantled in the era of racial civil rights legal action. Domestic partner benefits have added necessary and critical protective provisions, yet remain different, are different from state to state, and do not have the same permanence.

Some of the social benefits of marriage are small and surprising ones, such as the one a recently married couple in California, Sherri and Amy, shared in an e-mail: Sherri and I recently rented a car and realized that we had just experienced our first privilege as a "married couple"... We no longer had to pay for an "extra driver"—married couples get that free.... Go figure!! We had a good laugh and are going to place the extra driver agreement in our scrapbook.

3. *How do persons opposed to the idea of same-sex marriages respond to these concerns?*

- The proponents of marriage only between a man and a woman maintain marriage is not a right but a privilege, and that persons of the same gender have the same opportunities for legal rights that other unmarried persons have who share a household.
- Marriage is an institution organized for the good of society, for the care of children, and these are understood to occur only within the parameters of marriage between one woman and one man.
- Correspondingly, same-sex behavior is viewed as sinful, based upon a particular biblical understanding, rooted in the belief that Genesis 1 refers to the creation of man and woman as complimentary, meant to be together, and intended to procreate. Civil institutions should, according to these proponents, uphold this ‘natural’ law.

4. *Is marriage a religious or civil institution?*

- The word marriage is basically a legal term for a relationship recognized in civil society.
- For much of Christian history marriages have not taken place in churches. This began happening when the need or desire for documentation of marriages was established, usually for work, property and inheritance demands, and the priests were often the only people who could read or write.
- Wedding ceremonies can be performed by either designated civil servants (such as a judge, justice of the peace, or civil employee) or by religious clergy, who are acting as representatives of the civil society.
- A marriage license is issued by and filed with county authorities. The content of the ceremony itself is of no consequence to the government; licensing, registration and regulation are their only function.
- The term “marriage” is also used by religious communities and institutions. A religious community is free to set its own procedures and guidelines for marriages, such as whether a person needs to be a member of the church, any requirements regarding counseling, the content and ritual of the marriage ceremony itself, and even the clergy’s decision about the suitability of the marriage.
- Roman Catholic bishops assert that marriage is solely a religious issue.
- Some faith communities recognize and perform same-sex marriages, without legal recognition.

Marriage Resolution: Because marriage is a basic human right and an individual personal choice, RESOLVED, the State should not interfere with same-gender couples who choose to marry and share fully and equally in the rights, responsibilities and commitment of civil marriage. — by the National Freedom to Marry Coalition (supporters include Lambda Legal Defense and Education Fund, ACLU, PFLAG, National Organization for Women, Log Cabin Republicans, Union of American Hebrew Congregations Reform Judaism, People for the American Way).

5. *Is the discussion about same-sex marriage a religious issue or civil issue? Is there any comparison to be made between same-sex marriages and the civil rights issues on inter-racial marriage?*

- It is both a religious issue and a civil issue. The open discussion on same-sex marriage as a civil rights issue has allowed for a coalition between secular justice organizations and religious communities who understand the fundamental ethical importance of equality and justice.
- The laws governing civil marriage have evolved over the years. Increasingly, an individual has had the right to decide whom to marry, regardless of race, class, religion, age (with limits), and citizenship.
- The religious conversation on same-sex marriage does not belong to conservative religious communities alone. The need for an alliance of secular and religious groups will help the general public understand that for many people of faith, marriage access for all persons is central to their understanding of God’s intent for loving, committed relationships.
- There are striking similarities between the laws against inter-racial marriage and contemporary actions against same-sex marriage. For instance, in South Dakota the law which prohibits marriages between the same genders is remarkably similar to that of Virginia’s law against inter-racial marriage.

- Persons who do not believe there should be marriage between same gender partners view the comparison with racial issues as irrelevant and do not equate same-sex marriage as one of civil rights. They believe that race is an inherited characteristic which is not changeable, and that homosexuality is a behavior to be overcome and changed.
- The most overt and public disagreement to same-sex committed relationships, especially the idea of marriage, arises from traditional and conservative religious theology and communities. For instance, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops defines marriage solely as a religious issue, saying
“Marriage comes to us from the hand of God. It does not originate from the state or the church, though both institutions regulate its practice. Therefore, neither church nor state can alter the meaning and structure of marriage in such a way as to grant equivalent status to same-sex unions.”³

It has only been 32 years since the prohibition of marriage between different races was overturned by the U.S. Supreme Court. The Supreme Court responded to the laws of sixteen states which were similar to those of Virginia: all marriages between a white person and a colored person shall be absolutely void without any decree of divorce or other legal process. —
Va. Code Ann. § 20-57

DIALOGUE - SHARING OUR QUESTIONS AND FEELINGS

- Ask the group if there are any further questions that have come up for them as the material has been reviewed. Listen, and record these questions. Don't try to answer unless they are simple clarifications. Tell the group you will all address the questions at the next session.
- Break into small groups of 3 (no more) for 10 minutes and ask them to share with one another the feelings that have come up for each of during the session. Remind the group to give their full attention to each person sharing and to just listen - without comments.

A conservative religious/political organization, Focus on the Family, is a major financial and vocal force against equal marriage. One of the leaders, Glenn T. Stanton, states that if same-sex marriage is adopted as a right, “my civil rights to object to homosexuality as an idea will be gone.” Furthermore he believes that while same-sex couples are “tolerated in society today” and are not “evicted from their neighborhoods”... this is not about mere tolerance. Instead it is about forcing everyone to fully accept these unnatural families.”

REVIEW OF NEXT SESSION

Ask the group in the week ahead to read at least one of the scriptures listed in Information Sheet A - Session 2 (provide each person with a copy of the sheet). These scriptures will be discussed next session.

³ <http://www.usccb.org/laity/marriage/samesexfaq.shtml>

CLOSING CIRCLE

Ask the group to stand in a circle. Tell them you will be leading them in this litany, and their response will be “Loving God, we are grateful.” Have them practice saying it out loud together once. They do not need to have this as printed material.

Leader: For your promises to us,

All: Loving God, we are grateful.

Leader: For your love of us,

All: Loving God, we are grateful.

Leader: For the love of one another,

All: Loving God, we are grateful.

Leader: For the future, which you hold

All: Loving God, we are grateful.

Leader: May the Loving Spirit of God go before us, be behind us, walk next to us, be above us and below us, blessing us each day. Amen.

Information Sheet A - Session I

WHAT DO I THINK MARRIAGE IS?

Do you agree or disagree with the following comments? State your opinion - your immediate response at this time. Indicate by numbering as follows:

1 - Agree fully 2 - Agree partially 3 - Disagree partially 4 - Disagree fully

1. Marriage is a legal matter, and is undertaken for the protection of the individual and of society._____
2. Marriage is a religious ceremony, which signifies God's blessing of the relationship._____
3. Marriage can only be defined as a relationship between a man and a woman._____
4. Children need stability, and this can only occur in a home where there is a mother and a father._____
5. Any marriage recognized in one state should be recognized in another._____
6. The various models of sexual and marriage relations in the scriptures are confusing and contain little relevant meaning as patterns for our day._____
7. Marriage signifies the commitment of the couple to live in covenant with each other and with God._____
8. Marriage is basically for the intent of procreation and the protection of the children._____
9. Children need stability, and thus it is important that their parents (gay or straight) receive legal protection._____
10. Marriage is an outdated system based on the past, and there is no reason the government should be expected to affirm or deny any of our relationships, heterosexual or same-sex._____
11. Lesbian and gay persons can have committed relationships if they want, but there is no need for any legal and/or religious recognition._____
12. The interest of the GLBT community in marriage has renewed the importance of marriage for all couples._____
13. The Bible provides important guidelines for both heterosexual and same-sex couples._____

Information Sheet B-1

Models of Marriage⁴

Photocopy and assign small groups (2-3 persons) one or two of the examples

1. In many societies, members were forbidden to marry outside the tribe, clan, culture, or religion, while marriage within the family was considered acceptable. The ancient Hebrews, for example, enforced strict rules against marrying foreigners, but had only the barest of rules against marrying within the family. The Romans allowed first cousins to marry, and early Germanic clans gave the nod to uncle/niece marriages.
2. For centuries, and in many different parts of the world, marriage could not take place without a dowry - the money, goods, or estate that a woman brought to her husband in marriage, or a gift of money or property by a man to or for his bride. In 1425, the city of Florence, Italy, even launched a savings-bond institution in which a family could invest for a daughter's future dowry with returns of up to 15.5% compounded annually, with both capital and interest paid to the husband after consummation.
3. For centuries, the most enduring slave systems - including the Greeks, Romans, Hebrews, medieval Germans, and Americans - denied legal recognition to slave marriages.
4. In many cultures, polygamy (marriage with more than one mate) has been commonly practiced for centuries. At one time, Jewish law required a man whose first wife did not bear a child within ten years to marry another - with or without divorcing the first. Polygamy was practiced in Christian communities as late as the second century. In many African and Middle Eastern cultures, polygamy is still practiced today.
5. In the 1700s and 1800s, many laws extended the biblical idea that a husband and wife become “one flesh.” In British law, a 1765 statement by Lord Blackstone read, “In law husband and wife are one person, and the husband is that person.” This meant that a wife could own no personal property, make no personal contracts, and bring no lawsuits. The husband took over her legal identity - a concept called “coverture,” because his identity “covered” hers.
6. Before the 20th century, contraception was widely viewed as immoral within the institution of marriage (especially in the West and among Christians). The 1876 book *Conjugal Sins* insisted that contraceptive attempts “degrades to bestiality the true feelings of manhood and the holy state of matrimony.” During a period of escalated anti-contraception feelings and backlash laws in the 19th century, more than half of the states in the U.S. enacted laws that criminalized and prevented any sex acts that “made love without making babies.”

⁴ questions are from *What is Marriage For?*, a study guide from the United Universalist Church, by Scott Hirschfeld

7. In 1850, Indiana’s State Legislature passed the most open divorce law the United States had ever known. It stated that judges could grant divorce for any reason at all - not just under conditions of adultery, attempted murder, or other extreme circumstances. Though scandalous at the time, divorce has become an acceptable practice in mainstream American society.

8. In 1948, the California Supreme Court led the way in challenging racial discrimination in marriage and became the first state high court to declare unconstitutional an anti-miscegenation law (a mixing of races, especially between a white person and a member of another race). In 1967, the United States Supreme Court struck down the remaining interracial marriage laws across the country, and declared that the “freedom to marry” belongs to all Americans.

9. In 1976, the West German Civil Code was revised to eliminate traditional matrimonial phrases requiring “husbands to support wives” and “wives to obey husbands.” It now reads “The spouses are mutually obliged to adequately maintain the family by their work and property...”

