

RELIGIOUS LIBERTY ALERT

ELECTION YEAR 2008

OUR RELIGIOUS LIBERTY AT STAKE

The Pacific Union Conference and North Pacific Union Conference religious liberty leaders of the North American Religious Liberty Association (NARLA-West) are promoting and encouraging church members in California to vote for Proposition 8, the initiative to amend the state Constitution in order to take away the rights granted this year by the California Supreme Court to same-sex couples to marry. NARLA-West plans to hold meetings and organize action groups in Arizona, San Diego, Los Angeles, the Riverside area, Fresno, and Sacramento to urge members to vote for this Marriage Amendment. As part of its campaign, NARLA-West has provided a set of "Talking Points" to be used in getting as many people as possible to support Proposition 8.

Although Adventists have traditionally be-

lieved in religious liberty for all, including those with whom they disagree, it appears that prejudice against homosexuals is so great they are willing to reverse this stand. They have tried to frame their position in secular language, but it is obvious that their motivation is religious. Inside you can see NARLA's "Talking Points" and the responses we have prepared.

If you live in California, Arizona, or Florida where similar propositions are on the ballot this fall, you can use this information in talking to your friends, business associates, and church members. If you live in other states, this leaflet provides good information for you to use in helping explain why the Adventist belief in religious liberty should lead us to support GLBT individuals having the same rights as everyone else under the Constitution.

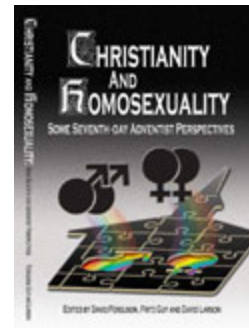
We encourage you to quietly share in a non-confrontational way the material that has been prepared.

We have prepared this printed material for you to share, including these responses to the talking points and information about our book, which encourages church members to support gay marriage. The more people you can encourage to read the book between now and November, the better chance they will have an open mind regarding this issue. Also, please feel free to make your own copies of this leaflet and share them as widely as possible.

We are being told that the vote will be close in November. Even if you aren't planning to get married, remember this is really a fight to uphold religious liberty and protect the guarantees of the constitution for all of us. What will *you* do to help?



What will you do to help uphold Adventism's traditional position of separation of church and state?



Christianity and Homosexuality: Some Seventh-day Adventist Perspectives
Order this excellent book online at sdgayperspectives.com

NARLA TALKING POINTS AND OUR RESPONSES



There is absolutely no evidence to show that children raised by gay or lesbian couples are any more disadvantaged than other children.

“THIS AMENDMENT DOES NOT RESPECT RELIGIOUS FREEDOM, BUT RESTRICTS RELIGIOUS FREEDOM.”



The Marriage Amendment is about imposing the religious beliefs of certain Christian groups on everyone.

Talking Point 1: Marriage is a fundamental institution of society, transcending time, culture ethnicity or religion. We tinker with it at our peril.

Response: Marriage has had many different forms throughout history. In Old Testament times marriage, apparently with God’s blessings, often consisted of one man and several wives. Women were “owned” by men and had no rights of their own. Moses commanded Levirate marriage. In more recent times marriage was a civil arrangement meant to establish blood lines and property ownership. Our concept of family as father, mother and children is both modern and Western. (See Gen. 16:3/24:1, Ex. 21:10, Deut. 21:15, Deut. 25:5)

Talking Point 2: The emotional well-being and development of children depends on having the active involvement of both a loving father and a loving mother. It’s about the kids! Of course social policy must promote marriage!

Response: Then why hasn’t the church protested divorce as vehemently as it has gay marriage? Isn’t being shuttled between two parents more damaging than having two parents of the same sex? While it seems that having two parents is the ideal, there have certainly been many single parents, either widowed or divorced, who have successfully raised well-adjusted children. There is absolutely no evidence to show that chil-

dren raised by gay or lesbian couples are any more disadvantaged than other children; in fact, recent research indicates that gay and lesbian parents often raise children who are more emotionally balanced and psychologically healthy, perhaps because their parents tend to take more time explaining things to them. Frequently, gay couples have adopted special needs children who would otherwise likely be unadoptable and provided a loving, stable home for them, and lesbian couples often raise their own children from a previous heterosexual marriage. (Gay dads : a celebration of gay fatherhood by David Strah)

Talking Point 3: The Marriage Amendment is needed to begin to restore a legal balance that respects religious freedom.

