

IN THE IOWA DISTRICT COURT FOR POLK COUNTY

KATHERINE VARNUM, PATRICIA HYDE *
VARNUM; DAWN BARBOUROSKE and *
JENNIFER BARBOUROSKE, individually *
and as next friends of MCKINLEY and *
BREEANNA BARBOUROSKE, minor *
children; JASON MORGAN, CHARLES *
SWAGGERTY; DAVID TWOMBLY, *
LAWRENCE HOCH; WILLIAM M. *
MUSSER, OTTER DREAMING; INGRID *
OLSON, and REVA EVANS, individually, *
and as next friend of JAMISON OLSON, *
a minor child, *

Plaintiffs, *

vs. *


TIMOTHY J. BRIEN, in his official capacities *
as the Polk County Recorder and Polk County *
Registrar, *

Defendant. *

CVCV 005965

**BRIEF *AMICUS CURIAE* OF
IOWA FAITH LEADERS,
COMMUNITIES AND SCHOLARS**

Comes now, *Amicus Curiae* and hereby respectfully submits the following brief in support of the Plaintiffs' Resistance to Defendant's Motion for Summary Judgment and in support of Plaintiffs' Cross-Motion for Summary Judgment.


Catherine C. Dietz-Kilen AT0001978
435 E. Grand Avenue
Des Moines, Iowa 50309
Telephone: (515) 284-1433
Facsimile: (515) 284-8909
ATTORNEY FOR *AMICUS CURIAE*

ORIGINAL FILED.

COPIES TO:

Dennis W. Johnson
Amy M. Bjork
Dorsey & Whitney, L.L.P.
801 Grand Avenue, Suite 3900
Des Moines, IA 50309-2790
ATTORNEYS FOR PLAINTIFFS

Camilla B. Taylor
Kenneth D. Upton, Jr.
Patricia M. Logue
Lambda Legal Defense and Education Fund, Inc.
Midwest Regional Office
11 East Adams, Suite 1008
Chicago, IL 60603
ATTORNEYS FOR PLAINTIFFS

John P. Sarcone
Polk County Attorney
Michael B. O'Meara
Roger J. Kuhle
Assistant Polk County Attorneys
111 Court Avenue, Room 340
Des Moines, IA 50309
ATTORNEYS FOR DEFENDANT

PROOF OF SERVICE

The undersigned certifies that the foregoing instrument was served upon all parties to the above cause to each of the attorneys of record herein at their respective addresses disclosed on the pleadings on January 26th 2007.

By: U.S. Mail FAX
 Hand Delivered Overnight Courier
 Federal Express Other

Signature Elinor A. [Signature]

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INTRODUCTION

More than seventy (70) *Amici Curiae* Iowa religious leaders, communities and scholars, and a number of national and regional religious organizations, both groups representing many denominations, respectfully submit this brief in support of Plaintiffs' Resistance to Defendant's Motion for Summary Judgment and in support of Plaintiffs' Cross-Motion for Summary Judgment.

As representatives of a wide variety of religious faiths, traditions and other religious organizations in the State of Iowa and across the country, and as supporters of the right of persons to enter into marriage with persons of the same sex, *Amici* believe that the Defendant's invocation of "tradition" to support its position in this case raises grave concerns for religious freedom.

Amici submit this brief to urge recognition of the following principles in this Court's analysis: (1) marriage equality for same-sex couples is an issue of civil rights, not religious rights, because there is a fundamental distinction between civil marriage and the religious rites of matrimony; (2) the free exercise of religion is not constrained, but enhanced, by recognizing the civil right of marriage between same-sex partners; (3) given the diversity of religious thought and practice, the separation of church and state requires an interpretation of Iowa law without reference to any single conception by any particular religious tradition of what is "moral" from a religious standpoint; and (4) a broad and diverse spectrum of clergy and other people of faith support marriage equality for all committed couples.

Amici urge the Court to uphold the important distinction between State-sanctioned civil marriage and the religious rites of matrimony as mandated by the tenets of any individual

religion. Iowa's constitutional hallmarks of fairness and justice require equal rights of access to civil marriage without regard to gender or sexual orientation.

STATEMENT OF THE INTEREST OF THE *AMICI CURIAE*

Amici joining in this brief are religious leaders, organizations and scholars that support the right of all committed couples to enter into civil marriage, including same-sex couples. A comprehensive list of the *Amici* is set forth at the end of this brief.