10. In 1987, the U.S. Supreme Court struck down a Missouri prison’s refusal to allow its inmates - convicted felons, “people who couldn’t vote much less support their wives or future children” - to marry, since “inmate marriages, like others, are expressions of emotional support and public commitment...having spiritual significance.”

Information Sheet B-2, Session 1

Refer to Information Sheet B-1 “Models of Marriage”

You have been given an historical example of a Model of Marriage which describes marriage laws and customs from a variety of cultures and eras. Inherent in each law or custom is a set of attitudes or beliefs about the purposes of marriage in that time and place. For each law/custom, list as many underlying beliefs as you can identify.

Example:

Law/Custom: The German guilds didn’t allow a man to become a master and run his own business unless he had a wife.

Underlying Attitudes/Beliefs: Marriage was a way to acquire a business partner. Marriage was a complete plan of labor. All men were expected to marry.

Law/Custom # _____

Underlying Attitudes/Beliefs:

Law/Custom # _____

Underlying Attitudes/Beliefs:

Information Sheet C, Session 1

DVD presentation, “For the Bible Tells Me So”

THINGS TO REMEMBER AS YOU APPROACH THE BIBLE

- Biblical writers did not share our contemporary understanding of sexual orientation as distinct from sexual behavior. They judged behaviors based on the assumption that heterosexuality was common to everyone.
- What homosexual behavior the biblical writers may have witnessed was either outside the bonds of marriage (thus adulterous, as all were expected to marry heterosexually) or outside the community of faith (thus the association with idolatry or “pagan” faiths).
- Same-gender sexual expression was condemned largely for crossing boundaries of gender: specifically, men viewed as abandoning their active role in intercourse to be passive with other men (as in Leviticus) and women perceived as abandoning their passive role to be active with women (as in Romans, where the word for “marriage” literally means “under a man”).
- Homosexuality was frequently confused with pederasty, the practice of men using boys for sexual pleasure.
- The King James Version (KJV) of the Bible has frequent references to “sodomites” which more recent translations avoid, because the word so translated refers to male pagan priests. Similarly, the word for pagan priestesses was incorrectly translated “prostitutes.” Ironically, historians have much evidence that King James, who first authorized the translation of the Bible into English, was himself homosexual!
- Jesus never condemned homosexuality, but challenged divorce, wealth, spiritual pride and exclusion.

*from For the Bible Tells Me So: A Study Guide and Advocacy Training Curriculum
by the Rev. Chris Glasser, edited by Dr. Sharon Groves
published by the Human Rights Campaign (www.hrc.org/issues/religion.asp)
used with permission*

Information Sheet D, Session 1

“Taking the Bible Seriously”

Dr. Paul Hammer⁵

Where shall we begin Bible study?

- In one way, it is quite unbiblical to begin with the Bible. Biblical writers generally do not begin with an exegesis of texts, but with the reality of their situations. They tap into their traditions and texts to help them meet the situations they face in their faith communities and in their worlds.
- No interpretation of a text can ever be absolutized, for the only Absolute is neither the Bible nor the Church but the living God.
- Bible's unity is enriched by its diversity. The biblical writers, spanning a thousand years of Hebrew-Christian history, dealt with their own interpretive or hermeneutical contexts
- These interpretive contexts are: a cosmic/world embracing context, an ecclesial context, a canonical context, an evangelical context, and a pneumatic context.

A cosmic or world-embracing context. (Kosmos means "world.")

- Biblical writers embrace the realities of their worlds and their situations where they and their communities find themselves.
- The biblical writings are put together in our Bible in the context of creation in Genesis at the beginning and of new creation in Revelation at the end. Thus the Bible as a whole has a cosmic or world embracing context.
- We bring our cosmic contexts to Bible study: our personal lives, our interpersonal relationships, our work, our leisure, our economics, our politics...., the glory and the tragedy of life in our world.

An ecclesial or a community-of faith- participating context. (Ekklesia means the "called-out" assembly, the church.)

- Biblical writers were part of communities of faith, even when as prophetic persons they had to challenge their own communities. These faith communities were communities of worship, of instruction, of supportive fellowship, of wider mission.
- Their life in an ecclesial context is intended to guide and nourish and challenge them to be faithful in the larger cosmic contexts of their worlds.
- We also bring to bible study the ecclesial context of our life in the faith communities of our churches, with their worship, their education, their fellowship, their ministries and missions.

⁵ This is an outline of a presentation given as the opening Bible Study at the 2000 Dunkirk Collquy. Dr. Paul Hammer is retired professor of biblical interpretation at Colgate-Rochester, Divinity School, Rochester, NY. This speech is also used as a resource in *God is Still Thinking About Marriage*, Michael Schuenemeyer, ed. and was the source for its inclusion in this study guide. Office of Health and Wholeness Advocacy, Wider Church Ministries, United Church of Christ, 700 Prospect Avenue, Cleveland, OH 44115

A canonical or Bible-engaging context.

- The earliest biblical writers worked from oral tradition rather than written scriptures.
- These traditions and the biblical writings that emerged from the communities of faith during a thousand years became canonical for Israel and the Church.
- From among other writings, these, taking several centuries of usage, finally became the canon or "measuring stick" to engage, inspire, challenge them and keep them on course
- These writings hardly spoke with one voice as they engaged their ecclesial as well as their cosmic contexts. An important aspect of the biblical writings is the way scripture can challenge scripture and point to an ongoing interpretive process.
- The canonical context points to both content and process, and thus the Bible canonizes both the writings themselves and the dynamically continuing process of interpretation.
- In Matthew's witness, Jesus himself carried on that process repeatedly with the words, "You have heard that it was said ... but I say to you." He can challenge ancient texts with fresh interpretive power.

An evangelical or gospel-happening context.

- The Bible serves as canon witness to the Word that became flesh, not text,
- It is evangel, the "good news" of God's working in real human existence, touching it with creative and liberating and healing power
- Both Hebrew and Christian biblical writers use the term evangel to describe what God has done. More than five hundred years before the coming of Jesus, Isaiah writes, "How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of the messenger who announces peace, who brings good news, who announces salvation" (Is. 52:7). The whole Exodus event is "good news" for Israel.
- An evangelical context means that we live with the expectation that good news will happen to people, to communities, to God's beloved world: that God's good news for the world will bring a deeper sense of faith and hope and love, of freedom and justice and peace, of grace and truth and glory—the glory of God's self-giving love in the cross of Jesus Christ.

Fifth, a pneumatic or Spirit-empowering context.

- Biblical writers speak of God's spirit or Holy Spirit in differing ways
- The Spirit of God takes the events of God's deeds in the past (creation, exodus, cross, resurrection) and makes them alive in the present with a foretaste of the future. The Spirit empowers the present with good news from the past and with pregnant hopes for the future.
- The gifts of the Spirit (charismata) with which the Spirit empowers the life of each person and enlivens the evangelical, canonical, ecclesial and cosmic contexts of our lives. We are empowered not only for our own inner spiritual life but for that work of the Spirit that meant for Isaiah and Jesus "good news to the poor ... release to the captives ... sight to the blind ... liberty to the oppressed" (Luke 4:18-19).
- From New Testament usage, all Christians are charismatics, for we all are blessed with various gifts of the Spirit and we need to value each one in mutuality and edification and mission together. We do our Bible study in a pneumatic context.

Session II: Biblical and theological reflections on same-sex marriage

Session Plan

During this session, participants will:

- Consider how different Christian traditions view marriage
- Study a variety of scriptural texts on marriage
- Understand some of the issues surrounding same-sex marriage through case studies and first hand accounts
- Develop own response and plan of action concerning same-sex marriage
- Understand ways to honor civil rights in the midst of honoring diversity in theological and faith traditions.

Preparations

- Set up room with seating around a table or in a circle
- Have a set of materials available for each person
 - Distribute Information Sheets A-D from Session 1 (for those who were not present for session 1)
 - printed list of questions from last session
 - Have ready the Information Sheets for Session 2
- Post a copy of the purpose of the study on the wall or write on a board.
- Arrange for a DVD player, TV and someone to help you run it if needed; set up and test before the class session
- Post the Guidelines for Dialogue on the wall or have a copy available for each person
- Have extra Bibles available
- Have name tags available as people come into the room

Session II Outline

Open with a prepared prayer

Introductions, Questions, Overview of Session	7 minutes
Talking Points - What is Marriage?	
Part 2 - What is the Church saying?	10 minutes
Dialogue - What the churches are saying	7 minutes
(Optional Dialogue) DVD and response “For the Bible Tells Me So”	15 minutes
Talking Points - How to do Bible study. What does the Bible say?	10 minutes
Dialogue - Biblical Study	15 minutes
Talking Points - What do church people have to say?	10 minutes
Dialogue - Personal histories	15 minute
Talking Points - Further Study and Action	5 minutes
Closing Circle and Prayer	10 minutes

INTRODUCTIONS AND OVERVIEW7 MINUTES

- Welcome participants.
- Open with a written prayer.
- Have group state their names, beginning with leader.
- Briefly remind the group of the purpose of the study
- Review the dialogue guidelines with the group (a copy is at each seat). Remind the group that you are all in ‘holy space’ during this time of dialogue.
- Have ready a written copy of the questions that were asked in the last session. Spend 7-8 minutes addressing these questions as a group. Be sure, as leader, you have spent time preparing comments on these questions during the time since the last session.

TALKING POINTS - WHAT IS MARRIAGE? (PART 2)10 MINUTES

What the church is saying.

Within the religious tradition of the Abrahamic faiths (Jewish, Christian and Muslim), marriage is associated with our ongoing covenant with God, along with a mutual commitment to one’s spouse in the presence of God. Marriage is understood to be a part of God’s plan and a sharing in God’s creation.

Historically and biblically, marriage has at times been forbidden outside one’s tribe or clan, was forbidden for those in slavery, was prohibited or banned for first cousins, or polygamy was mandated for those whose first wife was barren.

Theologically for some faith communities, marriage is the fulfillment of God’s law; we become partners in creation symbolized in procreation. “Be fruitful and multiply,” the admonition of the Creation story, becomes a directive, so that marriage and the procreation of children become inseparable. This is particularly so in the Roman Catholic, Orthodox and Latter Day Saints communities. Evangelical traditions are not as resolute on a theology of procreation, but imply the importance when marriage is defined as being about family and the protection of children.

