



# Speaking from Faith for Marriage Equality

Resources for people of faith  
for conversations about the  
2012 marriage amendment  
and LGBT equality

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## Why does marriage matter?

*Adapted from resources available at [WhyMarriageMatters.org](http://WhyMarriageMatters.org).*

As Minnesotans consider the possibility of allowing gay and lesbian couples to join in civil marriage, many people of faith will have questions about what it means and how it works. The bottom line is that marriage matters to gay people in similar ways that it matters to everyone. Gay and lesbian couples want to get married to make a lifetime commitment to the person they love and to protect their families.

### **Marriage says “We are family” in a way that no other word does**

Marriage is the way that loving couples in our society make a commitment to one another. In marriage, a couple makes a public promise of love and responsibility for each other and asks their friends and family to hold them accountable. Gay and lesbian couples may seem different from straight couples, but they share similar values—like the importance of family and helping neighbors; similar worries—like making ends meet or the possibility of losing a job; and similar hopes and dreams—like finding that special someone to grow old with and standing before friends and family to make a lifetime commitment.

### **It’s as basic as the Golden Rule.**

The Golden Rule is found in the scriptures of nearly every religion. Treating others as one would want to be treated includes allowing marriage for gay and lesbian couples who are truly committed to each other. Most straight couples would never want someone telling them they couldn’t marry, and when they think about it, many say they wouldn’t want to deny that for anyone else either.

### **Marriage strengthens families. It gives couples the tools and the security to build a life together and to protect their families.**

Couples get married because they want to be there for each other in sickness and in health, when times are good and when things get tough. Marriage is the means by which couples make a lifetime

commitment to one another, establish a family, and gain the legal benefits and protections that allow them to protect that family. State and federal marriage laws provide a safety net of legal and economic protections for married couples and their children—including the ability to visit a spouse in the hospital and to transfer property, which can mean being able to remain in the family home when a spouse has passed away. There are currently 515 laws in Minnesota statutes that discriminate against families based on marriage; every law that refers to “family,” “spouse,” or “next of kin” currently excludes same-sex couples. The legal protections afforded married couples are not extended to gay and lesbian couples.

There have been attempts to create marriage-like relationship systems (e.g., civil unions and domestic partnerships), but they don’t provide the same security and protections. In many states, gay and lesbian couples that have domestic partnerships have been barred from a dying partner’s bedside, and denied the ability to say goodbye to the person they love. That just doesn’t happen when you’re married.

Though civil unions and domestic partnerships may be intended to provide equal rights to gay and lesbian couples, the reality is that nothing is equal to marriage but marriage. Marriage is an institution of transcendent historical, cultural, and social significance, whereas civil unions and domestic partnerships surely are not. Only marriage captures the full meaning of what loving, committed, same-sex couples are for one another. Gay and lesbian couples will not be truly equal until they are free to marry.

### **Allowing committed gay and lesbian couples to get married does not change the meaning of marriage.**

All couples who marry in the United States must get a license for a civil marriage, usually at a courthouse or city hall. These civil marriages would also be available to gay and lesbian couples. Civil marriage for gay couples does not affect religious marriages, religious institutions, or clergy in any way. No religion would be forced to marry gay or lesbian couples, or recognize same-sex marriages within the context of their religious beliefs.

## **Myths and realities about marriage equality**

*Adapted from resources available at FaithfulVoices.org.*

There is much misinformation disseminated in the debate about marriage equality, particularly as it relates to religion, religious freedom, and religious institutions. Here we seek to clear up the confusion and set the record straight.

**Myth:** People of faith don’t support marriage equality.

**Reality:** We often hear and see in the media only the loud voices of those who are against marriage equality. In reality, there are a wide variety of opinions among people of faith about marriage equality, including many who support it. Some consider it a civil rights or human dignity issue on which their faith compels them to work. Even people who are uncomfortable with homosexuality because of their religious beliefs may support civil marriage equality because they think that, in a democracy, no one religious point of view should dictate public policy.