Response: The Adventist Church’s official statement on Religious Freedom says, “We will continue to cooperate and network with others to defend the religious liberty of all people, including those with whom we may disagree.” The Marriage Amendment is about imposing the religious beliefs of certain Christian groups on everyone; it actually favors the beliefs of some religious groups over others, thus instituting discrimination and unbalancing individual freedoms guaranteed by the constitution but long denied to some citizens in

our society. This amendment does not respect religious freedom, but restricts the religious freedom of certain religious groups of people who believe that God can bless homosexual unions and forces non-religious people who favor equal rights to observe the religious beliefs of certain groups.

Talking Point 4: Biology itself makes a basic distinction between marriage and same-sex relationships. It is not discrimination for the law to recognize this basic fact.

Response: Biological Exuberance by Bruce Bagemihl documents over 450 species of mammals, birds, fish and insects that exhibit some form of same-sex behavior. (Also see http://someone-to-talk-to.net/new_page_115.htm, http://someone-to-talk-to.net/new_page_114.htm)

Talking Point 5: If marriage is redefined in terms of personal choice, and emotional and sexual fulfillment, there is no logical place to draw legal boundaries excluding polygamy, or other group forms of “marriage.”

Response: The “slippery slope” fallacy is invoked to produce fear, but there is no logic to support it. There is more than ample scientific research demonstrating that homosexual orientation is not a choice. It is simply the way some people’s brains are wired. People with a homosexual

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TALKING POINTS, CONT.

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orientation are not attracted to those of the opposite sex, so heterosexual marriage is not a good answer for them or for a heterosexual partner. (See http://someone-to-talk-to.net/new_page_108.htm, http://someone-to-talk-to.net/new_page_119.htm, **Born Gay: The Psychobiology of Sex Orientation** by Glenn Wilson and Qazi Rahman brings together and summarizes the tremendous amount of current research into what causes homosexuality.)

Talking Point 6: Advocating for marriage need not violate the separation of church and state. The Marriage Amendment upholds a universal human relationship as a secular institution, not as a religious doctrine. It would be

improper for the state to determine that marriage should be restricted because “God ordained it so.”

Response: *This is tortured reasoning! If civil marriage is being targeted by the Marriage Amendment, why are Christians the ones behind it? The Marriage Amendment obviously is promoting the religious beliefs of certain Christian groups and thus establishes a very dangerous precedent against religious freedom. The recent California Supreme Court ruling on civil marriage in no way diminishes the standing of heterosexual marriage, nor does it force believers in one man/one woman marriage to change their mind or legal standing. It does not force the church to recognize or perform marriages it does not believe in. Stable family units, whether heterosexual*

or homosexual, are a benefit to society.

Talking Point 7: Just as the constitutional basis for the state to restrict marriage to a man and a woman is based on secular policy concerns – i.e., the public welfare of families and children, arguments in favor of marriage need to be made in secular language that all can understand.

Response: *This is an effort to deceive people as to the true intent and purposes behind promoting the Marriage Amendment and is not worthy of Christians of integrity. In secular language, family units and unions recognized by the state provide a stable basis for a strong society and are preferable to promiscuity. The Marriage Amendment works against such recognition and instead destabilizes society.*



Rights of conscience are God's precious gift to all.

“THE MARRIAGE AMENDMENT ESTABLISHES A VERY DANGEROUS PRECEDENT AGAINST RELIGIOUS FREEDOM.”

CONSISTENCY

Religious liberty means that no religion should impose its beliefs on another person, and everyone should have the right to worship as their conscience dictates. Seventh-day Adventists have long been advocates of religious liberty, in large part because our eschatological theology leads us to believe that our own religious freedoms will be threatened someday. We also believe that freedom of choice is a gift from God. It is inherent in His character that He does not coerce anyone into following Him; He

draws us by love. Satan is the one who uses any means he can to force us to follow his way.

Adventist support of religious liberty has led us to champion some seemingly strange positions, such as opposition to prayer in public schools and even the right of Native Americans to use peyote in their religious rituals.