For other faith communities, the theological focus is on human relationship, and on nurturing a quality and depth which mirrors the relationship that the Creator has with humanity. The birth of children in a family is seen as a blessing, but the lack of children does not negate the holiness of the marriage. Over the last several decades churches in the mainline Protestant traditions have been mindful of breaking from a societal expectation of marriages bearing children, focusing instead on the relationship and the commitment to giving to the world that a couple has in a marriage. This has corresponded to heightened sensitivity to women’s role in society.

In the Christian community as a whole, marriage is considered a holy covenant with God. In the Roman Catholic and Orthodox traditions it is defined more particularly as a sacrament.⁶

Today the church struggles, mostly with integrity yet also in animosity, over what Christians believe are appropriate expressions of marriage and sexuality. Outsiders to the church faith tradition don’t always look deeply enough into the church setting to listen to the wide range of understanding of sexuality, assuming universal conservative values. Christian approaches to sexuality and other complex human matter are reflected upon in churches through ecclesiastical tradition and scriptural authority, as well as Christian compassion as a reflection of God’s ever-embracing love.

⁶ a Christian rite (as baptism or the Eucharist) that is believed to have been ordained by Christ and that is held to be a means of divine grace or to be a sign or symbol of a spiritual reality (Merrill-Webster Dictionary)

Faithful people have come to different conclusions in the matter of homosexuality and its living out in intimate relationship. Yet, just as a portion of the church has felt the nudging of the Holy Spirit to break from tradition in times past - from the marriage of priests, to the translation of the Bible into the vernacular, to the witness against slavery, to the protection of AIDS patients, to the ordination of women - many in the church now believe that the Holy Spirit is urging us into a new time and a new understanding of human sexuality. In the 21st century we have learned how little is absolute - scientific theories of eras past are caught in a tidal wave of new understandings of human life, the way the universe operates, even the state of matter and dimension!

One of the important questions facing the church is: how do we live in this exciting and awesome 21st century and prepare for the next generations who will be part of ever evolving understandings of the richness of God’s creation?

Reflections from some of the mainline denominations of Christianity.

Episcopal Church

In 2005, at the invitation of the Lambeth Committee, a theologically trained group of Episcopalian church leaders met to reflect on the church’s 40 year witness about homosexuality.⁷ In part they observed a

“growing awareness of holiness in same-sex relationships” which “has caused the Episcopal Church to face some difficult questions we did not always want to face. Might Christ the Lord, unfolding the mystery of his redeeming work, be opening our eyes to behold a dimension of his work that we had not understood? In other words, might what we had thought to be a crucial and defining division within the human family -- between those of same-sex desire and those of heterosexual desire -- be in fact a biological or cultural difference or cultural difference (as between male and female, slave or free) that has been overtaken by our common Baptism into his crucified and risen Body? Many have begun to answer ‘yes’ to those questions.”⁸

United Church of Christ

As the United Church of Christ community has reflected on marriage equality and same-sex marriage, they have found the mandate in the biblical call to justice and compassion - to love one’s neighbor as one’s self.

Love of neighbor as oneself is manifested in the language of covenant, in both the words of the prophets and the teachings of Jesus. Covenant means in practical terms to be taken seriously by God and to be taken seriously by God’s people. The UCC affirms that

At the core of the Biblical message is justice, manifested in right relationship - seeking both personal and communal well being - and in the elimination of marginalization.
- United Church of Christ

“the overriding message of the Gospel is that God calls God’s people to live fully the gift of love in responsible, faithful, just, committed, covenantal relationships of trust that recognize and respect the image of God in all people. These Gospel values are at the core of the covenantal relationship that we call marriage. . . . We also recognize and affirm that all humans are made in the image and likeness of God, including people of all sexual orientations, and God has bestowed upon each one the gift of human sexuality. Further, we recognize and affirm that, as created in God’s image and gifted by God with human sexuality, all people have the right to lead lives that express love, justice, mutuality, commitment, consent and pleasure.”⁹

7 EpiscopalChurch.org Archives.6/21/05

8 “To Set Our Hope on Christ: A Response to the Invitation of Windsor Report. anglicanlistening.org 6/21/2005

9 UCC 25th General Synod, July 4, 2005

Presbyterian Church

In 1978, the General Assembly offered this "definitive guidance" on homosexuality:

" . . . Homosexuality is not God's wish for humanity . . . On the basis of our understanding that the practice of homosexuality is sin,¹⁰

Indicating that conversations would need to continue, the dialogue has continued for 30 years. It led to the June 2008 General Assembly in San Jose, CA, (meeting only weeks after the Supreme Court ruling opening the way to same-sex marriage) in which the PC-USA approved ordaining lesbian and gay clergy.

"the 218th General Assembly recommended June 27 by a narrow margin that the denomination change its constitution to remove the impediments that have been disallowing the ordination of sexually-active gays and lesbians.... The proposal - which won't take effect unless it is approved by a majority of the 173 presbyteries - passed by a vote of 380-325.... The presbyteries will decide in the next year whether to remove from the denomination's constitution language restricting ordination to those who practice fidelity if they are married or chastity if they are single."

In a later vote, the General Assembly did not approve changing the Book of Order which says that

"marriage is a civil contract between a man and a woman. For Christians marriage is a covenant through which a man and a woman are called to live out together before God their lives of discipleship..." But it did reaffirm the PC(USA)'s commitment to equal protection under the law for same-sex partners, and appointed a special committee to study the history of laws regarding marriage and civil unions; the current policy debate over same-sex marriage; and the theology and practice of marriage.¹¹

Quotes from the 218th General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church (USA)

Marnie C., a minister from Atlanta, was quoted: "God designed sex to be held within marriage between a husband and a wife. ...The biblical directive God gave us hasn't changed and won't change."

Susan B. of Cincinnati challenged the PC(USA) to change from a standard that discriminates to one that practices "the radical hospitality of Jesus."

Timothy H., a minister from Coastal Carolina, said he's from a small, mission-loving, casserole-eating church in which people see this issue as being about "the reconstitution of the biblical, confessional definition of marriage."

Heather R. of California acknowledged that six verses in the Bible do seem to condemn homosexuality, but said the New Testament shows families of choice "of every shape and form." She pointed out other admonitions from Deuteronomy that (aren't followed) strictly today. "I pray we take the Bible seriously enough to remember it has more than six verses."

¹⁰ PCUSA.org/101

¹¹ www.pres-outlook.com (Presbyterian Outlook, July 26, 2008)

United Methodist Church

While the national body of the United Methodist Church struggles with the split over theological and biblical understandings of homosexuality, increasingly local Annual Conferences are speaking of a different mind and heart than that of the General Church. In the California-Pacific Annual Conference in June, the delegates (representing the 80,000 laity and clergy of the region) passed a resolution supporting gay and lesbian couples who marry and is on record opposing the November ballot initiative Proposition 8. Rev. Frank Wulf, an openly gay pastor who serves a UMC/Presbyterian congregation, and was the first openly gay UMC candidate for Bishop (in the Western Jurisdictional Conference in July), was quoted as saying

"We want to affirm same-sex couples who choose to marry and some of our pastors who choose knowing that it is in violation of United Methodist Church law to participate in those marriages." ¹²

We affirm the sanctity of the marriage covenant that is expressed in love, mutual support, personal commitment, and shared fidelity between a man and a woman. We believe that God's blessing rests upon such marriage, whether or not there are children of the union. We reject social norms that assume different standards for women than for men in marriage. We support laws in civil society that define marriage as the union of one man and one woman.

The Book of Discipline of the United Methodist Church - 2004. The United Methodist Publishing House.

The General Conference held in Fort Worth in April 2008, with over 1000 delegates from throughout the world, voted to retain the phrase that "homosexuality is incompatible with Christian teaching." The vote was 501 to 417, or 55 to 45 percent. The phrase has been in the United Methodist Book of Discipline since 1972.

One lay delegate said that the "incompatible" phrase is contradictory to two other sentences that are in the same paragraph of the Book of Discipline – that were added in 2000: "We implore families and churches not to reject or condemn lesbian and gay members and friends. We commit ourselves to be in ministry for and with all persons."

Another delegate asserted that "God created maleness and femaleness and declared it good." He said keeping the phrase is "at the very heart of our Church." To take out the phrase, he said, "is to imply that homosexuality is not incompatible with Christian teaching."

A legislative committee had recommended a substitution which said "Faithful, thoughtful people who have grappled with this issue deeply disagree with one another; yet all seek a faithful witness."¹³

Bishop Ken Carder of Mississippi believes homosexuality will be a divisive issue in the church until the denomination addresses the United States' deteriorating emphasis on marriage and its escalating divorce rate. "I'm not sure the church has very much credibility in dealing with gay marriage because we haven't done a very convincing job on heterosexual marriage," he said. "My own sense is much of the conflict and the confusion resulting from gay marriage ... is symptomatic of our failure as a society and a church to deal with the meaning and purpose of marriage in general."¹⁴

¹² LA Times, June 28, 2008

¹³ Bruce Pettit, California-Nevada News Service, CNUMC.org, April 30, 2008

¹⁴ Amy Green, UMNS (United Methodist News Service), May 20, 2004

DIALOGUE - WHAT THE CHURCHES ARE SAYING.10 minutes

Divide into 4 groups. Each group is to review the position of one denomination for 6 minutes (each group will need copies of Talking Points – What Is Marriage? from pages 24 through 27 and Religious Support for Marriage Equality on page 45).

Ask:

What new thing do you learn from this comment?

In what way does this comment challenge you?

In what way does this comment comfort you?

Then bring the group back together for some informally shared observations.

Now again break into groups, this time into triads (3 people). Assign one of the following quotations to each group. Ask the groups to discuss what the statement means to each of them as a person of faith.

1. There is a “growing awareness of holiness in same-sex relationships” which “has caused ...the Church to face some difficult questions we did not always want to face. Might Christ the Lord, unfolding the mystery of his redeeming work, be opening our eyes to behold a dimension of his work that we had not understood?”

2. “My own sense is much of the conflict and the confusion resulting from gay marriage ... is symptomatic of our failure as a society and a church to deal with the meaning and purpose of marriage in general.”

3. ... six verses in the Bible do seem to condemn homosexuality, but ... the New Testament shows families of choice “of every shape and form” (and) other admonitions from Deuteronomy (Christians) don’t follow strictly today. “I pray we take the Bible seriously enough to remember it has more than six verses.”

4. “Faithful, thoughtful people who have grappled with this issue deeply disagree with one another; yet all seek a faithful witness.”

5. “So what are we to do if we are to change the mind of the UMC to make it more inclusive to all of God’s children? We change its heart. We help all of our people to experience the hurt, the pain, the trauma, the rejection which our present policy inflicts on good and faithful Christians.” — Bishop Jack Tuell

Our culture needs a sexual ethic focused on personal relationships and social justice rather than particular sexual acts.