Amici represent a wide variety of religious faiths and traditions that mirror the rich diversity of the citizens of the State of Iowa. Though *Amici* represent different faiths and practice in different ways, *Amici* stand united in support of the dignity of loving, committed same-sex couples, and believe that same-sex couples should be permitted to enter into civil marriage.

Amici submit this brief to counter the argument that current marriage laws, to the extent that they discriminate against same-sex couples, must be upheld in deference to the traditions and religious beliefs of only certain groups of citizens. *Amici* urge this honorable Court to order the State of Iowa to include same-sex couples under the civil, legal framework of the marriage laws of Iowa.

STATEMENT OF THE CASE

The Plaintiffs are twelve adult Iowans who comprise six same-sex couples and three of their children. The adult Plaintiffs each went to the offices of the Defendant and applied for marriage licenses. After each of the couples were refused a license on the sole basis that the

members of the couple are of the same sex, the Plaintiffs sought relief in this Court, seeking a Declaratory Judgment that Iowa's prohibitions on marriages by same-sex couples are invalid and unconstitutional. The Defendant has filed a Motion for Summary Judgment. The Plaintiffs have filed a Cross-Motion for Summary Judgment.

ARGUMENT

I. **ALTHOUGH "MARRIAGE" HAS BOTH RELIGIOUS AND CIVIL MEANINGS, IOWA LAW DEFINES AND GOVERNS ONLY CIVIL MARRIAGE**

Our society typically uses the same word, "marriage," to describe both the religious rite and the state-sponsored process for the legal union of two people. The term "marriage," therefore, has been applied both to wedding ceremonies performed within the confines of a religious community ("religious marriage"), and to the licensing and solemnization process set forth in the Iowa statutes and common law ("civil marriage"). The statutory provisions and common law, however, explicitly define the legal concept of marriage as a civil institution, and many religious faiths have long held views of religious marriage that diverge greatly from Iowa's construct of civil marriage. Entitlement to the legal status of civil marriage, therefore, should be unaffected by the varying and divergent concepts of religious marriage.

A. Civil Marriage is a Legal Status Created By The State.

Marriage is a civil contract that requires the consent of the parties. *See* Iowa Code §595.1A; In the Matter of the Estate of Fisher, 176 N.W.2d 801, 806 (Iowa 1970). Civil marriage

is an institution and a status recognized legally, apart from and regardless of religious background.

Two forms of civil marriage are recognized in Iowa. In re the Marriage of Martin, 681 N.W.2d 612, 616 (Iowa 2004). One is ceremonial, governed by statute. *See generally* Iowa Code §§ 595.1 - 20 (2005). The second form of marriage is informal, known as a common law marriage. This type of marriage has been recognized in Iowa for well over a century. Fisher, 176 N.W.2d at 804. Three elements must exist to create a common law marriage: (1) present intent and agreement to be married by both parties; (2) continuous cohabitation, (3) and public declaration that the parties are married. Martin, 681 N.W.2d at 617; In re the Marriage of Winegard, 278 N.W.2d 505, 510 (Iowa 1979).

Iowa statutes recognize marriage as a civil legal status by which the State issues a marriage license and the marriage is solemnized by an appropriate civil or religious official, at the option of the couple. *See* Iowa Code §595.10 (Who May Solemnize) and Iowa Code §595.3 (License). Iowa law does not require that a religious official solemnize a marriage. To the contrary, a marriage in Iowa may be performed by a judge, or, if desired by the particular couple, by a religious official. Iowa Code §§ 595.10 and 595.17. Marriage, even when solemnized by a religious official, is a civil status conferred by the State.

In addition to the recognition of civil marriage by the State of Iowa, the United States Supreme Court has historically recognized civil marriages and has stated that they "do[] not require any religious ceremony for [their] solemnization." Maynard v. Hill, 125 U.S. 190, 210 (1888). As a result, it is on the basis on neutral legal principles and not any religious viewpoint or perspective, that the courts must evaluate whether the Iowa Constitution requires that same--

sex couples cannot be denied the freedom to marry.

B. Religious Marriages Involve Diverse Requirements Established by Each Religion, and are Distinct From Civil Marriage Under Iowa Statutes and Common Law.

The parameters of religious ceremonies are governed by the belief systems of individual religious faiths, clergy or houses of worship and therefore are separate from the parameters of marriage set forth in the Iowa statutes and common law. Consistent with the traditions of their faith, religious leaders pass judgment upon the suitability of potential couples and choose whom they will join in religious unions. Communities of faith are not compelled to accept the State's parameters for civil marriage, and indeed, many religious institutions do not accept them. As such, religious conceptions of marriage vary widely.