**Myth:** Marriage equality will hurt families and marriage.

**Reality:** Marriage equality is a good and fair thing for all families, both gay and straight. Anytime we provide couples and parents the tools to take care of and be responsible for their families, we contribute to building strong families which lead to strong communities. Stopping some people from getting married doesn’t help anyone’s marriage; it only hurts those who are discriminated against, their families, and our communities. Allowing gay and lesbian couples to marry strengthens all families and our communities.

**Myth:** Marriage has always been between one man and one woman.

**Reality:** Marriage in modern times looks nothing like marriages portrayed in the Bible and the sacred texts of other religions. For example, marriage in biblical times often meant one man with multiple wives, with women being the property of their husbands.

At times in our history, neither the state nor most religions recognized divorce and the right to remarry, spousal equality, or interracial marriage. Marriage has changed over the years to reflect progress in cultural norms and human rights

**Myth:** The purpose of marriage is procreation.

**Reality:** While having children is important to many couples, few would say it is the only reason they chose to marry. Committed gay and lesbian couples wish to marry for the same reasons as their straight neighbors and friends: to share their life together, to publicly acknowledge their love and commitment, to legally protect each other and their relationship in tough times, and to create a family. Further, heterosexual couples unable to have children or who choose not to have children are allowed to marry.

**Myth:** Churches and ministers would be required to officiate at marriages for gay and lesbian couples.

**Reality:** This is one of the most damaging and misleading arguments set forth by opponents of marriage equality. Churches, synagogues, temples, and other houses of worship are protected by the First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution. They are not required to perform activities contrary to their faith. In fact, the state protects religious choice in many areas of civil law. For example, divorce is recognized by the state even though it is not sanctioned by some faith traditions. Marriage equality would allow congregations and clergy that do wish to perform religious marriage ceremonies for gay and lesbian couples to more freely exercise their religious beliefs.

## Engaging Jewish and Christian scriptures

As people of faith, many of us find our spiritual compass in particular stories and certain holy texts. Part of what defines many of our traditions is the sacred texts we look to for enlightened guidance. These are regarded as “scripture.” The prominence of such texts in conversations among people of faith about LGBT equality is impossible to miss. Certain verses from the Hebrew and Christian Bibles especially are leveled against advocates for LGBT equality as discussion-ending, “that settles it” evidence. Less well known are the broad scriptural motifs that lay a foundation for human equality, fulfillment, and diversity. These values are closer to the heart of Judeo-Christian faith than the isolated “Bible bullets” that are easier to rattle off in debates. As we engage scripture in direct and faithful ways, we must respond to the scripture wielded by opponents of LGBT equality. However, a stronger argument moves beyond self-defense to reveal extensive scriptural themes that encourage LGBT equality.

### Deflecting our opponents’ “Bible bullets”

Certain scripture passages from the Hebrew and Christian Bibles are frequently cited by our opponents to condemn LGBT people. There are seven such “Bible bullets” in particular that are worth mentioning:

- Genesis 2:21-25: Man and woman belong together
- Genesis 19:1-14: The sin of Sodom
- Leviticus 18:22 and 20:13: Man shall not lie with man
- Romans 1:26-27: Natural and unnatural intercourse
- 1 Corinthians 6:9 and 1 Timothy 1:10: Sodomites will not inherit the kingdom of God

### Resources for responding

Many biblical scholars have put forth compelling arguments that traditional interpretations of these passages are based on unfaithful readings of the text. The condemnation of homosexuality that

many people find in these passages, they say, has been imposed on the text by those who begin with an anti-LGBT bias.

