

## **Rev. Douglas W. Cruger**

To Representative George Hogan, Sr. and other members of the Maine State Legislature:

George (and others), I am sorry that cannot be in Augusta on April 22 to express my belief that LD 1020, the bill that would legalize same-sex marriage, ought to pass.

It's simply the right thing to do. I believe it, and I hope you do too.

I speak as an American Baptist clergyman with 42 years of experience as an ordained minister, as a gay man who has been partnered to the same man for 35 years (he's an elementary school teacher, by the way), and as a believer in the Constitution of the United States that gives equal protection to all of its citizens.

There is simply no biblical standard for marriage. Period. (Abraham, you will recall, could have as many wives as he could afford, and could divorce any one of them by simply saying "I divorce you.") The Apostle Paul didn't think people should be married at all!

You and I both know that this question about same-sex marriage is causing a huge stir among those of us, like me, who are getting older. Not so, as you also know, with young adults. For them – and for me – the right to choose a life partner, to start a family, to enjoy the all the legal benefits of a committed relationship, is simply the right thing to do. Only marriage endows the partners with the full protection and privilege that the state provides. Anything less than the freedom to marry denies full protection and gives privileges to some but not to others.

Please do what is right – and fair – and in the interest of the greater good. Baptist churches and Catholic churches – and any other religious group, frankly – can sanctify or not sanctify any union between two people (that's what they do every time a clergyperson consents to marry two individuals – or not!). However, in my view, it is not the business of the Church to decide who is to be protected under law. In a country that separates church and state, deciding civil rights is up to the people entrusted to protect the rights of everybody.

George, the tide of history is turning inexorably toward equal protection and equal opportunity for all citizens of Maine. When this is all over – years from now – I hope that we both will be able to count ourselves as ones who, when it really mattered and the decision was really costly, came down on the side of "justice for all" as the Pledge of Allegiance says.

Respectfully,

Rev. Douglas W. Cruger