Some religious marriage criteria are far more restrictive than the civil criteria found in the Iowa statutes and common law. Conservative Judaism, for example, prohibits interfaith marriages: "Rabbis and cantors affiliated with the Conservative Movement may not officiate at the marriage of a Jew to a non-Jew, may not co-officiate with any other clergy, and may not officiate or be present at a purely civil ceremony."¹ Other religious faiths, like Roman Catholicism, reject remarriages after legal divorce: "[i]f the divorced are remarried civilly, they find themselves in a situation that objectively contravenes God's law."² Such differences

¹ See, e.g., Leadership Council on Conservative Judaism, "Statement on Inter-marriage" (March 7, 1995), available at <http://www.uscj.org/intmar/statement.html> (last visited January 24, 2007).

² Catechism of the Catholic Church - Part Two, Section Two, Chapter 3, Article 7, Section V, The Goods and Requirements of Conjugal Love, Verse 1650 available at http://www.vatican.va/archive/ENG0015/___P55.HTM (last visited January 24, 2007) ("In fidelity to the words of Jesus Christ - 'whoever divorces his wife and marries another, commits adultery against her; and if she

between religious and civil marriage strictures have always existed and demonstrate that if Iowa were to recognize civil marriages of same-sex couples (as it does interfaith marriages and remarriages after divorce), those unions would confer a legal status wholly separate from any single religious conception of marriage.

On the other hand, some religions confer religious marriage in a far more expansive and inclusive manner than Iowa's current restrictions on access to civil marriage. For example, many religious faiths and communities of worship officiate and celebrate the religious marriages of gay and lesbian couples.³ These examples also demonstrate that the religious and civil institutions of marriage can and do vary greatly without doing harm to either.

II. ALLOWING SAME-SEX COUPLES TO ENTER INTO CIVIL MARRIAGES WILL NOT INFRINGE RELIGIOUS GROUPS' FREE EXERCISE RIGHTS

The separation of church and state, as guaranteed by the United States Constitution, *see U.S. Const. amend. I*, and the Constitution of the State of Iowa, *see Iowa Constitution Article 1 Section 3*, protects the free exercise of religion. The United States Supreme Court has held that "freedom of conscience and freedom to adhere to such religious organization or form of worship as the individual may choose cannot be restricted by law." Cantwell v. Connecticut, 310 U.S. 296, 303-304 (1940). "[C]ivil courts are bound to accept the decisions of the highest judicatories of a religious organization...on matters of discipline, faith, internal organization, or ecclesiastical rule, custom or law" Serbian Eastern Orthodox Diocese v. Milivojevich, 426 U.S. 696, 713, 96

divorces her husband and marries another, she commits adultery").

S. Ct. 2372 (1976).

In the same vein, Iowa courts have applied the guarantee of free exercise to protect the rights of religious citizens. If there is any one thing which is settled in the policies and purposes of the American people as a whole, it is the fixed and unalterable determination that there shall be an absolute and unequivocal separation of church and state. Knowlton v. Baumhover, 182 Iowa 691, 704 , 166 N.W.2d 202, 206 (1918). “The right of a man to worship God, or even to refuse to worship God, and to entertain such religious views as appeal to his individual conscience, without dictation or interference by any person or power, civil or ecclesiastical, is as fundamental in a free government like ours as is the right to life, liberty, or the pursuit of happiness.” Id. at 182 Iowa at 705, 166 N.W.2d at 208. “Iowa, like virtually every other jurisdiction, avoids interfering in purely ecclesiastical matters.” Kliebenstein v. Iowa Conference of United Methodist Church, 663 N.W.2d 404, 406 (Iowa 2003).

The State of Iowa has had a long history of recognizing the importance of religious autonomy and choice. In fact, the Iowa Constitution of 1857, Article I, sections 3 and 4, state that:

Religion. Sec 3. The general assembly shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; nor shall any person be compelled to attend any place of worship, pay tithes, taxes, or other rates for building or repairing places of worship, or the maintenance of any minister, or ministry.