Rather than duplicate the excellent work that has already been done, we point here to a few resources that are especially helpful in wrestling with these texts. The Rev. Dr. Mel White, co-founder of SoulForce, has written a booklet in which he addresses these scriptural passages. It is available as a free download at <http://www.soulforce.org/pdf/whatthebiblesays.pdf>. Two other books that provide a more lengthy treatment of these Bible passages include:

- *Jesus, the Bible, and Homosexuality* by Jack Rogers (2006, revised in 2009)
- *What the Bible Really Says about Homosexuality* by Daniel A. Helminiak (2000)

It's important to remember that there is no ancient Jewish or Christian understanding of homosexuality as we now understand it. The ancient world understood all people as inherently heterosexual; every same-sex act was therefore by definition "unnatural." Homosexuality as an inherent human disposition toward same-sex attraction was first conceived of in the mid-1800s. Until this point, only sexual *acts* were described as "homosexual," and never the people involved in those acts. The nineteenth century was the first time in human history when it became possible to speak of "homosexuality" as an innate orientation. Scriptural verses such as those listed above that condemn same-sex activity because it violates purity codes, participates in idolatrous worship, or exploits age differences between participants have no relevance to the current conversation over the rights of homosexual people. (This is even more true of scriptural arguments against transgender equality. Transgender identity was only just beginning to be understood a scarce fifty years ago.)

## Beyond biblical self-defense

Too often we are forced to respond reactively to opponents armed with one or more of the Bible bullets above. In this section, we explore ways to engage scripture proactively. As we reference the

Bible in conversations about LGBT equality, it is helpful to reframe the conversation by focusing on passages that say something constructive about the lives of LGBT people. Moving beyond biblical self-defense, we identify strong themes that span scripture to reflect God's generous desire that human beings pursue abundant and joyful lives.

## Proof texts versus broad themes

Scripture passages and individual verses are almost always limited in their truthfulness to their original context. Sacred scripture loses its integrity when it is co-opted and taken out of context by someone seeking to make an unrelated point. (Bible passages that are used in this way are often called "proof texts.") By contrast, themes that appear repeatedly throughout scripture lie closer to the heart of the text itself, and are more likely to reveal the sacred source of life and scripture. They are also much more difficult to explain away, since they are so prevalent in scripture. At least four broad characteristics of God's activity are evident throughout the Hebrew and Christian Bibles. These pro-LGBT themes are so prevalent that they easily outweigh the few "Bible bullets" that might suggest scriptural opposition to LGBT identity and equality.

## Theme: *God is doing a new thing*

One theme that runs through the Bible from beginning to end is this: God is always "doing a new thing" (Isaiah 43:19). As David Weiss has written in his book *To the Tune of a Welcoming God*, "The biblical story, in its broadest perspective, tells... how God must time and again surprise God's own people, both Jews and Christians, bursting asunder the orthodox boxes that we fashion for the restless deity."

God tells Abraham and Sarah that they will bear a son in their old age; Sarah laughs, and the two are stunned when Isaac is actually born (Genesis 17:15-21, 21:1-8). After being liberated from slavery in Egypt, the Israelites wander in the wilderness for decades and encounter new challenges that threaten to do them in; yet God parts the waters, provides manna from heaven to eat, and makes rocks give water to drink (Exodus 16-17). The prophet Isaiah

announces that foreigners and eunuchs—groups formerly excluded from the community—are to be welcomed as full members (56:3-8). Jesus dines with tax collectors, prostitutes, and sinners (Matthew 9; Mark 2; Luke 5). Paul, who once reveled in terrorizing Christians, becomes the foremost spokesperson for the faith (Acts 9:1-22). As Weiss writes, “From the first to the last, Israel’s encounter with God—and ours—is a tale of unexpected newness, unimagined surprise. God is always about the business of doing a new thing. And surely this has some bearing on whether there is anything new to be said within the church regarding homosexuality.”

**Theme: *God is at work on the margins of society***

Throughout both the Jewish and Christian scriptures we encounter a God who is determined to dismantle the status quo and disrupt systems of power that keep people on the margins of society. In 1 Samuel, Hannah reflects on God’s ways: “The bows of strong soldiers are broken, but the weak grow strong. The people who once were well fed now hire themselves out to get food, but the hungry are hungry no more. The childless wife has born seven children, but the mother of many is left with none” (2:1-10). Similarly, in the Christian New Testament, Mary sings to God, “You have shown strength with your arm; you have scattered the proud in their conceit; you have deposed the mighty from their thrones and raised the lowly to high places. You have filled the hungry with good things, while you have sent the rich away empty” (Luke 1:46-55).