All persons have the right and responsibility to lead sexual lives that express love, justice, mutuality, commitment, consent, and pleasure. Grounded in respect for the body and for the vulnerability that intimacy brings, this ethic fosters physical, emotional, and spiritual health. It accepts no double standards and applies to all persons, without regard to sex, gender, color, age, bodily condition, marital status, or sexual orientation.

God hears the cries of those who suffer from the failure of religious communities to address sexuality. We are called today to see, hear, and respond to the suffering caused by violence against women and sexual minorities, the HIV pandemic, unsustainable population growth and over-consumption, and the commercial exploitation of sexuality.

From the Religious Declaration on Sexual Morality, Justice, and Healing (religiousinstitute.org)

(OPTIONAL) DIALOGUE - DVD AND CONVERSATION ON “FOR THE BIBLE TELLS ME SO”

See Information Sheet C

TALKING POINTS - BIBLICAL GUIDELINES ON SEXUALITY AND MARRIAGE

When we turn to the scriptures for guidance on marriage and relationships, we find that the biblical narrative describes a cultural setting very different from the 21st century world in which we live.

- Men have multiple wives and concubines
- Women have little choice in marriage
- Women's worth is measured by their child bearing and property
- Widowed women are powerless and often economically destitute
- Jesus condemns divorce as adultery.

It is critical that we ask ourselves: How do these biblical views of marriage impact our understanding of contemporary marriage for faithful people? How do we respond to the integrity of our religious traditions while viewing them in their historical and cultural contexts? How is the Spirit calling us to respond?

The need for careful Bible study

The biblical accounts about relationships, marriage and sexual behavior are complex and reflect the practices of many generations and cultures of people. It is important in exploring biblical texts to seek the theological truth in the midst of its cultural embodiment. This can be accomplished by:

- studying to understand the cultural context of a particular biblical account;
- using research materials which explore the original language (Hebrew, Aramaic, Greek) and seeking accurate translations of these words;
- comparing several different translations of the Bible to note different translations of words;
- using reason to understand the intent of the passage, and its relationship to contemporary life.

All translations are filtered through linguistic and cultural perspectives, which impact the texts and their meanings. On a subject such as homosexuality and same-sex marriage, it is very important to take part in careful study and exploration to fully understand the viewpoint of scripture.

...we must also remember that Jesus, the Jewish prophets, and even Paul never even comment on the responsible love a gay man or lesbian feels for another. The Bible is completely silent on the issue of homosexual orientation. And no wonder. Homosexual orientation wasn't even known until the 19th century. The discovery that some of us are created and/or shaped in our earliest infancy toward same-gender attraction was made in the last 150 years. Biblical authors knew nothing about sexual orientation. Old Testament authors and Paul assumed all people were created heterosexual, just as they believed the earth was flat, that there were heavens above and hell below, and that the sun moved up and down.

“What the Bible Says - and Doesn't Say About Homosexuality”, Rev. Mel White

Within the religious spectrum, there are those who believe the Bible sets clear and absolute rules for sexuality, i.e. chastity in singleness, fidelity in heterosexual marriage. There are others who come to their sexual and relational decisions out of a more fluid interplay between individual conscience, their family's values, and the visions received from their faith community, who weigh not only what the Bible says but also principles such as mutual trust and responsibility, honesty, justice and health, age-level appropriateness, cultural differences and recent insights from science and psychology.

- From a sermon by Rev. Barbara Gerlach, Fidelity and Integrity: A Matter of Trust and Truth, in the UCC educational/ advocacy resource, Equal Marital Rights for Same Gender Couples

Biblical overview

Some exploration of biblical texts will be helpful in the dialogue about same-sex marriage. As the texts are studied, it is important to ask:

- What did this mean in the context in which it was written?
- What does it mean today?
- Are there other texts which support or conflict with this text?
- How does this correspond with other teachings?

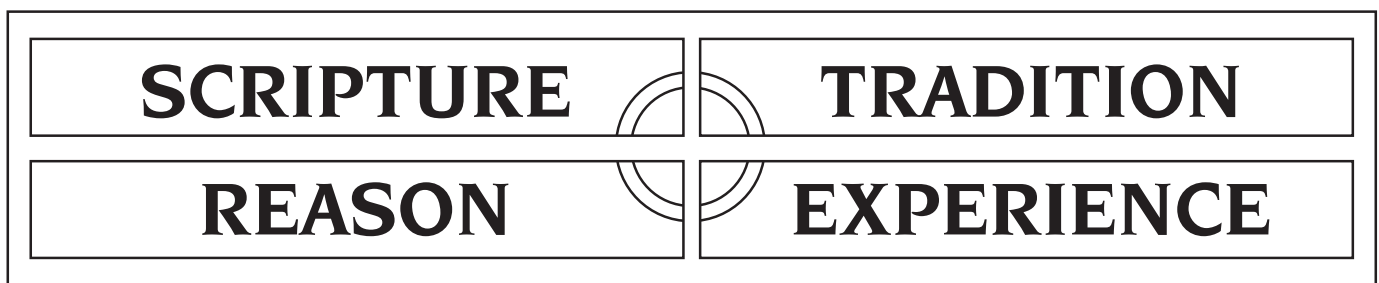
Christian life is lived in many dimensions, both of the spirit and of the practical, and there are multiple levels to ethical decision making by mindful and thinking Christian persons. All of these needs to be engaged in this 21st century process of decision making and soul searching about same-sex marriage.

We make distinctions today even in language and belief brought to bear on heterosexual marriage. Within the Anglican tradition, the Book of Common Prayer sacrament rests on Ephesians 5, in which the bride is directed to be submissive to her husband. Ephesians 6 makes the same directive for slaves submitting to their master. Few today still require this massive inequity in marriage. The vows of earlier years for the bride to “love, honor, and obey” have been replaced. So, too, can a sacrament of marriage for same-sex couples focus on life unions blessed by God to reflect our changing perspectives on what marriage is about as a life union of people joined in love and commitment alone.

A Window for Theological Decision Making

For details on this method of theological reflection, see Information Sheet C.

Considering any 21st-century issue by a person of Christian faith requires being fully engaged in a process of seeking understanding and knowledge before making decisions. Whether it is about the laws of church or state, concerns long held or newly arising ethical issues, or seeks answers to behavioral issues - it is important to have the ability to make careful and authentic responses by looking at an issue from a variety of perspectives. One model makes use of four windows - Scripture, Tradition, Reason and Experience.¹⁵ Each of these provides a particular way to look at an issue and make a reflective, faithful decision.



So what are we to do if we are to change the mind of the UMC to make it more inclusive to all of God's children? We change its heart. We help all of our people to experience the hurt, the pain, the trauma, the rejection which our present policy inflicts on good and faithful Christians. Oh, we don't neglect dealing with scripture and tradition and reason, because all of these can be enlisted in the struggle for inclusiveness. But we understand on an issue such as this that changing the heart is a prerequisite to changing the mind. At least, that's how it was for me.

— Bishop Jack M. Tuell (read complete sermon at www.calchurches.org/marriage)

“Living Lovingly” Talking About Marriage Equality From a Faith Perspective

DIALOGUE - BIBLICAL STUDY30 minutes
detail on texts is in Information Sheet A

There are few texts that actually address marriage, and even fewer that address same-sex relationships. The texts need to be studied contextually, and scholars vary in their interpretation and theology. In this section we will explore two biblical references:

i. Genesis 1:26-28; Genesis 2:18-22

ii. Ruth 1:1-18

iii. Galatians 3:23-29

- Divide into 3 groups.
- Assign a Biblical text to each of the groups.
- Ask the groups to spend time reviewing the material in the study guide. The attendees received these texts the week before, and some will be prepared for responding. Leave some time for others to catch up with the material.
- Ask the group to discuss the following questions with each other:
 - What does this text tell me about relationships from a faith perspective?
 - What questions does this text raise for me?
 - In what way does this text speak to me about same-sex marriage?
- Group reflection on bible study
- Ask each group to report back briefly what they have learned in the Bible study.

An interview with biblical scholar Walter Brueggeman

Julie Wortman:

As a person who bases what he thinks on Scripture, what would you say the biblical standards are for relationships?

Walter Brueggemann:

Well, I think fidelity. It takes a lot of interpretation, but it's basically to love God and love neighbor. And the first neighbor I suppose we love is the one to whom we make these holy vows. So that has to do with relationships that are honorable and just and faithful and reliable and all that neat stuff. Then you can argue out what all that means. This is relational thinking.

But the sort of thinking that you can establish out of the Book of Leviticus, where so much of this anti-same-sex blessing stance comes from, involves a substantive material sense of contamination that has nothing to do with relationships. To this way of thinking there is a palpable poison that is turned loose in the community that must be resisted. People who think this way cannot take into account the relational dynamics that we're trying to talk about. That way of talking about physical contamination is deeply rooted in the Bible, though, which is a problem

The Witness ¹⁶

An important consideration regarding any Biblical text is translation—from ancient languages to modern languages, and from ancient cultures to modern cultures.

— *Time to Seek*, p. 27,
Religious Institute on Sexual
Morality, Justice, and Healing

15 In United Methodist theology this system is referred to as “The Quadrilateral”. Book of Discipline, The Episcopal Church has a slightly different model: Scripture, Tradition, Reason and Communion.

16 information source God is Still Talking About Marriage, United Church of Christ

TALKING POINTS: OTHER BIBLICAL TEXTS IN THE CHRISTIAN TRADITION

Biblical information regarding marriage and relationships is found in many kinds of texts - prescriptive law, stories of the tribes of Israel and other people in the Hebrew Testament (as in the dialogue above and Information Sheet A), ethical guidance in relationships, the holiness code, the teachings of Jesus, the teachings of Paul and other apostles. A broad perspective of texts reminds us how diverse the scriptural witness is, and how important it is to engage scripture in dialogue, with integrity.

