

**THE REV. DONALD J. RUDALEVIGE
CAPE ELIZABETH, MAINE**

TO: The Joint Committee on Judiciary

RE: Testimony in Support of LD 1020, "An Act to End Discrimination in Civil Marriage and Affirm Religious Freedom"

Dear Legislators:

I am a retired United Methodist Pastor and former District Superintendent for Southern Maine. I have been in ministry 45 years, having served 9 Parishes and three Administrative positions in that time. I am pleased to be able to support the full inclusion of gays and lesbians in our society, including the privilege and obligation of marriage.

I do not understand why my marriage of 44 years is somehow threatened by the desire of same gender couples to join in the same relational state. Indeed, by honoring the estate of marriage, same gender couples are strengthening the institution of marriage rather than weakening it.

Civil marriage would confirm the loving commitment between two persons in what is meant to be a permanent, enduring relationship. It affirms the couple, helps to stabilize the community, and respects the mutuality of covenant. It also helps to topple the stereotype of homosexuals as promiscuous.

In Biblical times, and indeed until very recently, marriage was for procreation and the transmittal of property. It was also hierarchical. Biblical prohibitions of homosexuality must be understood in this light. In addition, it was assumed that homosexuality was a promiscuous choice made by men already in married relationships. These acts were understood to be aberrations from the norm.

In the New Testament, the prohibition changes somewhat, as St. Paul is condemning ritual prostitution in pagan temple worship. Thus, not only is a man violating his marriage relationship, he is also worshiping false gods.

Now, many of us understand marriage to be a meeting of equals coming together in a permanent relationship, for mutual support and strength. Procreation is a choice, not an obligation. Is it too much to suggest that what the opponents of same gender marriage are really threatened by is the erosion of male hierarchical supremacy?

Another change that has taken place since the biblical epoch is our understanding of homosexuality as a given, part of our DNA, not a lustful choice. It appears we are each created with a sexuality along a continuum and each of us finds ourselves somewhere on that continuum, not by choice or even nurture, but by "nature". If we understand God to

be a loving Creator, would not such a God love equally all the human creation, whatever their sexual orientation? Can we do less?

Various denominations have taken stances which prohibit same gender marriages. This freedom would not be limited by Legislative action permitting same gender marriages. Churches would retain the freedom to marry whom they will, even as they now define bans on divorce, contraception, etc.

As a Christian Theologian, I must ask, "Whom would God exclude?" I cannot believe that God excludes on the basis of our sexuality expressed in a stable loving relationship; nor should we.

Thank you for your attention,

(Rev.) Donald J. Rudalevige