

My name is Rev. John S. Holt. I reside in the Town of Lamoine. I am the minister of the Union Congregational Church of Hancock, Maine. I was born in Auburn and am a 1965 graduate of Waterville High School and a 1969 graduate of Bates College in Lewiston. Following my graduation from Andover Newton Theological School in 1972, I was ordained within the American Baptist Churches of Maine. I served as minister at the Second Baptist Church of Islesboro, the Damariscotta Baptist Church, and Immanuel Baptist Church of Portland. I began serving as minister in Hancock in 2000 and have completed nearly 37 years in the ordained ministry, these last nine years within the United Church of Christ denomination.

I support strongly LD 1020. As a subject of public policy, the matter of availability of the institution of marriage to same-sex couples is fundamentally one of justice. I see no credible evidence that the public good would be harmed in any way by the inclusion of gay and lesbian persons within the institution of marriage. I do believe that the public good in fact would be enhanced by making the benefits of the institution of marriage available not simply to heterosexual persons but also to gay and lesbian couples.

As a subject of theological reflection and religious policy, same-sex marriage certainly is a problematic and contentious matter. Yet, the Bible is silent on the matter of same-sex marriage and what passages that often are cited as referring to homosexuality are themselves subject to a great variety of interpretation by Biblical expositors. I, for one, long have been convinced that the central hermeneutic, or the compelling interpretive principle, for understanding confusing and often contradictory selected passages from Scripture is the principle of love as an ethical compulsion to do what is good and right for the well-being of others. The gospel of love seeks always to be inclusive rather than exclusive and accepting rather than rejecting. While I can accept that many clergy are currently opposed to same-sex marriage within their denominations, I affirm that I, for one, believe that same-sex marriage has its rightful place not only, in our day, in the public sphere, but, in time, in all the religious institutions of our land. Passage of LD 1020 is good for people, good for our communities, and good for our State. I urge its passage.