

**UNITED CHURCH
OF CHRIST**



EQUAL MARRIAGE RIGHTS FOR ALL

[Adopted at the Twenty-fifth General Synod on July 4, 2005]

WHEREAS the Bible affirms and celebrates human expressions of love and partnership, calling us to live out fully that gift of God in responsible, faithful, committed relationships that recognize and respect the image of God in all people; and

WHEREAS the life and example of Jesus of Nazareth provides a model of radically inclusive love and abundant welcome for all; and

WHEREAS we proclaim ourselves to be listening to the voice of a Still Speaking God at that at all times in human history there is always yet more light and truth to break forth from God's holy word; and

WHEREAS many UCC pastors and congregations have held commitment services for gay and lesbian couples for some time, consistent with the call to loving, long-term committed relationships and to nurture family life; and

WHEREAS recognition of marriage carries with it significant access to institutional support, rights and benefits; and

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

WHEREAS legislation to ban recognition of same-gender marriages further undermine the civil liberties of gay and lesbian couples and contributes to a climate of misunderstanding and polarization, increasing hostility against gays and lesbians; and

WHEREAS a Constitutional Amendment has been introduced to this Congress to limit marriage to "only the union of a man and a woman"; and

WHEREAS equal marriage rights for couples regardless of gender is an issue deserving of serious, faithful discussion by people of faith, taking into consideration the long, complex history of marriage and family life, layered as it is with cultural practices, economic realities, political dynamics, religious history and biblical interpretation; and

WHEREAS the Tenth General Synod pronounced that all person are entitled to full civil liberties and equal protection under the law without discrimination related to sexual preference; and

WHEREAS the Eleventh General Synod urged that States should legislatively recognize that traditional marriage is not the only stable living unit entitled to legal protection; and

WHEREAS the Nineteenth General Synod called on the church for greater leadership to end discrimination against gays and lesbians; and

WHEREAS the Executive Council of the United Church of Christ in April, 2004 called the church to action and dialogue on marriage;

THEREFORE LET IT BE RESOLVED, that the Twenty-fifth General Synod of the United Church of Christ affirms equal marriage rights for couples regardless of gender and declares that the government should not interfere with couples regardless of gender who choose to marry and share fully and equally in the rights, responsibilities and commitment of legally recognized marriage; and

LET IT BE FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Twenty-fifth General Synod of the United Church of Christ affirms equal access to the basic rights, institutional protections and quality of life conferred by the recognition of marriage;
and

LET IT BE FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Twenty-fifth General Synod calls for an end to rhetoric that fuels hostility, misunderstanding, fear and hatred expressed toward gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender persons; and

LET IT BE FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Officers of the United Church of Christ are called upon to communicate this resolution to local, state and national legislators, urging them to support equal marriage rights for couples regardless of gender.

In recognition that these resolutions may not reflect the views or current understanding of all bodies, and acknowledging the pain and struggle their passage will engender within the gathered church, the General Synod encourages the following:

LET IT BE FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Twenty-fifth General Synod calls upon all settings of the United Church of Christ to engage in serious, respectful, and prayerful discussion of the covenantal relationship of marriage and equal marriage rights for couples regardless of gender, using the “God is still speaking, about Marriage” study and discussion guide produced by Wider Church Ministries of the United Church of Christ (available online at UCC.org); and

LET IT BE FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Twenty-fifth General Synod calls upon congregations, after prayerful biblical, theological, and historical study, to consider adopting Wedding Policies that do not discriminate against couples based on gender; and

LET IT BE FINALLY RESOLVED, that the Twenty-fifth General Synod urges the congregations and individuals of the United Church of Christ to prayerfully consider and support local, state and national legislation to grant equal marriage rights to couples regardless of gender, and to work against legislation, including constitutional amendments, which denies civil marriage rights to couples based on gender.

Funding for the implementation of this Resolution will be made in accordance with the overall mandates of the affected agencies and the funds available.