In the Bible we find that God favors not the powerful elites but those on the margins. God calls Abraham and Sarah—childless foreigners—to give birth to God’s chosen people (Genesis 12:1-9). God continues to call as leaders the people we would least expect: Moses, a poor public speaker with little confidence in his abilities (Exodus 2-4); Gideon, a member of the weakest clan of Israel and the youngest in his family, who successfully defends the Israelites from a foreign invasion (Judges 6-8); and David, a lowly shepherd with a sling, who fights the mighty Goliath and emerges victorious (1 Samuel 17). Jesus himself is a manger-born carpenter whose

friends are outcasts. God is at work with people on the margins—and certainly this is good news for LGBT people.

**Theme: *God works to bring about liberation***

The God of the Jewish and Christian scriptures is a God who is constantly acting to liberate the oppressed. It is, in fact, a story of liberation—the Israelites’ deliverance from slavery in Egypt—that lies at the very heart of the Hebrew scriptures (Exodus 1-18). In this story of the Exodus, God is passionately on the side of the oppressed, intimately involved in their struggle, liberating them from human bondage. The prophets of the Hebrew scriptures also reveal God’s concern for the oppressed. These prophets of Israel are prophets of social justice. A consistent theme in their writings is God’s concern for the lack of social, economic, and political justice for those who are poor and unwanted in society. The prophets condemn those who “trample on the needy” (Amos 8), who live luxurious lives without concern for the less privileged (Amos 6), who neglect the orphan and the widow, the most vulnerable among the Israelites (Isaiah 1). The prophets tell us that God will not tolerate injustice; through God’s activity the oppressed will be vindicated (Jeremiah 9:23-24). In the Christian scriptures, Jesus reaffirms this theme of liberation. He condemns the rich, insisting that the Kingdom of God is for the poor, and he locates his ministry among those who suffer injustice. Jesus’ work was directed to the oppressed for the purpose of their liberation.

Given the Bible’s emphasis on liberation, we must conclude that those who hold it to be a sacred book are called to join with God in working to liberate all people who are oppressed. To take the Bible seriously is to join in God’s mission to “bring good news to the oppressed, to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and release to the prisoners; to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor” (Isaiah 61:1-2; Luke 4:18-19). God seeks to liberate all who are oppressed, including people who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender.

## Theme: *God creates and celebrates diversity*

The Bible describes how, from the very beginning, God has created and preserved diverse life forms: plants and trees of every kind, the fish of the sea, birds of the air, cattle, wild animals, and every living thing that moves upon the earth. God creates humankind in all its wild diversity and describes it as “the image of God.” (The Christian doctrine of the Trinity suggests that God’s own identity is diverse, Three-in-One.) As creation is completed, God sees everything that has been created and calls it “very good” (Genesis 1). The diversity of creation is God’s joy.

Humans have been less keen to celebrate diversity. One of the earliest stories in the Jewish and Christian Scriptures describes the people of Babel who want everyone to live the same, talk the same, and be the same. But God gives the people many different languages, which causes them to spread throughout the world (Genesis 11:1-10). The Christian festival of Pentecost highlights God’s preference for diversity yet again. Pentecost recalls the coming of the spirit to Jesus’ disciples, giving them the words of other languages to proclaim good news to all the different peoples of the world (Acts 2:1-21). Because people are different, God will manifest in myriad ways rather than insist that all humans assume one form or language. God sustains diversity from the moment of creation, throughout human history, and even to the present moment.

Lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender lives are among the ways in which God creates and maintains diversity. LGBT people are part of God’s good and diverse creation, made in God’s image. The spark of the divine exists in all people regardless of race, class, gender identity, or sexual orientation. Providing equal access and protection for LGBT people honors the image of God in them.