Religious test – witness. Sec. 4. No religious test shall be required as a qualification for any office, or public trust, and no person shall be deprived of any of his rights, privileges, or capacities, or disqualified from the performance of any of his public or private duties, or rendered incompetent to give evidence in any court of law or equity, in consequence of his opinions on the subject of religion; and any party to any judicial proceeding

³ See discussion *infra* at 10-15.

shall have the right to use as a witness, or take the testimony of, any other person not disqualified on account of interest, who may be cognizant of any fact material to the case; and parties to suits may be witnesses, as provided by law.

Given Iowa's long-standing commitment to the free exercise of religion, if same-sex couples were allowed to marry in the State, religious institutions' authority to regulate their marriages would be unaffected. In fact, the free exercise of religion would in no way be impaired by the recognition of civil marriage between couples of the same gender. The autonomy of religious institutions to determine their own guidelines for religious worship would remain undisturbed, but the rights and obligations of the legal institution of civil marriage should be available, for those who choose to enter into it.

III. CIVIL MARRIAGE BETWEEN SAME-SEX COUPLES IS SOLELY A MATTER OF CIVIL LAW, WITHOUT REFERENCE TO ANY PARTICULAR RELIGIOUS BELIEFS OR TRADITIONS

In this case, the Defendant has invoked "promoting the concept of fundamental marriage" and the "integrity of traditional marriage" as a basis for upholding the current laws that restrict same-sex couples from civil marriage. However, as Justice Scalia recognized: "[p]reserving the traditional institution of marriage is just a kinder way of describing the State's moral disapproval of same-sex couples." Lawrence v. Texas, 539 U.S. 558, 602 (2003) (Scalia, J., dissenting). The arguments based on "tradition" are nothing more than thinly veiled appeals to the moral and religious disapproval that some individuals hold against gay and lesbian people.

State and federal courts have acknowledged certain civil rights in the face of an "historical foundation" that would tend to abrogate those rights. In 1979, the Iowa Supreme

Court overturned the interspousal immunity doctrine precluding one spouse from suing another because the tradition of viewing a married couple as one financial and contractual unit was outdated. Shook v. Crabb, 281 N.W.2d 616, 617 (Iowa 1979). In 1967, the United States Supreme Court, in Loving v. Virginia, 388 U.S. 1 (1967), rejected the state of Virginia's argument that there was no fundamental right to interracial marriage because the "historic tradition of marriage" did not contemplate it.

Iowa law recognizes the creation of civil rights in the face of traditions to the contrary. See Coger v. Northwestern Union Packet Co., 37 Iowa 145 (1873) (recognizing the right of an African-American woman to sit in the dining area with white passengers in face of common carrier's regulation and traditions of segregation.) The Court stated,

“[i]t cannot be doubted that she was excluded from the table and cabin, not because others would have been degraded and she elevated in society, but because of prejudice entertained against her race, growing out of its former condition of servitude – a prejudice, be it proclaimed to the honor of our people, that is fast giving way to nobler sentiments, and, it is hoped, will soon be entombed with its parent, slavery. Coger, 37 Iowa at 158.

The United States Supreme Court very recently elaborated on the principle that a religious or "moral" rationale cannot justify discrimination. In Lawrence v. Texas, the Court noted that “for centuries there have been powerful voices to condemn homosexual conduct as immoral. The condemnation has been shaped by religious beliefs, conceptions of right and acceptable behavior, and respect for the traditional family.” Lawrence, 539 U.S. at 570. But the Court concluded that these rationales give rise to "no legitimate state interest." Id. at 578. See also Moore v. City of E. Cleveland, 431 U.S. 494; 506 (1977) (plurality opinion) (striking down a housing ordinance that limited occupancy of a unit to a narrowly defined family); Lawrence v.

Texas, 539 U.S. at 583 (Justice O'Connor, concurring) ("Moral disapproval of this group, like a bare desire to harm the group, is an interest that is insufficient to satisfy rational basis review under the Equal Protection Clause. . . . Indeed, we have never held that moral disapproval, without any other asserted state interest, is a sufficient rationale under the Equal Protection Clause to justify a law that discriminates among groups of persons").

Thus, as this Court considers the fundamental right of same-sex couples to join in the civil institution of marriage, it should not be swayed by a claim by some individuals that their particular religious values demand that the State discriminate within the institution of civil marriage. To do so would run counter to Iowa's long adherence to the separation of Church and State by endorsing one particular view of marriage held by one or more religious groups but not all religious groups or citizens. In each case, the deviation from the views historically embraced by the law of spousal immunity, interracial marriage and sodomy did not discourage the courts from protecting the rights of individuals. Social dynamics constantly change and historically held views do not always account for the need to meet the changes. In considering the fundamental right of same-sex couples to exercise the same right to enter a civil marriage, the rhetoric of moral and religious positions is not a valid basis for denying constitutionally protected rights. The State can have no religious opinions. Knowlton, 182 Iowa at 710, 166 N.W.2d at 208.

