

Call to Action and Invitation to Dialogue on Marriage

[Adopted by the Executive Council of the United Church of Christ on April 26, 2004 Atlanta, Georgia]

The United Church of Christ has historically stood with the disenfranchised. From support by our predecessor denominations for abolition of slavery to the recognition of women as equal partners in religious leadership, we have consistently honored the biblical injunction to support "the least of these." We hold that as a child of God, every person is endowed with worth and dignity that human judgment cannot set aside. We believe that recognition of the sacred joining of individuals is deserving of serious, faithful discussion by people of faith, taking into consideration the long, complex history of marriage and family life, layered as it is by cultural practices, economic realities, political dynamics, religious history, and biblical interpretation.

Because there is a need to end the rhetoric which fuels hostility, misunderstanding, fear and hatred expressed toward gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender persons, and the denial of their equality under the law, we, The Executive Council of the United Church of Christ, meeting April 25-27, 2004, in Atlanta, Georgia:

- Call for the defeat of the Federal Marriage Amendment and the repeal of the Defense of Marriage Act of 1996 (DOMA);
- Call for the defeat or repeal of any similar Amendments to the Constitution of any State and the defeat or repeal of any State's Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA) or similar legislation;
- Encourage and support the continued collaborative efforts of the UCC to develop educational resources, study guides and social policy analyses for use by UCC members and congregations in addressing the issues of marriage;
- Urge all settings of the UCC and individual church members to engage in serious, respectful, responsible discussions about the study of marriage, including diverse understandings of marriage;
- Commend the resources now available to our churches called "God Is Still Speaking, About Marriage." This resource is a discussion guide for congregations to engage in healthy conversations and study about marriage, biblical and theological reflections on covenant and

marriage, legal and economic aspects of marriage, and the role of the church in making marriages official and legal (see ucc.org/justice/marriage.htm); and

- Affirm equal rights for all couples who seek to have their relationships recognized by the State.

The national setting of the United Church of Christ is committed to being in ministry in ways that are multi-racial, multi-cultural, open and affirming, accessible to all and advocates for peace with justice.