- Texts that speak in legal terms about marriage and relationships include :
 - admonitions of Paul concerning marriage (Ephesians 5:21-25 and Colossians 3:18-19)
 - the reassertion of Jewish law by Jesus (Mark 10:5-12)
- Texts that teach ethical relationships include:
 - Love your neighbor as yourself (Matthew 22:37); Clothe yourselves with love (Colossians 3:14); Faith, hope, love abide...the greatest of these is love (1 Corinthians 13:13)
- Texts that speak of broken relationships and how people learn through them
- Texts that speak of women and other persons without status in the culture
- Texts that speak of loving relationships between persons of the same sex, e.g., Ruth and Naomi, Jonathan and David

Rev. Mel White is the founder of Soul Force, a group that has worked conscientiously with non-violence for the full acceptance of the homosexual community. Rev. White has spent many years in the careful study of scripture. One of the observations he makes is that

“the Bible is a book about God -- not a book about human sexuality...
The Bible is the story of God’s love for the world and the people of the world. It tells the history of God’s love at work rescuing, renewing, and empowering humankind. It was never intended to be a book about human sexuality. “

He points out that using the Bible’s standards on sexual matters as they are presented put us in a very precarious place, for “the Bible accepts sexual practices that we condemn and condemns sexual practices that we accept.” For example, in:

- Deuteronomy 22:13-21: If it is discovered that a bride is not a virgin, the Bible demands that she be executed by stoning immediately.
- Deuteronomy 22:22: If a married person has sex with someone else's husband or wife, the Bible commands that both adulterers be stoned to death.
- Mark 10:1-12: Divorce is strictly forbidden in both Testaments, as is remarriage of anyone who has been divorced.
- Leviticus 18:19: The Bible forbids a married couple from having sexual intercourse during a woman's period. If they disobey, both shall be executed.
- Mark 12:18-27: If a man dies childless, his widow is ordered by biblical law to have intercourse with each of his brothers in turn until she bears her deceased husband a male heir.
- Deuteronomy 25:11-12: If a man gets into a fight with another man and his wife seeks to rescue her husband by grabbing the enemy's genitals, her hand shall be cut off and no pity shall be shown her.

Rev. White concludes that

“over the centuries the Holy Spirit has taught us that certain Bible verses should not be understood as God’s law for all time periods. Some verses are specific to the culture and time they were written, and are no longer viewed as appropriate, wise, or just. ¹⁷

¹⁷ White, Mel, “What the Bible Says—and Doesn’t Say About Homosexuality. www.soulforce.org

It is our charge, as Christians of the 21st century, to determine marriage within the greater fullness of the biblical teachings. Building on the Hebrew Testament stories of covenant relationships and the breaking down of barriers between cultural groups, Christ taught and lived a radical hospitality, with an openness to those who were traditionally outside the cultural norm. The early church was moved to understand that there is no “clean and unclean” in the Spirit, so that all were treated equally who came to faith through Christ. The scriptures ask us to see how the truth revealed in the past is revealed now, in covenant relationships of love among men and among women of the church.

For many Christians, the issues of equality in all relationships stems from Galatians 3: 23-29:

Now before faith came, we were imprisoned and guarded under the law until faith would be revealed. Therefore the law was our disciplinarian until Christ came, so that we might be justified by faith. But now that faith has come, we are no longer subject to a disciplinarian, for in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith. As many of you as were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus. And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham’s offspring, heirs according to the promise.

In her book, *What Is Marriage For?* E.J. Graff describes the historical, economic, social and political conditions which have defined marriage through centuries of practice. She concludes with the question: “What is marriage for, in other words - like most serious political or social questions - is a question about what it means to be fully human.”

Graff points out that marriage has been under constant change through all human history, and remains one of the hardest and most enduring of human institutions. She describes how marriage has historically changed in response to the needs of the community. Graff charts the change from choosing a working partner to the contemporary companion for sharing life, from production of children to happiness and intimacy, from the family as primary work group to a nurturing nest for the young, from the establishment of kinship relationships to the focus on individual spiritual needs. Many of these different understandings of marriage are reflected in different cultures and communities not only historically, but also in contemporary worldwide cultures and Christian communities. ¹⁸

A perspective from the Family Research Council, who were the primary supporters of the “Defense of Marriage Act.:

Marriage has been the foundation of civilization for thousands of years in cultures around the world. It is the single most important social institution, and it is the basis for the procreation of children and the heart of family life. Those who are trying to radically redefine it for their own purposes are the ones who are trying to impose their values on the rest of the population. Ordinary people did not pick this fight. They are not the aggressors. They are merely defending the basic morality that has sustained the culture for everyone against a radical attack...

Robert H. Knight, director of the Family Research Council

The most beautiful word in the Gospel of Jesus Christ is “whosoever.” All of God’s promises are intended for every human being. This includes gay men and lesbians. How tragic it is that the Christian Church has excluded and persecuted people who are homosexual!

We are all created with powerful needs for personal relationships. Our quality of life depends upon the love we share with others, whether family or friends, partners or peers. Yet lesbians and gay men facing hostile attitudes in society often are denied access to healthy relationships. Jesus Christ calls us to find ultimate meaning in life through a personal relationship with our Creator. The important spiritual union can bring healing and strength to all of our human relationships.

Rev. Elder Don Eastman. *Homosexuality: Not a Sin, Not a Sickness*

18 E. J. Graff, *What is Marriage For?*,

DIALOGUE - PERSONAL HISTORIES15 MINUTES

The case studies are found in Information Sheet E. Distribute one to each group.

This dialogue opportunity is to engage 5 different lives through five different case studies. It's an opportunity to hear the stories of persons who live within a real world of same-sex committed relationships, their families, and their friends. Hear the stories as if you were listening to these persons in the room with you. Hear what they are saying to you. How can and do you respond? Break into 5 groups and listen in on these persons' lives.

TALKING POINTS - FURTHER STUDY AND ACTION5 MINUTES

We have shared 3 hours or more together seeking to understand same-sex relationships and the idea of same-sex marriage. Each of us is not the same person we were when we began this study. We each have been impacted by information, by one another, by feelings, by new knowledge, to new realities. Some of it has been challenging, some of it has been exciting, some of it is comforting, some of what we've heard is still not clear in our minds.

So what is next? Each of us will have a different response. Response is what faithful people are called to do. We are to listen, to hear, to be in relationship, and to respond. Doing nothing is contrary to the call of Christ to 'follow him.'

What kind of response will you make?

1. You can pray - for more understanding, for security for same-sex couples and their families, with thanksgiving for committed relationships - both homosexual and heterosexual. You can pray that God will continue to speak to you and help you understand or be patient. You can pray that God will touch the hearts of people who are angry and not open. You can silently listen for the presence of God.
2. Facts, biblical study, even well presented information doesn't always help, as pointed out by Bishop Jack Tuell. What matters is relationship—hearing the stories of people hurt by the church, left out of the church, denied by the church. Listen to the stories of gay and lesbian persons, talk to their parents. Seek to understand from your heart.
3. You can read more. There is so much information to be shared, and not all of the material used in this study will be covered in the time available. Re-read the material you have received. Download the full study guide for personal study. Investigate some of the resources mentioned in footnotes or at the end of the study.
4. Continue the conversation with one another. Go for coffee with another member of the group, or make plans to go out with another friend, and share about what you've learned. Spend time with someone with whom you have a different perspective, and listen/share some more (remember about dialogue rather than debate!). If you are heterosexual - get to know persons in your church who are gay or lesbian as brothers and sisters in Christ. If you are gay or lesbian, bi-sexual or transgender, seek out allies in the church, gay and straight. Build alliances!
5. Study the political issues facing the state and the nation right now, as you prepare for elections in November and beyond. How does what you've studied impact the choices you make? Write persons in the legislature with your opinion.
6. Become part of groups which are making a difference in the lives of the LGBT community - teen support groups, school LGBT alliances, community organizations working against hate crimes. Whatever your position on open

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marriage, reconciling relationships and civil rights advocacy are important actions for the Christian Community.

7. Become familiar with the response of your denomination or religious community to same-sex marriage. Learn how your faith community distinguishes between the legal and religious authority regarding marriages.
8. Set up a library of materials for your church/community members to review. Send for materials from a variety of organizations, including those mentioned in the study.
9. Arrange for a showing of the film “For the Bible Tells Me So” and organize a dialogue time with small groups following the film. Perhaps open this up to the community.
10. Contact IMPACT, the advocacy branch of the California Council of Churches, for information on the work they are doing.
11. See if there are others who would like to work on a statement for your own church community regarding same-sex marriages that would reflect your variety of opinions, as well as your compassionate concern. If you want to take some sort of official action the civil rights of marriage, speak with your church’s social action committee or your official board.

CLOSING RITUAL5 MINUTES

Tell the group that for the closing you will be leading them through a breath prayer.

A breath prayer is a simple prayer, in which one phrase is said or thought of on the in breath, and a second phrase on the out breath. Describe the breath prayer to them and say it to them before you begin. Suggest they close their eyes and sit silently for a moment before you begin.

Lead the group in the following breath prayer from Romans 8:38-39.¹⁹ Say it aloud slowly with them twice, and then have them breath the prayer 2 more times in silence. End by saying “Amen.”

On the ‘in breath,’ pray “nothing can separate us.”

On the ‘out breath,’ pray “from the love of God.”

Now, ask the group to stand and form a circle, holding hands with each other. Describe to the group that you will be asking each person to say her/his name, and then the group will respond with the name in the following sentence:

“We give thanks for you, _____, Child of God!”

Demonstrate it once, then begin with a person on one side of you. Conclude with saying your name, and the group responding.

End with the blessing,

“Go now, children of God, one in Christ, empowered by the Holy Spirit.”

¹⁹ July 27, 2008, Out In Scripture, www.hrc.org/scripture/week.asp

Information Sheet A, Session 2

Biblical overview of Biblical Texts on Relationships

Read the texts before discussing.

As the texts are studied, it is important to ask:

- What did this mean in the context in which it was written?
- What does it mean today?
- Are there other texts which support or conflict with this text?
- How does what I've learned correspond to my experience and knowledge?

Genesis 1:26-28; Genesis 2:18-22

In these early texts, the stories of Creation are told.

- In Genesis 2 the story says that God creates a “helper” for Adam, whose name is called Eve; other English translations are “companion,” “helpmate,” or “partner.” This new creature was taken from the side rib of Adam.
- The Genesis 1 account presents another story of creation, in which both the male and female were created at the same time, in the image of God.

Some varied understandings of these creation texts are:

- God created Eve to be Adam’s wife. Women are to be the companion of the male.
- God’s intention is to pair persons in heterosexual relationships.
- God’s intention is to create committed relationships and mutual responsibility.
- Companionship is the issue in this text, not the maleness/femaleness of the relationship.
- Sexuality is a gift from God.
- Human beings are diverse from the beginning of creation, as is God who creates humanity.
- From the beginning of creation, Eve is equal with Adam.

Ruth 1:1-18

The story of Ruth is one of commitment between two women, as they seek to live faithfully in response to God. The most famous text from the story of Ruth is that of Ruth’s pledge to her mother-in-law Naomi:

Entreat me not to leave you or to return from following you; for where you go I will go, and where you lodge, I will lodge; your people shall be my people, and your God my God; where you die I will die, and there will I be buried; May the Lord do so to me and more also if even death parts me from you.