**IV. IN ADDITION TO SUPPORTING FULL CIVIL MARRIAGE EQUALITY,
MANY RELIGIOUS TRADITIONS ALREADY CELEBRATE THE
MARRIAGES OF SAME-SEX COUPLES IN THEIR RELIGIOUS
COMMUNITIES**

The restrictive notion of marriage as a union only between a man and a woman would be

a fundamentally flawed basis upon which to deny marriage equality to same-sex couples, particularly when this antiquated belief has been rejected by many diverse religious traditions and faiths. A growing number of religious traditions and faith organizations support equal civil marriage rights and regularly perform religious marriages for same-sex couples.

For example, the Reform Jewish movement, the largest Jewish movement in North America with more than 900 congregations and 1.5 million members, supports the rights of same-sex couples to obtain civil marriage and allows its rabbis to perform religious wedding ceremonies for same-sex couples.⁴ Within the Reform movement, the Central Conference of American Rabbis (the "CCAR") constitutes by far the largest association of religious leaders. The rabbis of the CCAR recognize that civil marriage is a question of civil law, completely distinct from rabbinic officiating at religious marriages.⁵ Similarly, the Jewish Reconstructionist movement, with over 100 congregations across North America, recently adopted a resolution in favor of full civil marriage equality for same-sex couples and has allowed rabbis to officiate at gay and lesbian religious marriages since 1993.⁶

Several Christian denominations also recognize the validity and dignity of same-sex

⁴ The Union for Reform Judaism (formerly the Union of American Hebrew Congregations) has consistently affirmed its commitment to welcoming gay and lesbian couples into its congregations and in 1993 expanded that support with a resolution supporting full equality under the law, including legal recognition of same-sex relationships. UAHC 1977 Biennial Convention, Civil Marriage for Gay and Lesbian Jewish Couples (1977), available at <http://data.ccarnet.org/cgi-bin/resodisp.pl?file=rights&year=1977> (last visited January 24, 2007).

⁵ Outline for Informational CCAR Weblink on Same Gender Marriage, available at <http://ccarnet.org/Articles/index.cfm?id=213&pgeid=1606> (last visited January 24, 2007).

⁶ Resolution in Support of Civil Marriage for Same-Sex Couples" (March 16, 2004), available at <http://www.therra.org/resolution-Mar2004.htm> (last visited January 24, 2007).

relationships within their communities. The United Church of Christ, with 1.3 million members, expressly allows its ministers to perform religious marriage ceremonies between individuals of the same sex.⁷ The Unitarian Universalist Association, with more than 1,000 congregations across the country, expressly provides that its clergy and congregations may celebrate the religious marriages of same-sex couples.⁸ That these two traditions explicitly support religious marriage for gay and lesbian couples is particularly noteworthy because each traces its history directly to the Puritans of New England.⁹ In addition, the Episcopal Church, with 2.4 million members nationwide, permits priests, as a matter of pastoral care, to perform liturgies and blessings at weddings between couples of the same sex.¹⁰

⁷ Leaders of the United Church of Christ (UCC), with 6,000 local congregations in the United States and Puerto Rico, have consistently and again recently affirmed the importance of "equal rights for all couples who seek to have their" relationships recognized by the State. *See* "United Church of Christ Leaders denounce Federal Marriage Amendment; call for action and dialogue on marriage" (April 28, 2004), available at <http://www.ucc.org/news/u042804.htm> (last visited January 24, 2007). On July 4, 2005, at its General Synod, the UCC voted on and adopted a resolution in full support of full civil marriage equality entitled "Equal Marriage Rights for All" *See* <http://www.ucc.org/lgbt/pdfs/2005%20-%20EQUAL%20MARRIAGE%20RIGHTS%20FOR%20ALL.pdf> (last visited January 24, 2007).

