

My name is Rev. Mark D. Wilson. I am an Ordained Minister in the United Church of Christ (Congregational) currently serving a church in Phippsburg, though I live, with my wife and three daughters, in Bath.

I am writing in support of Sen. Dennis Damon's "An Act To End Discrimination in Civil Marriage and Affirm Religious Freedom" (LD 1020). I fully support extending the legal rights and protections of civil marriage to same-sex couples. I would ask that this bill be passed as written: no amendments and no referendum.

I am asking you to also support this effort to make Maine a place where all loving, committed, adult couples and their families can share in the legal and social support marriage affords. We have been commanded to "love our neighbors as ourselves;" to treat others the way we'd want to be treated; and there are no bounds on that love, or that commandment. I am a native of this state, and if there is one thing I know about folks here, we believe in fairness: we have an inherent sense of justice; we don't want some to be denied something that other folks have. Marriage is a gift of God sealed by a mutual and sacred covenant. Marriage should be open to all God's children; it should be open and equally available to all who love. "God is love," the Bible tells us in the First Letter of John, "and those who love abide in God and God abides in them." Love is sacred; and all who love are therefore sacred.

A story. This winter, a car drove up the hill here and parked next to the church. A couple I knew got out of the car. They had been married previously, divorced, and now they were to be married again. They had a Notary Public with them, and they wanted to get married under our famous linden tree. I said, "No problem, but it is kind of cold out here, why don't you use the church?" So they did, and I was their witness. The Notary

asked the obligatory questions, they answered them, and the whole thing was over in about 3 minutes. They left legally married. I have a same-sex couple in my congregation who have been together for 24 years. They are legally married (in Massachusetts), have bought a place here in Phippsburg, and would like to retire here, but they would also like to know that their marriage is going to be considered valid up here before they do. In Maine, what the first couple had, gave up, then gained again in the space of a few minutes the second couple, who have been together for more than two decades, cannot get at all. I'd like that to change.

With thanks for your time,  
Rev. Mark D. Wilson, Pastor  
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