This text is often used at Christian weddings as part of the covenant of the couple with each other before God. We should also consider:

- Ruth was released by the Law from following Naomi, because her husband had died. The daughter-in-law Orpah

was also released to return home. Ruth refused.

- Ruth and Orpah were ‘foreigners’, and represented an intermixing culturally and racially, which was contrary to some of Israel’s purity laws. Yet later Ruth married an Israelite, and it was given God’s blessing.
- At death the young women were no longer responsible for their mother by marriage if they stayed in their own land. Returning home, Naomi had no status and no access to support or to income, as her whole “identity” (her husband and sons) had died.
- Ruth’s pledge is a commitment and covenant which is given by one woman, a daughter by marriage, to another woman, her mother by marriage, binding her life with hers.
- What does it mean that two women have made a covenant with each other and with God? Here a covenant between two individuals occurs in the Biblical context outside of traditional marriage and is blessed by God.

Galatians 3:23-29

In this passage, Paul, as did Jesus before him, sets aside focus on strict adherence to the purity code, or following strict laws, to be reconciled to God. This is one of many passages where the “old” law is set aside and replaced by the law of compassion, grace, and inclusion.

- How does this passage make all the arguing about strict divisions between “pure” and “impure,” insider and outsider, a non-issue?
- The wisdom of this text lies in the proclamation of the absolute equality of all God’s children without regard to any of the distinctions traditionally used to divide and exclude. What does this say about current day attempts to exclude based on gender, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, or any of the other categories we use to decide who is in and who is out?

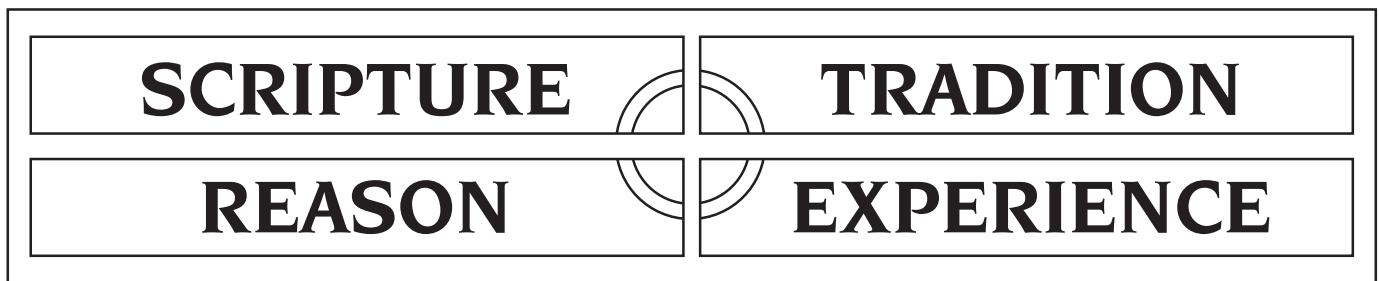
We all interpret individual passages of the Bible based on our overall understanding of what is most central and important. For Christians, Jesus’ teachings are the gold standard by which everything else in the Bible is evaluated. Jesus constantly revised the teachings of the Hebrew scriptures in the light of his new commandment. “You have heard it said, but I say unto you . . .”

- Jesus replaced a religious life based on countless laws with a new law: Love God, Love your neighbor as yourself. What does this have to say about all the beliefs, doctrines, creeds, and dogmas we use to decide who is “right” and “wrong.” “in” and “out?”
- What is it about human nature that seems to make it so necessary for us to see ourselves as different, or even “better” than others? Does it diminish our value in God’s eyes if ALL people are seen as equally valued and loved and whole?
- Is it more important for people of faith to submit to a list of “good” and “bad” behaviors or to be nurtured to fully embrace and become the whole person God created them to be?

Information Sheet B, Session 2

A Window for Theological Decision Making

Considering any 21st century issue by a person of Christian faith requires being fully engaged in a process of seeking understanding and knowledge before making decisions. Whether it is about the laws of church or state, concerns long held or newly arising ethical issues, or seeks answers to behavioral issues - it is important to have the ability to make careful and authentic responses by looking at an issue from a variety of perspectives. One model makes use of four windows - Scripture, Tradition, Reason and Experience.²⁰ Each of these provides a particular way to look at an issue and make a reflective, faithful decision.



- **Scripture** is the first step - this is the starting point for all Christians. What does scripture tell me? Not just one or two isolated passages of scripture, but the overall Biblical narrative. What do I learn from the witness and conclusions of the biblical people and writers?
- The second step is church **Tradition** - what does tradition of the wider church, my local church, my denomination, other faith movements - past and the present - say about this situation? What has the dialogue been? What kinds of conclusions has the church as a community come to?
- **Reason** is the third approach - “What do I think?” What does my reason, my learning, my reading, my training, my observation tell me about this issue or situation?
- The final window is **Experience**, a very significant means of observation. What does my own experience tell me about this situation? When I put together the biblical witness, my own reason and the educated thoughts of others, take a look at how the faith tradition has evolved, then I need to notice what happens with my personal feelings in response. What does the spirit within my life tell me about how to respond?

²⁰ In United Methodist theology this system is referred to as “The Quadrilateral”. Book of Discipline, The Episcopal Church has a slightly different model: Scripture, Tradition, Reason and Communion.

Information Sheet C, Session 2

DVD presentation, “For the Bible Tells Me So”

Scriptures on which to base the welcome, acceptance and rights of LGBT people

- **Isaiah 56.** God’s welcome of foreigners and eunuchs into God’s “house of prayer for all peoples.”
- **Book of Ruth** and **1 Samuel 18 through 2 Samuel 1.** The modeling for same-gender couples in the love relationship heralded in scripture in the stories of Ruth and Naomi (Ruth) and Jonathan and David (Samuel).
- **Micah 6:8.** The emphasis of justice in the prophets: “God has told you, O mortal, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?”
- **Deuteronomy 6:4-5, Leviticus 19:18** and **Luke 10:25-28.** As other rabbis of his time would have, Jesus blended Deuteronomy 6:4-5 (“Love God”) and Leviticus 19:18 (“Love your neighbor as yourself” - note this comes between Leviticus 18 and 20!) in Matthew 22:34-40 as the greatest commandments, and the lens through which to interpret all of the law and the prophets. To confirm this was a common pairing, see Luke 10:25-28, in which Jesus solicits the same conclusion from an expert in religious law.
- **John 9.** Jesus dissociates a human condition from a sinful cause when he declares a man was not born blind because of his sin or that of his parents, but so that the glory of God may be made manifest.
- **John 4.** Jesus reveals his messianic identity to the outcast Samaritan woman at the well who had had five husbands and was living with a man unmarried. She becomes the first evangelist, bringing others from her village to meet Jesus.
- **Luke 10:25-37.** The parable of the Good Samaritan, in which the most hated person to Jesus’ listeners “loved his neighbor as himself” in helping a victim of robbers - what a priest and a lay priest failed to do.
- **Acts 10** and **11.** the full welcome of uncircumcised Gentiles into the church, whose lifestyles were repugnant to Jews.
- **Galatians 5:1, etc.** The many letters of Paul that assert freedom from law and custom in Christ, such as Galatians 5:1, “For freedom Christ has set us free.”
- **1 John 4:16b.** “God is love, and those who abide in love abide in God, and God abides in them.” What follows repeats the theme emphasized throughout scripture to not be afraid, “there is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear. ... We love because God first loved us. those who say, ‘I love God,’ and hate their brothers or sisters, are liars...”

from For the Bible Tells Me So: A Study Guide and Advocacy Training Curriculum
by the Rev. Chris Glasser, edited by Dr. Sharon Groves
published by the Human Rights Campaign (www.hrc.org/issues/religion.asp)
used with permission

Information Sheet D, Session 2

Use for additional dialogue if time allows or for an extended session

ADDITIONAL DIALOGUE - *The Holiness Code through 21st Century eyes*

Several of the most obvious biblical comments on same sex activity are found in Leviticus in what is called the Holiness Code. Read the information about the Holiness Code below, and review the commentary from the Episcopal Church (Information Sheet B). Ask the group - what questions does this study of scripture raise for you as you consider committed and covenantal same-sex?

THE HOLINESS CODE - Leviticus 18-26

The holiness code (Leviticus 18-26) is generally dated to the early exilic period, a century or two later than much of Leviticus. It seems to have been a new synthesis of Torah for the community that survived the destruction of Jerusalem and was now living in exile among the nations. Maintaining Israel's distinctiveness would be a matter of survival. It is an axiom of sociological studies that pollution/purity beliefs receive emphasis where social boundaries are precariously maintained. The holiness code makes no distinction between ritual and moral regulations, as is especially clear in chapter 19 - which follows the chapter on sexual regulations and forms the rhetorical center of the holiness code. The rights of the poor and the duty to the neighbor are listed side by side with the prohibitions about not breeding two different kinds of cattle or wearing clothes made of different kinds of cloth. But even if the text itself makes no distinction, no interpretive community - including orthodox Jews - treat all the commandments with the same weight. The interpretive tradition is a living and growing conversation with the text about where “the density of holiness” lies. Interestingly, Judaism and Christianity have agreed about this: the commandments that help us sift out and interpret the others are those to love God above all else (Deuteronomy 6:4ff) and to love the neighbor as oneself (Leviticus 19:18). As the scribe says to Jesus in Mark 12, these are far more important than all burnt offerings and sacrifices.



Information Sheet E, Session 2

Case Studies

Read through the case study. Ask yourself:

- **What are the issues in the story as it is presented?**
- **What questions does the story raise for me?**
- **What does the case tell me about relationships and marriage?**
- **What decision do I find myself coming to as a result of each story?**

Case Study A

Phyllis and Mary Anne were in their 40's when they met each other. Phyllis had been married briefly to a student she met in college, but their young infatuation did not last more than a few years, and Phyllis was clear early on that she had few feelings other than friendship for him. Phyllis went on to become a college professor. Mary Anne was an only child, and when she met Phyllis she was caring for her mother who had had a stroke. Mary Anne was a bookkeeper, and met Phyllis when she was doing a special project at the university where Phyllis taught.

Phyllis had met several other women over the years with whom she was in a relationship. Mary Anne was quite shy, and had never been sexually active, yet was aware of her feelings for other women, but confused by it. In time, as Phyllis and Mary Anne spent more time together, their relationship became intimate, and then they became such close companions that neither of them could imagine living without the other. When Mary Anne's mother passed away, Mary Anne sold the house, and she and Phyllis set up a household together.