⁸ In 1996, the Unitarian Universalist Association's Board of Trustees adopted a resolution in support of both civil and religious marriage for same-sex couples. *See* "History of Unitarian Universalist Involvement in and Support of Bisexual, Gay, Lesbian and Transgender Issues" (1996), available at <http://www.uua.org/obgltc/resource/history.html> (last visited January 24, 2007)

⁹ *Our Historic Faith* (October 2002), available at <http://www.uua.org/info/origins.html> (last visited November 14, 2005); *United Church of Christ, About the UCC*, available at <http://www.ucc.org/aboutus/shortcourse/> (last visited January 24, 2007)

¹⁰ *See* Resolution CO51 of the 76th General Convention (2003), "Rites: Blessings of Committed Same-Gender Relationships," available at <http://www.integrityusa.org/gc2003/FinalResolutions/CO51%20Rites%20Blessing%20of%20Committed%20Same-Gender%20Relationships.htm> (last visited January 24, 2007).

The American Friends Service Committee ("AFSC") and many individual Quaker institutions have also long supported civil marriage rights for same-sex couples.¹¹ In its statement in support of equal civil marriage rights, the AFSC noted that:

We are aware that many are calling for civil unions for lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender people and some people wish to reserve civil marriage for heterosexual couples alone. It is our belief that government sanction should be applied equally. All couples should be granted civil union licenses or all should be granted marriage licenses.

The Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches ("UFMCC") has specifically ministered to the needs of gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender Christian communities since its inception almost forty years ago, in 1968. UFMCC allows its members to obtain, and authorizes clergy to perform, holy unions or the Rite of Holy Matrimony for same-sex couples.¹²

In addition to these religious denominations, many faith organizations are working within their respective traditions for the full inclusion of gays and lesbians and the recognition of both civil and religious marriages between same-sex partners. For example, the Al-Fatiha Foundation, an organization dedicated to lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex Muslims "promotes the progressive Islamic notions of peace, equality and justice" while envisioning "a world that is free from prejudice, injustice and discrimination, where all people are fully embraced and

¹¹ The Executive Committee of the AFSC Board of Directors, acting at the direction of the full board, approved a statement supporting marriage equality in January 2004. "It is our belief that government sanction should be applied equally. All couples should be granted civil union licenses or all should be granted marriage licenses." Minute on Civil Marriage (January 9-10, 2004), available at <http://www.afsc.org/lgbt/civil-marriage.htm> (last visited January 24, 2007).

¹² Bylaws of the Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches, Article III, Section C pertaining to rites of the Church, effective July 2005, available at http://www.mcccchurch.org/Content/NavigationMenu/AboutUs/BylawsandGovernance/Bylaws_and_Governanc.htm (last visited January 24, 2007).

accepted into their faith, their families and their communities."¹³

The Executive Director of Lutherans Concerned/North America, a Christian Ministry comprised of individuals who assert God's love for all people of all sexual orientations and gender identities, recently stated that:

As members of the Body of Christ and practicing Lutherans, we [lesbian and gay members of the Lutheran Church] are secure in our God-given faith despite the long years of exclusion by our church. We believe that the Good News of the Gospel will ultimately prevail. We remain committed to the removal of discriminatory policies that violate our calls to ministry and marginalize our relationships.¹⁴

Similarly, in August of 2003, the board of directors of DignityUSA, a national organization of gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender ("GLBTH) Catholics and GLBT-supportive Catholics, adopted a resolution saying:

Consistent with the pursuit of liberty and justice for all, same-sex couples should have full and equal access to the rights and responsibilities bestowed by civil marriage. . . . As Catholics, we remind our Church of a foundational conviction of our faith: God is love and all who abide in love abide in God and God abides in them. The love that brings and binds two people of the same, or opposite sex, together has a divine source.¹⁵

Finally, the Alliance of Baptists "supports the rights of all citizens to full marriage equality, and ... affirm[s] anew that the Alliance will 'create places of refuge and renewal for those who are

¹³ Al-Fatiha Foundation Homepage, available at <http://www.alfatiha.org> (last visited January 24, 2007).

¹⁴ Press Release, Lutherans Concerned/North America, "Lutheran Alliance remains focused on the full participation of gays and lesbians in the life of the Lutheran Church (January 13, 2005), available at http://www.lcna.org/lcna_news/2005-01-13.shtm (last visited January 24, 2007).