## Speaking as a Catholic for marriage equality

*Adapted from resources produced by Catholics for Marriage Equality MN, available at [cpcsm.org/catholicsformarriageequalitymn.html](http://cpcsm.org/catholicsformarriageequalitymn.html).*

### **Remember: The hierarchy doesn’t speak for most Catholics**

Growing numbers of Catholics are embracing a more inclusive view of homosexuality and advocating for equal rights for LGBT people. Recent and credible opinion polls show that U.S. Catholics—as many as 73%—are more supportive of LGBT rights, including same-sex marriage, than the general public and other Christians. [1, 2] Accordingly, be clear that in actively working to legalize a ban on same-sex civil marriage, the Minnesota Catholic bishops are *not* representing the majority of Catholics.

### **Use the language of your Catholic faith and the teachings of the Church to inform and bolster your support of marriage equality.**

Explain how your support for marriage equality is informed by your Catholic faith. You can begin by noting that as a Catholic you value compassion, justice, family, truth-telling, and love, and that you’ve witnessed all of these qualities and values in the lives and relationships of LGBT people. As one Catholic puts it: “I see the face of God in the love of same-sex couples.”

Also highlight the fact that your support for marriage equality is informed by Church teaching. For example, the Church teaches that:

- The “intrinsic dignity of each person must always be respected in word, in action and in law.” [3]
- The “fundamental human rights and responsibilities of all people”—including LGBT people—must be recognized, and “any and all forms of injustice, oppression or violence against LGBT people must be eliminated.” [4]
- In 1991 Minnesota Archbishop John Roach noted that “homosexual persons... like all people have a right to human respect, economic security and social equality.” [5]

Note that you believe that civil marriage is a “fundamental human right” necessary for “social equality,” and that the effort on the part of the bishops to legalize a ban on same-sex civil marriage is unreasonable, unjust, oppressive, discriminatory, and hurtful. Furthermore, these same efforts are a violation of the Church’s own teaching.

- “Government is to see to it that equality of citizens before the law, which is itself an element of the common good, is never violated, whether openly or covertly, for religious reasons. Nor is there to be discrimination among citizens.” [6]

### Prepare to be challenged.

Your support of marriage equality may well be challenged. Following are three potential challenges and suggested ways of responding to them.

**Challenge #1:** The official teaching of the pope and the bishops still stands: gay sexual relations are wrong. As a Catholic you should be following this teaching and not supporting gay marriage.

One way to respond to this type of statement is to highlight the Catholic understanding of the Primacy of Conscience. The current pope, then Cardinal Ratzinger, said that “conscience is the highest norm which [we] must follow even in opposition to authority.” [7] The Church also teaches that our consciences must be “well-formed,” i.e., formed by the Church. But we should not limit “the Church” to the hierarchy of the Roman Catholic Church. In its broadest and most *catholic* sense, the Church is the *entire* people of God, the whole Body of Christ. Thus in forming our consciences we should not just be open to the teachings of the Magisterium (the official teaching body of the Church) but also to the insights of theologians and the experiences of the entire people of God—known as the *sensus fidelium*, or, *the sense of the faithful*. In fact, in Catholicism, all three—the hierarchy, the theologians, and the wisdom of the laity—are recognized as the Church’s authentic sources of truth. They are the three “magisteria.” When one

considers what Catholic theologians and the Catholic people are thinking and saying about the issue of homosexuality and same-sex relationships, at the very least we have to acknowledge the possibility that *Vatican* teaching on this issue may not actually be the *Catholic* teaching. An excellent example of a more recent change based on the sense of the faithful is the fact that the vast majority of married Catholics are practicing birth control in spite of the official teaching of the hierarchy. This teaching does not make good sense to the Catholic people as it does not fit with their lived experience.

**Challenge #2:** You’re cherry-picking the teachings of the Church when you highlight social justice teachings to support your cause but ignore the prohibitions on gay sex.

One way to respond to this is to share the belief that the social justice teachings of the Church are clearly rooted in Jesus’ life and preaching. Not so the church’s teaching prohibiting gay sex. For many Catholics the call for social justice supercedes certain teachings of the church that reflect a medieval and inadequate understanding of human sexuality—teachings that, accordingly, are unresponsive to the presence and movement of the Spirit in the lives of LGBT people. They are also teachings that fail to reflect the overarching biblical theme of liberation and Jesus’ call to “fullness of life.” Gay people do indeed flourish as individuals when they accept themselves for who they are and live their lives accordingly. Indeed, human beings—gay or straight—have the potential to flourish when they engage in and build relational lives that are experienced and expressed sexually. Actual sex acts are just one aspect of such relational lives. It’s the quality of these relationships that the Church should be concerned about.