Over the years they had made promises to each other, made commitments, wrote poetry and letters, which secured their love for each other. When domestic partnerships became possible, they were so relieved, because Phyllis one year had had a series of medical problems, and Mary Anne had not been able to do anything to help her in an official capacity. Luckily Phyllis's brother was close, and he was supportive of them, so things had worked out.

When Phyllis and Mary Anne heard about the decision of the Mayor of San Francisco to permit marriages between same-sex persons, they were thrilled. They drove from their home in Southern California, spent a night in a hotel in San Francisco (their first trip there), and joined the long line at City Hall. They were married amidst many camera flashes and news reporters crowding in. It was a wonderful event. They didn't know how long the marriage would be "legal" but they knew that it was "true". When they signed their marriage license, Phyllis was 68 and Mary was 72.

Phyllis and Mary Anne sent letters to the Mayor, and to their senators, and shared about what this marriage meant to them. They joined an organization working towards equal marriage, and even drove back to San Francisco, waiting in the crowds, the day the Supreme Court made its decision that discrimination against same-sex marriage was unconstitutional. Tears flowed down their faces, and as they looked at one another, they most felt gratitude - for each other, and for the young men and young women they saw around them - that they might have a future in which they did not have to hide who they were and who they loved.

Case Study B

The phone rang. Joe picked it up, “Hello?” It was his mother and father, both on the line at the same time. “Hi, son. How are you doing? And how’s Ted’s job search going?” The conversation continued as Joe shared anecdotes and events from the daily life he shared with his partner of 10 years, Ted. They had met at a convention for pharmaceutical sales persons, in the Midwest, and had barely been apart since then. Four years previously they had adopted a young son, Davey, 5 years old, who had some physical problems with his legs, and with epilepsy. Ted had gone back to school to learn physical therapy in order to better understand their son’s needs, and now having graduated, he was looking for a job as a physical therapist.

“Joe - we have something we want to ask you,” said his mother. “We have a request. You know that our 50th wedding anniversary is coming up.” Of course he knew - she hadn’t stopped talking about the party for 6 months. His parents lived on the east coast, and he and Ted had stayed in the Kansas City area, home turf for Ted.

“Honey, this is what I want.” Joe suddenly felt anxious. It had taken awhile for his parents to get used to his relationship with Ted. They were pretty open minded people, but in their Vermont small town, gay relationships were not something one talked about. The arrival of a grandson in their home had been the deal breaker, and from then on they seemed to accept this family of three - but mostly not acknowledging the obvious fact that Joe and Ted were gay partners. Were they worried about Ted and Joe and Davey coming to the anniversary event?

“Mom...” Joe began, “we’ve already bought our tickets...is everything o.k.?”

“Oh yes” they both exclaimed at once. “We were afraid you wouldn’t all be able to come. Oh, we’re so relieved. Because this is the favor we’re asking. We were thinking...when we renew our wedding vows, we wondered if you and Ted would like to...well...what do you call it...have a commitment ceremony too? At the same time? It would make us so happy.” His mother was crying, his father was making throat clearing noises on the phone, and Joe - well he was stunned. It was the most important moment of his life.

Case Study C

Frank was a Boy Scout leader, a much-loved leader of the church, and well known in the community. He had devoted 17 years to scouting, even after their son had gone on to college. One day his wife showed him a newspaper article about the courts trying to force a Boy Scout troop to accept a Scout leader that was homosexual. The young man had grown up in the troop, become an Eagle Scout, and it had been a formative time in his rather lonely life. It was only recently the troop members had found out the young man was gay. Frank was furious. What business did the courts have forcing someone like that into the good, wholesome setting of the Scouts? Scouting is where boys are taught to be men, and there wasn’t anything very manly about these “gay guys” as he liked to refer to them. Frank thought it was pretty strange that the guy had made it to Eagle Scout.

The next Sunday was Scout Sunday and Frank had been asked to preach. He preached on a text from Romans, where Paul admonishes the church about uncontrolled sexuality, and says that it was an abomination for a man to lay with another man. He preached “we have to teach the kids that God created us to be male and female, and to deny this is to go against God, and God’s whole plan for the human family. Family is the key word,” he said in his sermon. He urged each of the boys to grow up and find a woman to share life with, to have children, and to teach their children right from wrong. “Homosexuality is like creating an idol, it is loving ourselves instead of loving God. Maybe people can’t help the way they are, but they sure can do something about how they act.”

During the week he got telephone calls from a number of church members. Many of them were supportive and thanked him. But one was from a man who had been a friend for years, who asked, “Isn’t there enough love in God to go around to

everybody, including the homosexuals? Wasn't the Apostle Paul really most concerned about caring relationships?"

Another call was from his son's best friend from junior high who was now a college senior. He was kind of quiet at first, and then blurted out,

"Mr. Frank, I heard about your sermon. I was always glad you were my scout leader. You really taught me what it was like to be a man who was caring. I guess I just want you to know, Mr. Frank. Well...I'm gay." And then he hung up.

Frank was startled. He didn't know what to think. He went on the Internet and found a site called Family Research Council, in Washington, D.C. Joe was grateful for the information they provided him which reaffirmed that the Bible teaches that homosexuality is a sin, and that we can love the sinner but hate the sin. The phone rang again. This time it was the pastor of his church. "Frank," he said, "I think it would be a good idea if we could get together and talk about Sunday. Could I come over tomorrow evening?"

Case Study D

Joyce and Brenda had been friends for 15 years. After Joyce's partner, Maria, died of cancer, they became closer, realizing they had an important relationship to which they wanted to commit themselves. They became a family. Maria was mother to a young girl named Lily. Lily's father had become involved with drugs, and became unable to take care of his daughter. Joyce had been very present in Lily's life, and had been able to adopt her right before her mother died when Lily was 3 years old.

Joyce is a professional architect, with a good salary. Brenda is a writer, and the more outgoing of the two women. When Lily began attending the local elementary school, they both were involved, but Brenda became the parent on the scene. She is the one who arranges play dates, walks Lily to school and is active with the PTA. Brenda wants to adopt Lily. She adores her. Joyce and Lily want this badly. They have already spent over \$140,000 on lawyers, CPAs, financial and investment advisors, etc. in order to protect their family's future. They have no inheritance rights, no social security benefit rights, no authority to make health care decisions for each other, no right to their partner's IRA, 401K or ESOP plans, no right to their partner's health benefits, the house doesn't automatically go to the other upon the death of one. They cannot even legally have a joint checking account because as an unemployed stay-at-home mom, the IRS would consider everything one partner would put into such a checking account a gift to the other.

Adoption depends upon the attitude of the judge assigned to their case. As is usual for gay second parent adoptions, according to state Department of Social Services policy, Brenda's request to adopt was turned down, and then assigned to a judge. Court fees and attorney fees have to be paid. Because Brenda works at home as a writer, she had to list herself as unemployed. It is not possible to list joint household income, even though Joyce's salary is more than enough for their household, and Brenda's work at home provides a stable environment for Lily. During a home visit by a Social Worker, the fact that Brenda has been her parent for most of Lily's life is ignored. Instead, questions focus around Brenda's plans to tell Lily that she is adopted, and how important this is for her "identity." It was not known by the Social Worker that Joyce's family has a history of chronic heart disease, and so it is critical for Lily that Brenda adopts her.

Case Study E

April 24, 2008

Dear Governor Schwarzenegger –

Today the Opponents of Equality are announcing that their proposed Constitutional Amendment to limit marriage will be on the ballot in November.

As a gay dad, I think limiting access to marriage is a bad proposition. It teaches our children who are straight that it is OK to bully people who are different, and it teaches our children who are gay there is no alternative but celibacy or suicide. It prevents parents who are gay from fully participating in our economy, and places a greater economic burden on families who are not gay.

Most of all, it deprives individuals of making the most important choice they can make as human beings: if and whom to marry.

This initiative is not about “protecting marriage.” It is about taking an entire group of people and telling them they are less worthy and less capable of choosing how they live their own lives. It is not about “protecting the children” but about changing their Constitution to punish our differences instead of celebrating them. We would not like somebody to do that to us, and we should not do it to others. Any and all ways that you slice it, this is a bad proposition. Thank you for opposing it.

Yours,²¹

²¹ <http://signab43.wordpress.com/category/groups>

RELIGIOUS SUPPORT FOR MARRIAGE EQUALITY

Many denominations are considering their policies on marriage, holy unions and the legal right to marry. As of August 2008:

- Several religious denominations and institutions have policies that support full inclusion of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) persons, including marriage for same-sex couples. These include: Alliance for Jewish Renewal, Central Conference of American Rabbis/Union for Reform Judaism, Ecumenical Catholic Church, Reconstructionist Rabbinical Association/Jewish Reconstructionist Federation, Unitarian Universalist Association, United Church of Christ, Unity Fellowship Churches, and Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches.
- The American Baptist Churches USA, the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), the Episcopal Church USA, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, the Presbyterian Church USA, and various Quaker groups allow clergy to perform union ceremonies for same-sex couples. Authority is not denomination-wide but rests with individual clergy, congregations or local governing bodies. In the Episcopal Church and Presbyterian Church, ceremonies for same-sex couples must not reference or use the word “marriage.”
- Several denominations have endorsed the rights of same-sex couples to legally marry. In 1996, the Unitarian Universalist Association passed a resolution in support of marriage equality. The same year, the Central Conference of American Rabbis passed a resolution supporting the “right of gay and lesbian couples to share fully and equally in the rights of civil marriage.” In 2005, the General Synod of the United Church of Christ voted overwhelmingly to endorse full civil and religious marriage equality for same-sex couples.
- Many religious institutions have publicly opposed federal and state efforts to deny marriage equality. In 2004, over two dozen denominations and religious groups signed a joint letter to Congress urging the defeat of the Federal Marriage Amendment, which would have written marriage discrimination into the U.S. Constitution. Among the signatories were the Alliance of Baptists, American Friends Service Committee (Quaker), American Jewish Committee, Central Conference of American Rabbis, Episcopal Church USA, Jewish Reconstructionist Federation, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, National Council of Jewish Women, National Sikh Center, The Interfaith Alliance, Union for Reform Judaism, Unitarian Universalist Association, and United Church of Christ.
- More than 2,800 religious leaders have endorsed the Religious Declaration on Sexual Morality, Justice, and Healing, which calls for full inclusion of sexual minorities, including ordination and performance of same-sex unions.