¹⁵ Press Release, DignityUSA, "DignityUSA Urges Washington State Supreme Court to Uphold Lower Court Rulings Affirming Marriage Equality" (March 1, 2005) available at <http://www.dignityusa.org/news/050301seattle.html> (last visited January 24, 2007).

ignored by the church."¹⁶

Therefore, this court should not uphold the State of Iowa's current, discriminatory application of marriage laws based on the argument that religious tradition would require such an outcome. Different religious faiths will continue to come to various conclusions on the issue of religious marriage for same sex couples, but this has no bearing on the issue of the right to civil marriage for these couples. Given the diversity of religious thought on the issue of marriage between same-sex partners, any invocation of "traditional values" to justify the exclusion of loving same-sex couples from the right of civil marriage is wholly inappropriate and without rational basis, and, therefore, should not form the basis for a decision by this Court.

CONCLUSION

The issue before this Court is a civil, not a religious or moral, issue. Communities of faith must retain their freedom to develop their own views on religious solemnization of marriage. Protection of religious freedoms does not, however, mean that the views of some religions and faiths can or should be used to deny same-sex couples the legal rights granted to, and responsibilities imposed upon, married couples by the State.

¹⁶ Alliance of Baptists Statement on Same Sex Marriage (April 17, 2004), available at <http://www.allianceofbaptists.org/sssm-2004.htm> (last visited December 29, 2006). The Alliance of Baptists is a national coalition of individuals and churches "dedicated to the preservation of historic Baptist principles, freedoms, and traditions." www.wabaptists.org/links.htm (last visited January 24, 2007).

Individuals

The Reverend Brian Eslinger
Ames, Iowa

The Reverend Roger Mohr
Unitarian Universalist Fellowship
Burlington, Iowa

Dr. Gary L. Chapman, Pastor
Zion United Church of Christ
Burlington, Iowa

The Reverend Liane Nichols
Cedar Falls, Iowa

The Reverend James Altenbaumer
Cedar Falls, Iowa

The Reverend Dr. Marlene Walker
Cedar Rapids, Iowa

The Reverend Richard L. Wereley
Davenport, Iowa

The Reverend Roger Butts
Unitarian Universalist
Davenport, Iowa

The Reverend Mark Stringer
First Unitarian Church
Des Moines, Iowa

The Reverend Julia Rendon
Crossroads United Church of Christ
Indianola, Iowa

The Reverend Faith V. Ferré
Des Moines, Iowa

The Reverend Matt Mardis-LeCroy
Des Moines, IA

The Reverend Robert Dotzel
Lutheran Campus Ministry
Iowa City, Iowa

The Reverend Richard McCarty
Iowa City, Iowa

The Reverend Martha E. Lang
New Song Episcopal Church
Coralville, Iowa

The Reverend Peter H. Wenzel
Peace United Church of Christ
Monticello, Iowa

The Reverend Dr. Peter T. Nash
Waverly, Iowa

The Reverend Paul S. Fraser
Central Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)
Boone, Iowa

The Reverend Melvin Schlachter
Trinity Episcopal Church of Christ
Iowa City, Iowa

The Reverend Nancy Bickel
Dubuque, Iowa

The Reverend Nancy Haley
Unitarian Universalist Society of Iowa City
Iowa City, Iowa

The Reverend Marsha Acord
Iowa City, Iowa

The Reverend Paul Schultz
Iowa City, Iowa

The Reverend Elizabeth R. Dilley
First Congregational United Church of Christ
Red Oak, Iowa

The Reverend Forrest Cornelius
First Baptist Church
Waterloo, Iowa

The Reverend John B. Harper
Episcopal Diocese of Iowa
Iowa City, Iowa

The Reverend Dr. Mary L. Fraser, Director
Office of Pastoral Care and Counseling
Urbandale, Iowa

The Reverend Benjamin Webb
Cedar Falls, Iowa

The Reverend Sophie Mathonnet-VanderWell
Pella, Iowa

The Reverend Maureen Doherty
Waverly, Iowa

The Reverend Paul Johnson
West Des Moines, Iowa

Dr. Henry W. Morisada Rietz
Associate Professor of Religious Studies
Grinnell College
Grinnell, Iowa

The Reverend Kristen Klepfer
Presbyterian
Grinnell, Iowa

Dr. Joseph Molleur
Mount Vernon, Iowa

The Reverend Dr. Janet Everhart, M.Div., Ph.D.
Milo, Iowa

The Reverend Dr. Jennifer Harvey
Des Moines, Iowa

Julie A. Eberbach
Open and Affirming Coordinator
Iowa Conference United Church of Christ
Grinnell, Iowa

