

God is still speaking,
**UNITED CHURCH
OF CHRIST**



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United Church of Christ leaders celebrate Supreme Court ruling affirming marriage equality for all

CLEVELAND (June 26, 2015) - Leaders from the United Church of Christ are celebrating the decision of the U.S. Supreme Court to affirm marriage equality for all people, issued today, June 26. The ruling coincides with the UCC's biennial General Synod gathering, taking place June 26-30 at the Cleveland Convention Center, as well as the 10th anniversary of the UCC becoming the first mainline religious group to affirm equal marriage rights for all people, regardless of sexual orientation.

"How tremendously exciting that we can celebrate this huge historic moment together, as a gathered denomination here at General Synod, at the same time we are also commemorating the 10-year anniversary of our early support for marriage equality and our 30-year Open and Affirming UCC movement," said the Rev. J. Bennett Guess, the first openly-gay UCC national officer, whose marriage is now legal in the state of Ohio. "We've been at this a long time, and when the final story is written on how marriage equality came to this country, it will be impossible for anyone to ignore the significant leadership that the United Church of Christ, our churches and leaders, contributed toward making this victory for LGBTQ families possible."

"Today we celebrate a victory for justice and equality; it is a significant moment in this journey," said the Rev. Mike Schuenemeyer, UCC executive for health and wholeness advocacy, whose marriage is also now legal in the state of Ohio. "In the United Church of Christ, we believe couples should be able to enjoy all the rites and blessings their faith traditions have to offer. And we'll be ready to perform those rites and blessings, including the solemnizing of legal marriages just as soon as couples can get their licenses not only here in Ohio, but in our open and affirming churches across the country."

UCC marriage equality supporters are attending a rally celebrating the decision at Cleveland City Hall today, Friday, June 26. UCC ministers will also begin officiating same-sex marriages on Mall C in Cleveland as soon as the county starts issuing marriage licenses. The church will recognize the marriages of Ohio-based LGBT couples who were legally married in other states, including the marriages of five couples on the UCC national staff.

“Driving into downtown Cleveland, on the first day of General Synod, I told my partner, Jim, that I had a strong feeling that, by the end of this Synod, we would finally be legally married, here in our home state of Ohio,” Guess said. “And, halleluia, that day has finally arrived. After so many years of telling our stories, refusing to be silent or second-class, and insisting on the moral and legal validity and equality of our relationships, that persistent emotional courage, by so many, has paid off.”

For more information or to speak to Rev. Guess or Rev. Schuenemeyer, please contact Emily Schappacher, UCC Communications Specialist, at 216-736-2177 (office), 216-571-8967 (mobile) or schappachere@ucc.org.

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About the United Church of Christ:

The United Church of Christ is a mainline Protestant denomination with nearly 1 million members and more than 5,000 congregations nationwide. Headquartered in Cleveland, Ohio, the UCC is a church of many firsts, including the first mainline denomination to ordain a woman, the first to ordain an openly-gay man and the first predominantly white denomination to ordain an African American.

The UCC and its members are tireless advocates for social issues such as immigration reform, racial equality, LGBT rights, marriage equality, environmental protection and economic justice.