

Why You Should Care About Marriage Equality
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We believe in love... Love is the doctrine of this Church.

I grew up in the Christian Science Church. Above the lectern were the words in gold leaf, as in all Christian Science Churches: "God is Love." I didn't buy into the rest of Christian Science much even then, but I've always held those words close.

One of our UU principles, maybe my favorite, is to hold a belief in the inherent worth and dignity of every person.

If we believe these things, how can we tolerate unequal treatment of people, citizens, based on their sexual orientation?

The answer, of course, is we cannot.

So here's Why You Should Give A Damn About Gay Marriage – the title of a book by Davina Kotulski that I've been reading lately and am unabashedly and liberally borrowing from.

Please excuse her and my directness but Davina, and I are both just a bit more than irked about the way this issue has been kicked around over the past several years.

Davina was probably aiming for the conscience of the general populace when she used the term "Gay Marriage" in the book's title. But let's you and I say, "Marriage Equality," OK?

When someone mentions gay marriage, you might say, "I like to say marriage equality, because it means equality for all loving and committed couples."

You can feel Davina biting her tongue most of the way through as you read the book. I hope bit of directness here, loving directness, won't hurt too much.

The line of contention seems to fall right between the blues and the reds, but really, what is liberal or conservative about it? It is a civil rights issue, pure and simple, isn't it?

According to the U.S Government Accounting Office are 1338 federal civil rights granted to straight couples that are denied to gay couples.

I can see where the Republican Party opposes equality— it depends on fundamentalist Christians for about half of its votes.

But what of the other half of the Republican voters? Are they willing to oppose equality and civil rights just to get their candidates elected? That does not seem like a principled stand to me.

That's the argument I'm applying to my Republican brother these days. I'll let you know how it comes out when push comes to shove, i.e., at election time.

What earthly difference does it make to you personally what the sexual orientation is either of people you know or the other six billion you don't? I often think, it has or will make a difference to me personally with about one or two dozen people with whom romance was or might be a dimension for me. But not for anyone else.

Here is something important to consider, a point made by Molly McCay at the Liberal Voices Conference in Modesto that you all have heard so much about. Molly is the field Director for Equality California, and she is the wife of Davina Kotulski, the author of the book I mentioned.

90% of us according to most estimates are heterosexual. Molly's point is how very important it is that straights declare their support for Marriage Equality and GLBT rights, because so many equality opponents say, "Oh it's just the gays...". Well let's make it not just the gays. We need to demolish that argument.

So often we hear and read dismissive references to the “gay agenda”. This is the point where you might stand up and say,

“Well I’m a heterosexual, and I support equal treatment for people of all orientations.

“I support the gay agenda. It is very simple: gays want to be treated equally.

“Isn’t that the American way? They pay their taxes and they support their wives, husbands, and children and their communities— why shouldn’t they get the same legal benefits and rights that straights take for granted with nary a thought of it?”

And please, do not sit still for anyone who refers to the “gay lifestyle”.

Do you ever say, “I live the heterosexual lifestyle,” or, “She lives the straight lifestyle”? I’ve never heard such.

Cowboy, outdoorsman, and yuppie—these are life styles: which of course are chosen by many gays.

The implication of the phrase “gay lifestyle” is, “They chose to be gay.” Rest assured that this is not the case, any more than any of us choose to be straight.

One important way that straight people reach an enlightened view is to have gay family members, friends and acquaintances.

Molly McCay told us that it’s actually more influential to heterosexuals (influential in a good way, I mean) to have a gay friend or associate than to have a gay family member. And by that I mean a person you know is gay—everyone knows gay people, it’s just they often don’t know they are gay.

So let me ask you GLBT’s now: Are you out?

Like, are you out to all of your family, to all your friends, to the members of your congregation, your business associates, the golf club, and on and on?

It has to be a powerful and unsettling experience for person who does not accept equality to find out that someone she knows and respects is gay. Soooo... gays please check your rolodexes.

(But by the way, how do you do that? You don’t just walk up to someone and out of the blue say, “You know, I’m gay?” do you? Someone check back with me on that, OK? Someone gay I mean.)

For me it started as a justice issue. Our friend and former Member Ryan Monroe once asked at a canvass focus group, “Why isn’t this Church a Welcoming Congregation?” He got my attention.

I have to say though, more than anything else having gay friends made me dive into this. It’s still a justice thing, is but when your friends are treated unfairly, well, it stings.

Why now you may ask? Didn’t we pass a Congregational Resolution in Support of Marriage Equality? Hasn’t field of contention become quiet? Won’t the California Supreme Court put it to rest for us?

- We need to get a marriage equality law passed and signed, so we won’t need the Supreme Court to say it is constitutionally required.
- We need to elect Senators and Assembly Members who will put it on the Governor’s desk every year until his sense of justice outweighs political expediency.
- We need to be fully prepared to strongly oppose the radical constitutional amendment that opponents are expected to put on the ballot soon.
- Our Marriage Equality resolution was a good big step in the right direction.

- But there's more work to be done.

Eric Nelson gave us a good talk on January 22 about the obligations of enlightenment. He drew the conclusion that enlightenment carries with it a moral compass; that enlightenment calls for action and service. As Eric said, it is not possible to do all things. But I say that is usually possible to do more.

And our Minister Carol Rudisill gave a sermon January 29 titled "Let Your Light Shine." She reminded us how our faith calls us to work for a better world; that believing and doing are two quite separate things.

Now we're getting down to the brass tacks.

It is often said here that It would be good if we would do more Social Action work as a Church. Here is our chance.

This is definitely a losable issue. Powerful factions are planning to take action opposing us, probably in the form of an initiative to amend the California Constitution to again redefine marriage.

We might be lucky; they might overreach and defeat themselves. No matter what they do, terrific contests lie ahead in the legislature, on the courts, and most importantly, in the court of public opinion.

November could be a very dangerous time if we sit on our hands.

What can you do?

Here are some things I want you to do:

- Come out: Declare yourself as an equality voter. Our Diversity Committee Equality Voter Id Project starts in a few minutes in Jackson Hall.
 - We will need 4 million California votes in November
 - California Faith for Equality and our UU Legislative Ministry already have over a million pledges.
 - These pledges raise consciousness and commitment, and are effective in legislative work in Sacramento
- You can sign a pledge today.
- Signing is good; but then take it with you and ask your family, your friends, your neighbors, your co-workers, anyone you know to sign it.
- Come to a Diversity Committee Meeting and help.
 - Third Wednesdays; next on March 15.
- Come to our Marriage Equality House Party. Bring your checkbook and make a modest (or immodest) donation.
- Be informed. There's a lot of misinformation and many baseless argument floating about out there.
- Log on to www.eqca.org and make a donation, or send them a check

As they say at Emily's List, "Early money is like yeast: it makes the dough rise."

- Support candidates who support marriage equality, or who are more likely to if you support them:
 - These are probably the candidates you were going to vote for anyway, but I don't mean just vote for them, but:
 - Contribute. Politics doesn't work without money.
 - Walk the precincts for them.
 - Tell them you support equality.
- Attend events and rallies. Go to the Equality For All Tour when it stops in Stockton on April 2.
 - Carry a banner or placard, and clap and cheer at the appropriate points. Don't overdo it, but know that people's votes are influenced by what their neighbors think, particularly if they are undecided.

- Write a letter to the Editor. Keep writing until they publish you.
- Do what UU's do: stand up for what you think is right.

Well, I said I'd be direct, but I hope I was not uncomfortably so.

So be it.