Although our church may officially understand God's will to be opposed to gay marriage, do we have the right to try to legislate our

beliefs as binding for others? In many cases, these are *Christian* people, both heterosexual and homosexual, who believe that God can bless committed same-sex monogamous relationships. Whether or not we share their belief, if we vote to deny them this right are we not imposing our belief on them? Do we have the right to tell all gay and lesbian people, Adventist or not, that they must remain celibate all their lives? Do we want to take the responsibility of pushing them toward promiscuity if

they are not able to be a lifetime celibate, because we refuse to allow them to live together as committed couples?

Rights of conscience are God's precious gift to all. We who *truly* believe in religious liberty are privileged to support the free exercise of those rights by everyone, even when we do not agree with their beliefs for whatever reason. Whenever we make exceptions to this rule, we lose our own credibility and moral power.

WHY ADVENTISTS SHOULD CONSIDER SUPPORTING GAY MARRIAGE

The following is an opinion piece written by a young Adventist pastor studying at La Sierra University and published here with his permission. It is meant to present a viewpoint on gay marriage, not to change anyone's mind. Whether or not you agree with the concept, please read it with that understanding.

Today [6.16.2008] is an historic day in the history of the State of California and in the history of the United States as a whole. Today is the day when a ban on homosexual marriage will be lifted in accordance with a decision of the California Supreme Court. Homosexual couples from across the United States will descend on California in the coming days and weeks, and will receive the legal rights and responsibilities that accompany marriage.

Today's removal of the ban on same-sex marriage is part of a larger debate in America over the definition of marriage. Because at stake in the discussion are issues of morality, justice, ethics, and separation of church and state, Adventists cannot and must not remain silent on the issue. Adventists have always insisted on speaking the truth, demonstrating God's love, and working for justice. For those reasons, I suggest several reasons below that voters in California and elsewhere should stand in firm opposition to any

constitutional amendments that would ban same-sex marriage. Below, I enumerate my reasons and provide a starting place for further conversation on the topic.

Seven reasons to oppose a ban on same-sex marriage

1. Adventists affirm separation of church and state.

Advocating a ban on same-sex marriage on moral grounds is tantamount to coercive mandating of a religious viewpoint. We cannot spread morality by force through law! We should oppose all efforts to do so.

2. Protecting marriage: Supporters of a ban on same-sex marriage define the issue as protection of marriage. We must note that same-sex marriage is still marriage.

Marriage as an institution is not under attack. Rather, it is being affirmed.

3. **Promoting fidelity and monogamy:** If we, as Christians, support and uphold fidelity and monogamy as better than cohabitation, then we should be consistent. The

purpose of marriage is to promote monogamy and fidelity. Get it?

4. **Marriage is beneficial for society both structurally and fiscally.** Marriage promotes stable, lasting relationships over transient ones. Further, marriage is related to greater financial security and mental and physical health. Married people provide societal benefits for those reasons.

5. **We cannot defer to the "will of the people" or "deeply rooted tradition,"** as attempts by some organizations have done, to ban same-sex marriage. The will of the people and tradition consented to slavery in America. America's elected officials outlawed slavery as a violation of human freedoms and dignity. America enacted laws banning interracial marriage by the will of the people and tradition. Appointed judges rescinded the laws as violations of the U.S. Constitution's 14th amendment. Majority does not equal right. The court-ordered desegregation of schools in the 1950's also

went against the will of the people.

6. **Same-sex marriage is NOT a slippery slope** to the permitting of polygamy in America..Some have argued that allowing same-sex marriage will open the door to a broad definition of marriage that will inevitably come to include polygamy. That slippery slope argument is demonstrably false. (See [Gay Marriage and Polygamy](#), by Dale Carpenter, a professor at the University of Minnesota Law School.)

7. **Same-sex marriage does not pose a threat to me, my choices, or my way of life.** The practice of marital fidelity by homosexual couples does not impinge upon any of my liberties, it does not harm me or my religious practice, and it does not threaten God or God's sovereignty.

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There is no excuse for anyone in taking the position that there is no more truth to be revealed, and that all our expositions of Scripture are without an error. The fact that certain doctrines have been held as truth for many years by our people is not a proof that our ideas are infallible. Age will not make error into truth, and truth can afford to be fair. No true doctrine will lose anything by close investigation. (Counsels to Writers and Editors 35.2)

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