

February 14, 2005

Dear New Yorkers,

We are leaders of faith from across New York State representing hundreds of congregations and dozens of faith traditions. We are united through Pride in the Pulpit, New York's faith-based network which openly advocates for equality and justice for lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) people and their families. We are writing to you to express our belief that *all* families in New York should have access to the government institution of marriage, even though we may hold different beliefs in our faith traditions.

We are here to clarify that New York's faith community is not uniformly opposed to fair and equal treatment of same-sex couples. We have witnessed the many ways that communities benefit from diverse and welcoming environments, and we know first-hand that strong families make strong communities. By denying same-sex couples the rights and benefits that their straight brothers and sisters receive in civil marriage, many New York families lack the tools they need to support and care for one another.

Though we may have different religious perspectives, there is one point on which we unanimously agree: we are steadfastly in support of government giving these couples all the same rights and responsibilities as other families, regardless of how they might be viewed by our religions or other faiths.

For some of us, our denominational polity limits our ability to bless same-sex unions. For others of us, we openly bless these unions. But we all understand that sacred rites are separate from governmental rights. We do not believe it is fair or just to deny individuals who love each other the right to make medical decisions about their partners or the right to survivor benefits such as pensions and Social Security. To deny those rights is to engage in discrimination. Discrimination is immoral.

Every day we act as faithful leaders for communities that look to us for spiritual and ethical guidance. We are now coming to you with the hope that New York will choose a message of equality and justice for all families, not just some.

We urge you to pray for an end to the discrimination that LGBT people face every day by being denied access to civil marriage.

In peace and with hope,

Rabbi David Adelson
East End Temple
New York, NY

The Rev. Pat Bumgardner
Metropolitan Community Church
New York, NY

The Rev. Kaaren Anderson
First Unitarian Church
Rochester, NY

The Rev. Josephine Cameron
Riverdale Presbyterian Church
Bronx, NY

The Rev. Dr. Lynn Ashley
Voorheesville, NY

The Rev. Sherry Chayat
Syracuse, NY

Fr. Luis Barrios, Associate Priest
St. Mary's Episcopal Church
New York, NY

The Rev. Thomas A. Clemow, Pastor
First United Methodist Church
Oneonta, NY

The Rev. Steve C. Clunn
First United Methodist Church
Schenectady, NY

The Rev. Jen Crow
First Unitarian Church
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The Rev. Lynette A. Curley-Roam, LCSW-R,
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The Rev. Denise Donato
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The Rev. Ellen Ensig-Brodsky
Interfaith Minister
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United Church of Christ
Watertown, NY

The Rev. Ronald Farr
Emmanuel Congregational Church
United Church of Christ
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The Rev. William Feinberg
Unitarian Universalist Society of South
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The Rev. Susan De George
South Presbyterian Church
Dobbs Ferry, NY

The Rev. Dr. Richard S. Gilbert
Interim Minister
First Unitarian Church of Ithaca
Ithaca, NY

The Rev. Anthony W. Green
Schuylerville, NY

Rabbi Lisa Grushcow
New York, NY

The Rev. Michael Hopkins
St. Luke & St. Simon Episcopal Church
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The Rev. Carol A. Huston
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Rabbi Sharon Kleinbaum
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Open Arms Metropolitan Community Church
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ACCUS
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Latino Commission on AIDS
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The Rev. Koshin Paley Ellison
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The Rev. Paul Ratzlaff
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Archbishop Richard G. Roy, OSJD
Holy Trinity National Catholic Church
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The Rev. Dr. Diane Samuels
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