

# United Church of Christ Statements on...

## Marriage Equality

**The Rev. J. Bennett Guess, first openly-gay UCC National Officer, whose marriage is now legal in Ohio**

“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. 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.

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. And, halleluiah, 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.

At the same time, we must recognize that marriage equality, while a huge step forward, is not a panacea for all that threatens the LGBTQ community. We still lack a federal employment non-discrimination law, homelessness among gay teens is disproportionately alarming, and violence against transgender persons is a serious concern. Make no mistake, the backlash from the extreme right-wing will be, and already is, relentless, with a massive legislative push now on to pass anti-gay religious exemption laws, allowing for legalized denial of services. Now is definitely a time to celebrate, yes, but we still have important work to do.”

**The Rev. Mike Schuenemeyer, UCC executive for Health and Wholeness Advocacy, whose marriage is now legal in Ohio**

“Marriage is a commitment, a covenant of love and faithfulness. Through this covenant two people share their lives and come to know each other with mutual care and companionship. When two people receive the gift of such a relationship, they be able to have their relationship legally recognized and supported with all the rights and responsibilities of civil marriage.

And on this historic day, the U.S. Supreme Court agrees.

In the United Church of Christ, we believe couples should also 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.



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And I also want you to know this: As we celebrate marriage equality – which is truly worth celebrating – it would be wrong to think that the struggle for equality and justice is over. I am not free, unless you are free. And you are not free unless I am free. All struggles for justice and equality are bound up with each. We cannot forget this, and we are not done, friends, not yet.

Not when persons can be fired in Ohio and other states for who they are. We must have legislation in Ohio and throughout the nation that protects people from discrimination. Not when there is so much work to be done for racial justice and to implement the law enforcement reforms so needed. We must remain vigilant to change the culture of the use of force.

Today we celebrate a victory for justice and equality; it is a significant moment in this journey. As we raise our voices in praise today, let us also join our spirits and dedicate our lives to the work of justice that God has placed before us in the commandment to love neighbor as self, and the golden rule to treat others as you wish to be treated.

Let our mantra be, “We shall not give up the fight, we have only started,” and let us continue until our pledge to one another as citizens of this great nation, the pledge of liberty and justice for all truly means all.”

**The Rev. Kate Huey, Dean of the Amistad Chapel UCC, one of Ohio’s newest UCC congregations, whose marriage is now legal in Ohio**

“Today is my birthday. My family has been a family for more than 20 years. Even though this decision was just released, I’m so grateful, and I don’t think people realize what it feels like. I’m so grateful to be part of the UCC.”



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