Religious Institute on Sexual Morality, Justice, and Healing

21 Charles Street, Suite 140, Westport CT 06880

www.religiousinstitute.org

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Resources

There are so many good resources available; we regret that we cannot include them all here. A longer list of resources is posted, and will be continually updated, at calchurches.org

Books

- Christianity and Homosexuality – Some Seventh-day Adventist Perspectives*, Ed. David Ferguson, Fritz Guy, and David Larson. Roseville, CA: Adventist Forum, 2008 (See esp. Part 4 on committed relationships.)
- Gifted by Otherness: Gay and Lesbian Christians in the Church*. Countryman, Louis William. Morehouse Publishing, 2001.
- The Good Book: Reading the Bible with Mind and Heart*. Gomes, Peter J. New York: William Morrow and Company, 1996
- Here Lies My Heart: Essays on Why We Marry*, A Beacon Anthology. Beacon Press, 1999.
- Homosexuality and Christian Faith: Questions of Conscience for the Churches*. Wink, Walter, ed. Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress Publishers, 1999.
- Homophobia: How We All Pay the Price*. Blumenfeld, Warren, ed., Beacon Press, 1992.
- In the Name of the Family: Rethinking Family Values in the Postmodern Age*, Stacey, Judith. Beacon Press, 1996.
- Jesus, the Bible, and Homosexuality*. Rogers, Jack. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2006
- Our Chosen Faith*. Buehrens, John and Forrest Church. Beacon Press, 1998.
- Same-Sex Marriage? A Christian Ethical analysis*. Ellison, Marvin. Pilgrim Press, 2004
- Say It Loud: I'm Black and I'm Proud; Black Pride Survey 2000*. Battle, Juan, Cathy J. Cohen, Dorian Warren, Gerard Ferguson and Suzette Audam. New York: The Policy Institute of the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force, 2002
thetaskforce.org/downloads/reports/reports/SayItLoudBlackAndProud.pdf
- Sex Texts from the Bible: Selections Annotated and Explained*. Hornsby, Teresa J. Woodstock, VT: Sky Light Paths Publishing, 2007
- The Sins of Scripture: Exposing the Bible's Texts of Hate to Reveal the God of Love*. Spong, John Shelby. New York: HarperCollins, 2005
- Stranger at the Gate: To Be Gay and Christian in America*. White, Mel. New York: Plume Books, 1995
- Take Back the Word*. Goss, Robert E and Mona West, ed..Pilgrim Press, 2000
- Trans-Gendered: Theology, Ministry and Communities of Faith*. Tanis, Justin. Cleveland: The Pilgrim Press, 2003
- What God Has Joined Together, A Christian Case for Gay Marriage*. Myers, David G. and Letha Dawson Scanzoni. Harper San Francisco 2005
- What the Bible Really Says About Homosexuality*. Helminiak, Daniel A. San Francisco: Alamo Square Press, 2000.
- A Whosoever Church: Welcoming Lesbians and Gay Men into African American Congregations*. Comstock, Gary David. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001
- Wrestling with God and Men: Homosexuality in the Jewish Tradition*. Greenberg, Steven. Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 2004

Video

- All God's Children* (1996). Through the voices of politicians, religious leaders, academics, families and activists, this documentary by Dee Mosbacher, Frances Reid and Sylvia Rhue analyzes sexual orientation within the context of the traditional African-American church. (Study guide available.) woman-vision.org/children.htm
- Coming Out - Coming In: Faith, Identity and Belonging*: This 30-minute DVD documentary gives voice to gay and lesbian Christians who have struggled to reconcile faith with orientation. Intended for use by congregations, study groups, Sunday School classes to provide a launching point for safe and productive dialogue. Study guide is included. Reconciling Ministries Network rmnetwork.org

De Colores (2001). Bilingual documentary featuring Latino families and their efforts to break cultural barriers and replace homophobia with love and acceptance. (Study guide available.)
unlearninghomophobia.com/decolores.htm

For the Bible Tells Me So. Through the experiences of five very normal, very Christian, very American families -- including those of former House Majority Leader Richard Gephardt and Episcopal Bishop Gene Robinson -- we discover how insightful people of faith handle the realization of having a gay child. Informed by such respected voices as Bishop Desmond Tutu, Harvard's Peter Gomes, Orthodox Rabbi Steve Greenberg and Reverend Jimmy Creech, FOR THE BIBLE TELLS ME SO offers healing, clarity and understanding to anyone caught in the crosshairs of scripture and sexual identity. See study guides below. forthebibletellsmeso.org

Sacred Covenants, Faithful Conversations: A DVD resource for talking about marriage equality. United Church of Christ. Comes with discussion guide. ucccoalition.org/resources/topics/videos

Study Resources

AT THE CROSSROADS: African-American Attitudes, Perceptions, and Beliefs toward Marriage Equality. A Report by the National Black Justice Coalition in Partnership with Freedom to Marry. nbjcoalition.org/news/marriage_report.pdf

Called to Equality: Considering Marriage Equality. Two 1-hour sessions created to live into God's call for justice in the public sphere. ucccoalition.org/resources/CalledtoEquality.pdf

Claiming the Promise-Study Guide. An Ecumenical Welcoming Bible Study on Homosexuality. Editor: Mary Jo Osterman A curriculum on the Bible and homosexuality which includes both a study book and a leader's guide and can be used for group or individual study. Reconciling Ministries Network rmnetwork.org

For the Bible Tells Me So

- HRC guide for study and advocacy training hrc.org/documents/For_the_Bible_Tells_Me_So_Curriculum.pdf
- Filmmaker's guide for moderate to conservative churches forthebibletellsmeso.org/Discussion%20guide-final.pdf

God Is Still Speaking about Marriage Study and Discussion Guide [Newly Revised, June 2008]. United Church of Christ. ucc.org/lgbt/pdfs/god-is-still-speaking-about-marriage-rvsvd-june-2008.pdf

God Is Still Speaking about Marriage Resource Collection ucc.org/assets/pdfs/mdgr.pdf

Holy Conversations: Talking About Homosexuality. Oliveto, Karen P., Kelly D. Turney, Traci C. West. Over the course of 6 sessions, through conversation, study and exercises participants reflect on their Christian beliefs and personal experiences guided by the Wesleyan Quadrilateral. Includes a Facilitator's Guide. Reconciling Ministries Network rmnetwork.org

Jumping The Broom: A detailed explanation and understanding of marriage equality from a Black perspective. National Black Justice Coalition. nbjcoalition.org/jump_broom1.pdf

Open Letter to Religious Leaders on Marriage Equality religiousinstitute.org/marriage.html

A Time to Seek: Study Guide on Sexual and Gender Diversity. Timothy Palmer and Rev. Debra W. Haffner religiousinstitute.org/timetoseek.html

Web Resources

“An Argument for Gay Marriage” by Eugene Rogers, Jr. www.religion-online.org/showarticle.asp?title=3069

The Bible and Same-Gender Marriage, a lecture by Mary A. Tolbert
www.clgs.org/marriage/lecture_tolbert_wisconsin.html


California Council of Churches: www.calchurches.org/marriage

California Faith for Equality: www.cafaithforequality.org

The Center for Lesbian and Gay Studies in Religion and Ministry: www.clgs.org/marriage/index.html

Claiming the Blessings (Episcopal): www.claimingtheblessing.org
“Does the Bible Condemn Homosexuality?” www.theturning.org/folder/samesex.html
Episcopal Church Resolution A095 – called on civil society to grant same-sex couples the same rights as non-same-sex couples. www.gc2006.org/legislation/view_leg_detail.aspx?id=101&type=CURRENT
Equal Marriage (numerous sections) www.samesexmarriage.ca/equality/faiths.html.
Gay and Lesbian Advocates and Defenders (GLAD): www.glad.org
Human Rights Campaign (HRC) Religion & Faith: www.hrc.org/issues/religion.asp
Lambda Legal: www.lambdalegal.org
Marriage equality statements from faith leaders: www.lambdalegal.org/take-action/tool-kits/people-of-faith-speak-out/faith-leaders-speak-out.html
Metropolitan Community Church:
www.mcccchurch.org/Content/NavigationMenu/ProgramsandInitiatives/MarriageEquality/Marriage_Equality.htm
National Black Justice Coalition: www.nbjcoalition.org
National Coalition for the Freedom to Marry: www.freedomtomarry.org
National Gay and Lesbian Task Force (NGLTF): www.nglftf.org
www.thetaskforce.org/issues/marriage_and_partnership_recognition
Out In Scripture. An insightful resource on the Human Rights Campaign website with daily prayers, scripture commentary, spiritual insights and reflections from the LGBT faith perspective, provided by pastors and scholars. www.hrc.org/scripture/week.asp
Pastoral Letter, Rt. Rev. Marc Handley Andrus, Bishop, Episcopal Diocese of California
www.episcopalbayarea.org/joomla/content/view/666/87/
Pastoral Letter Rt. Rev. J. Jon Bruno, Bishop, Episcopal Diocese of Los Angeles
www.virtueonline.org/portal/modules/news/article.php?storyid=8251
People of Faith Speak out! Voices for Marriage Equality, Lambda Legal. www.lambdalegal.org/take-action/tool-kits/people-of-faith-speak-out
“Princeton Theology Professor Comes Out for Same-Sex Marriage in the Church and in Society,”
www.mlp.org/article.php?story=20070604193604417
Robert Warren Cromey, Trinity Episcopal, San Francisco. www.andromeda.rutgers.edu/~lcrew/cromey2.html
Soulforce: www.soulforce.org
The Religious Institute on Sexual Morality, Justice and Healing www.religiousinstitute.org
Six different perspectives –a Presbyterian reflection. www.mlp.org/article.php?story_20070604193604417
Study Circles Group: www.studycircles.org
“A Theology for Gay Marriage” Paul Varnell. www.indegayforum.org/news/show/27062.html
Unitarian Universalist Legislative Ministry, California: www.uulmca.org/programs/me.html
United Church of Christ resources: : www.ucc.org/lgbt/marriage

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Cut along line and mail in.

Evaluation Form

1. What was the most important learning/experience you gained from the course?
2. What did you want or expect to learn about but didn't? Why?
3. Rank the study materials as you found them useful, on a scale of 1 to 10, with 1 being not useful and 10 being extremely useful:

- Session Plans
- Class Discussions
- Hand Outs
- Web-based resources
- Homework Assignments

4. What are your follow-up plans for future programs and/or advocacy actions?

5. What else would you like to tell us?

Name of Congregation /Organization_____

City_____

Dates, days and times study held_____

Average number of participants_____

Please fax to (916) 488-7310, or mail to the California Council of Churches, 4044 Pasadena Ave, Sacramento CA 95821 at the end of your study. Thank You!

NOTES



California Council of Churches 2008