**Challenge #3:** Isn’t it the church’s job to weigh in on important social issues? You’re not opposed to the bishops making statements on issues like immigration, are you?

One possible response to this would be to observe that in the past, when the clerical leadership of the church has shared its

insights on important social issues such as racism and immigrant rights, it has done so in order to reduce discrimination and expand the circle of acceptance and inclusion. That's not happening in the case of marriage equality, and this is a betrayal of the Catholic way of being in the world—a way that should always be seeking to discern and celebrate God in the lives and experiences of *all*. Like all Christians, the bishops should be standing for the principles of justice, compassion, equality, and inclusion. When it comes to gay people, gay lives, and gay relationships they've chosen *not* to embody in their words and actions these Gospel principles.

## Notes

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2. *Support for Gay Marriage Reaches a Milestone*. ABC News/Washington Post poll: Gay Marriage (Langer Research Associates: New York). March 18, 2011. (<http://abcnews.go.com/images/Politics/1121a6%20Gay%20Marriage.pdf>)
3. Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. *Letter to Bishops of the Catholic Church on the Pastoral Care of Homosexual Persons*. 1986.
4. U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops. *Always Our Children: A Pastoral Message to Parents of Homosexual Children and Suggestions for Pastoral Ministers*. 1997.
5. Roach, J. "A Statement on Homosexual Persons and the Protection of Human Rights." *Catholic Bulletin*, September 26, 1991.
6. *Dignitatis humanae* (the Second Vatican Council's Declaration on Religious Freedom), December 7, 1965. ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dignitatis\\_Humanae\\_-\\_cite\\_note-1](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dignitatis_Humanae_-_cite_note-1))
7. Ratzinger, J. "Conscience and Truth," a presentation at the 10th Workshop for Bishops, February 1991, Dallas, Texas.

## A Jewish perspective on marriage equality

As Rabbi Jerry Brown teaches, marriage is about sanctifying a loving relationship. It is an opportunity for a couple to celebrate the value of long-term commitment, faithfulness and the willingness to share life's joys and sorrows. It is about a public pledge of commitment. Marriage has the potential to provide mutual care for both partners. It enables the individuals to combine efforts and make a greater contribution to the common good. Marriage helps to make sure that all children are wanted, loved, and nurtured. Marriage benefits all who enter into it, regardless of sexual orientation.

Here we address the need for marriage equality in Minnesota and our Jewish responsibility to ensure that any two people, regardless of gender, can have their marriage recognized not only by God and the Jewish community, but also by civil society as well.

### Traditional marriage?

Opponents of marriage equality assert that same-sex marriage is not traditional marriage, but what does that term really mean? They imply that traditional marriage is the marriage of one man and one woman, but we Jews know that the definition of marriage has continually changed. The Bible defines marriage as a union between one man and one or more women. There are three patriarchs mentioned in the *T'filah* and four matriarchs, after all. Jacob had two wives. Classical rabbinic texts understand marriage as the acquisition of property. A man acquires his wife from her father.

We also understand as Americans that marriage has changed. In the past, most states prohibited interracial marriage, but that injustice ended with perhaps one of the best named Supreme Court cases, *Loving v. Virginia*, in which Mildred Loving, a woman of African and Native American descent, and her white husband, Richard, won the right to remain married, overturning Virginia's and subsequently all states' laws banning interracial marriage. *Loving v. Virginia* changed our understanding of marriage, reflecting a greater recognition of people's humanity and their civil rights. Our current understanding of marriage must also change,

because of our greater recognition of the humanity of gays and lesbians.

