

Submitted by: Conference Board of Directors

## **PROPOSED ADMINISTRATIVE ACTION**

“Support for General Synod Proposed Resolution on ‘Equal Marriage Rights for All’”

### Background Statement

The righteousness of the Almighty is the ability and the desire to make things right for people; to help the needy survive today, and to give them hope for the future; and to bring full life and justice to all the people. Human beings are termed righteous when they reflect that aspect of the Holy One’s nature.

We read the call to human righteousness in Proverbs, “Do not withhold good from those who deserve it when it is in your power to act.” [3:27, *NIV*]

As states legislate regarding marriage, and the possibility of a proposed U.S. Constitutional amendment regarding marriage surfaces and re-surfaces, we would do well as Christians to reflect upon marriage, and the relationship between the laws of the land and the gifts of heaven. Within our Conference, not all of us are of the same mind regarding the blessing of relationships between same-sex couples as well as of the relationships between heterosexual couples, and we struggle in our interpretation and reconciliation of scripture and tradition.

Marriage has been variously defined or characterized as: a legal contract; vows; a lifelong commitment; dissoluble by mutual consent; a sacrament; in trouble. Biblical views of marriage include polygamy and women-as-property. Christian thinkers have concluded that marriage is, variously, worse than celibacy but suitable for those who cannot control their lust; necessary for the procreation of children; the supreme metaphor of Christ’s love for the church; blessed union.

Many have asserted that legal marriage should exist only between men and women for purposes of procreation and support of families. Observation, however, reveals that those who procreate do not necessarily marry, and those who marry do not necessarily procreate. The divorce rate among heterosexuals is so high as to dizzy hopes for constancy in raising children. We may conclude that legal same-sex marriages would be as glorious and as flawed as different-sex marriages are.

Committed relationships and households that endure need all the help they can get. Aside from the 1400 or so documented financial and tax advantages of which legally married people can partake, there are more benefits not so easily quantified: unhesitating admission to one’s spouse’s hospital room; unquestioned guardianship of one’s children; health insurance coverage; public and pervasive recognition of commitment to one another, with the full implication that pledging one’s troth and abiding in faithfulness are within one’s capacity as a human being.

Let us not “put a stumbling block or hindrance in the way of another.” [Romans 14:13] Instead, let us act in righteousness to clear the way for all those seeking to live and love in faithful commitment. The proposed General Synod Resolution from the Southern California Nevada Conference [see [www.ucc.org/General Synod](http://www.ucc.org/General%20Synod)] “In Support of Equal Marriage Rights for All” provides a Biblically sound basis for affirming the mysteries of human love and a constitutionally valid basis for affirming equal protection under the law.

Let us, as the Northern California Nevada Conference, urge all ordained and licensed ministers of the United Church of Christ to undertake, with one another and with their congregations, prayer and study of the nature of marriage, of the differences between legal marriage and sacramental marriage, and of the roles ministers can and should play as agents of the state in conducting legal marriages, and that this be communicated to the General Synod, along with the following Administrative Action:

Administrative Action

As an expression of our commitment to strengthening families and acting in righteousness, the Northern California Nevada Conference endorses the proposed General Synod resolution from the Southern California Nevada Conference, “In Support of Equal Marriage Rights for All.”

Fiscal Impact: none

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