

## Gay Marriage In The Church Of Christ?

In an Associated Press article dated July 4th of this year, the news was released that the United Church of Christ's rule-making body voted overwhelmingly that day to approve a resolution endorsing same-sex marriage, making it the largest denomination to do so.

This recent news has caused a few people to comment to me that many outside the Lord's church have asked them if churches of Christ have begun to allow gay marriage. The reason for this article is not to state policy for all churches of Christ, but to establish the truth about the "United Church of Christ" and gay marriage from the scriptures.

The United Church of Christ, formed in 1957 with the union of the Congregational Christian Churches in America and the Evangelical and Reformed Church, is a denomination known for its liberal stand on social issues, including strong support for gays and lesbians. The denomination has been traditionally strong in New England. Let me emphasize in the strongest terms that the UCC is dramatically different from the church of Christ found in the New Testament.

In the early 1970s, the UCC became the first major denomination to ordain an openly gay "minister." The church declared itself to be "open and affirming" of gays and lesbians 20 years ago. Last year, the UCC caused a stir when it created a television advertising campaign that featured a gay couple, among others, being excluded from a church. CBS and NBC rejected the 30-second ads. "We believe that all people are created equal in the eyes of God and should be treated equal by our governmental bodies," said Libby Tigner, an associate minister in Long Beach, CA, at First Congregational United Church of Christ.

Roughly 80 percent of the representatives on the church's 884-member General Synod voted to approve the resolution, a day after a smaller committee recommended it. John H. Thomas, president of the United Church of Christ, said with the vote on Independence Day, the rule-making body "acted courageously to declare freedom." "This is a significant moment," said Rebecca Voelkel of Cleveland, coordinator of a church coalition addressing gay and lesbian issues. She said the decision emphasizes that lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people are "spiritual people who love and are loved by God." In a way, I guess you could make the case that July 4th was Independence Day for the UCC -- they declared themselves independent from the teachings of Jesus and the clear teachings of scripture!

The Bible has condemned homosexuality consistently throughout the Old Testament and the New Testament. In Genesis 19, the sin of Sodom and Gomorrah was homosexuality (vss. 4-5). Because of their sin, God destroyed those cities. Under the Law of Moses, Leviticus 20:13 says, *"If a man also lie with mankind, as he lieth with a woman, both of them have committed an abomination: they shall surely be put to death; their blood shall be upon them."* Again, God condemned homosexuality!

In the New Testament, Paul wrote, *"Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God"* (1 Corinthians 6:9-10). Again, he said, *"For this cause God gave them up unto vile affections: for even their women did change the natural use into that which is against nature: And likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one toward another; men with men working that which is unseemly, and receiving in themselves that recompence of their error which was meet"* (Romans 1:26-27). So homosexuality is "vile," "against nature" and "unseemly." It will also keep someone from inheriting the kingdom of God. How much plainer does the Bible have to be?

The UCC does not follow the word of God when it approves of gay and lesbian unions. Furthermore, when it upholds many other doctrines which are not found in the scriptures, it demonstrates to all that it is not the church of the New Testament. The one true church found in the Bible is distinctive and its doctrines are distinctive. The UCC and other denominations are simply not the Lord's church that is found in the Bible. Jesus built the church and He shed his blood to pay for it (Matthew 16:18; Acts 20:28). He gets to direct every facet of the church (Ephesians 1:22-23). That direction does not include the acceptance of homosexuality!

Homosexuality has been a divisive issue for a number of denominations. The Anglican Communion has been divided since its U.S. branch, the Episcopal Church, consecrated an openly gay bishop in 2003. The United Methodist Church is also debating a panel's decision to reinstate a gay minister who had been defrocked. This summer, a special task force of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) is set to finish its report about how to overcome severe disagreements on gay relationships and other issues.

Despite the fact that homosexuality is becoming more accepted by society, it is still condemned by God. Denominations, desiring to appeal to carnal mankind, are accepting what is an abomination to God. Homosexuals need to repent by turning away from homosexuality and be baptized into Christ

for the forgiveness of their sins (Acts 3:19). Many make the claim that one cannot stop being a homosexual, but the Corinthians were told: "*And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.*" The answer is not compromise, it is repentance!

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