The Rabbi Henry Jay Karp
Davenport, Iowa

The Reverend Don Withers
Unity Church of Ames
Ames, Iowa

The Reverend Heather Withers
Unity Church of Ames
Ames, Iowa

Dr. Kathleen Roberts Skerrett
Associate Professor
Religious Studies/Gender and Women Studies
Grinnell, Iowa

The Reverend Deanna L.K. Shorb, Chaplain
Grinnell, Iowa

The Reverend Susan Leathem M.Div., Th.M.
Chaplain/Spiritual Care Coordinator
Grinnell Regional Medical Center
Grinnell, Iowa

Dr. Edmund T. Gilday
Associate Professor of Religious Studies
Grinnell College
Grinnell, Iowa

Dr. Michelene Pesantubbee
Associate Professor
Dept. of Religious Studies
University of Iowa
Iowa City, Iowa

The Reverend Jill Sanders
United Methodist Clergy, Extension Ministry
Cedar Rapids, IA

The Reverend Dr. Kathryn A. Kleinhans
Professor of Religion
Wartburg College
Waverly, Iowa

The Reverend Brian Milford, Pastor
Lovely Lane UMC
Cedar Rapids, Iowa

The Reverend Clint Twedt-Ball, Associate Pastor
Lovely Lane UMC
Cedar Rapids, Iowa

Dr. Chris Seeman
Assistant Professor of Religion
Coe College
Cedar Rapids, Iowa

Dr. Susan Hill
Associate Professor of Religion
University of Northern Iowa
Cedar Falls, Iowa

The Reverend Betsy Lee
Burlington, Iowa

The Reverend Patricia Aurand
Mason City, Iowa

The Reverend D. Stephen McDuff III
Ames, Iowa

The Reverend Sarah Larsen Nelson
Ames, Iowa

The Reverend Orville H. Grove, Jr.
Unity Church of Des Moines
Des Moines, Iowa

The Reverend Kathy Reid, M.Div.
Pastor, Grinnell United Church of Christ - Congregational
Grinnell, Iowa

The Reverend Dr. Tim Diebel
First Congregational Church
Des Moines, Iowa

The Reverend Charles M. Pope, Rector
St. Paul's Episcopal Church
Grinnell, IA

The Reverend James Dale
Decorah, Iowa

The Reverend Vicki L. Pedersen
New Song Episcopal Church
Coralville, Iowa

Nancy Menning, Ph.D. candidate
Department of Religious Studies
The University of Iowa
Iowa City, Iowa

Martha J. Reineke, Ph.D.
Professor of Religion
University of Northern Iowa
Cedar Falls, Iowa

Dr. Brian Jones
Waverly, Iowa

Kenneth L. Penning, Executive Director
Association of Welcoming and Affirming Baptists

The Rabbi Daveen H. Litwin
Grinnell, Iowa

Pastor Cheri Doane
Pella, Iowa

The Reverend Chester Guinn
Des Moines, Iowa

The Reverend Carlos Jayne
Des Moines, Iowa

Michael D. Smith
Chair, Committee on Legislative and Judicial Affairs, Board of Directors.
More Light Presbyterians

Ted Coppock,
Iowa Liaison
More Light Presbyterians

Dr. Jerome P. Soneson
Cedar Falls, Iowa

The Reverend Eva Cameron
Cedar Falls, Iowa

The Reverend Dr. Rebecca Blair
Waverly, Iowa

The Reverend Susan Guy
Des Moines, Iowa

The Reverend Dr. Walter "Chip" Bouzard
Waverly, Iowa

The Reverend Doug Peters
Des Moines, Iowa

Organizations

Progressive Action for the Common Good
Davenport, Iowa

promotes love and acceptance among ALL people. We are all part of the same human family whose existence is of shared space on earth. We believe all living creatures breathe the same air and nourish ourselves from food grown from common soil -- therefore we are in relations with one another.

Lutherans Concerned
Iowa Chapter

-works for the full inclusion of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender Lutherans in all aspects of the life of their Church and congregations. We provide a place of comfort and safety. We reach out and teach that Christ's message, the Gospel, is for everyone equally. We call for the blessing of committed and covenanted same-gender relationships, and for the ordination of those called to minister.

More light Presbyterians

- a network of people seeking the full participation of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people of faith in the life, ministry and witness of the Presbyterian Church (USA) enthusiastically supports Lambda Legal's effort to obtain marriage equality for the benefits and responsibilities under the law for persons of the same sex.