### **Human dignity and the command to pursue justice**

The classical rabbinic texts do not address same sex marriage. The scant references to homosexuality in our tradition are unaware of the possibility of committed, long-term relationships between two people of the same sex and often condemn what the rabbis do know of homosexuality. But the Talmud teaches us that the value of human dignity is so great that it supersedes any negative commandment in the Torah. Deuteronomy teaches us *Tzedek, tzedek tirdof* (Justice, justice shall you pursue). In giving the world the concept of justice, Torah gave the world equality: fair treatment of the poor, the orphan, the widow and the stranger. Time and time again, Torah commands us not to oppress the stranger, because we were strangers in the land of Egypt and we know the heart of the stranger. We are Israel and we know what it is to be labeled as different. As Harvey J. Fields and Chaim Stern remind us, “We are Israel, schooled in the suffering of those tyrannized by oppression. Their anguish is ours, their poverty and humiliation diminish us.” Empathy is a central virtue in Judaism. It demands that we see things from the point of view of the other.

Religious Jews who favor same-sex marriage do not do so only because they embrace American ideals. Rather, we approach marriage equality with a sense that it is part of our obligation to pursue justice. In Genesis, we are given a vision of humanity that tells us every human being is created *b'tzelem Elohim* (in the image of God). In confronting the civil rights issues of the 1960s, Rabbi Max Shapiro addressed the challenges of racial inequality: “There is a religious standard by which man relates to his fellow man. ‘All men are brothers.’ ‘He who honors his fellow man honors God.’ No religious person—no Jew—can dispute this.” Rabbi Shapiro reminded us then that we have always been a people driven by a sense of justice. We Jews have been the victims of discrimination. We have had jobs, schools and neighborhoods withheld from us because of who we are. “We understand that the law is not enough. The law tells us not to injure. The law forbids us from denying

others their rights. But religion goes beyond the law. It demands that we help! Judaism demands that we help the less fortunate, that we protect [their] liberties, that we enhance [their] rights.”

The Talmud teaches us that God created all of humanity from one person to illustrate God’s genius. When coins are minted from a mold, all are alike. But when God created humankind, though we were all minted from the same mold, each of us turned out differently so that each of us could say, “For my sake was the world created.” The Psalmist teaches us, “How many are the things you have made, O God! You have made them all with wisdom; the earth is full of your creations!” (Psalm 104:24). Our diversity speaks to God’s power. Each one of us has worth and value and dignity.

For us as Jews, marriage equality is a religious issue. As Jews, we know what it is like to have our rights limited. Our experience demands that we care for those who are strangers even in the places they live, because we were strangers in the land of Egypt. As Jews, our tradition demands that we recognize the image of God in each and every individual. Please join in the campaign for marriage equality in the State of Minnesota.

## Action steps

How can you get involved? Here are a few ideas:

- Join the official campaign to defeat the constitutional amendment, Minnesotans United for All Families, at [mnunited.org](http://mnunited.org). The two most important things you can do are sign up to volunteer and make a financial contribution.
- Make it personal! Talk to members of your family, places of worship, neighborhood, community groups, and other organizations about what marriage equality would mean for you, your family, and your friends.
- Write letters to the editor of your local newspaper voicing your opposition to this discriminatory constitutional amendment. Don't be afraid to use the language of faith!
- Tell your story to friends, neighbors, co-workers, and members of your congregation, and ask them to oppose the amendment.
- Invite organizations you know to be supportive, including your place of worship, to sign on to publicly oppose the amendment; forms will be available at [outfront.org](http://outfront.org).
- Ask opinion makers (clergy, organization leaders, business leaders, PTA members, school board members, etc.) to speak out against the amendment.
- Publish an article supporting LGBT equality in your community of faith newsletter.
- Organize a guest speaker, film screening, or book study in your place of worship.
- Update your Facebook status to let your friends know about issues affecting LGBT folks. (And don't forget to "like" OutFront Minnesota and Minnesotans United for All Families on Facebook!)
- Host a house party, inviting all of your closest friends and OutFront Minnesota. This is a great way to share the message about what's happening in the LGBT community.
- Get connected with the LGBT welcoming organization within your particular tradition or denomination. More information about these organizations is available at [outfrontmn.org/marriage/faith](http://outfrontmn.org/marriage/faith).

