



February 7, 2004 - Leaders and Members of Over 3000 Churches, Mosques, and Synagogues Issue Joint Statement in Support of Constitutional Amendment Initiative

Today, the Roman Catholic Dioceses of the state of Massachusetts joined with over 3000 other religious communities within the state to offer a joint statement in support of a constitutional amendment defining marriage as a union between a man and a woman. The list of names appended to the statement shows how truly broad-based support for this amendment is among the mainstream religious communities of the state of Massachusetts. The ongoing reference in the media to leaders or congregations supporting same-sex marriage has created a myth of religious support. Our signatures speak otherwise. The racial, cultural, and theological make-up of the communities represented by the signatories lays to rest any argument that support of a constitutional amendment defining marriage as a union between a man and a woman is limited to only a few faith communities. It is our hope that the legislature of the state of Massachusetts will respond to this petition from its constituents and vote to allow this amendment to come before the people.

Among the signers are the leaders of Vision New England (2,053 Churches in Massachusetts), the four Roman Catholic Dioceses of Massachusetts (about 1000 Catholic Churches), the Orthodox Churches (about 100 Churches in MA), the Islamic Council of New England (representing 25 Islamic Centers and Mosques), the Black Ministerial Alliance (about 80 Churches), Jewish congregations, and various Lutheran, Presbyterian, Methodist, Episcopalian communities as listed. We anticipate other signers will be notifying us of their desire to endorse this statement as well.

Statement

We stand together today, as religious and academic leaders, and as citizens of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, to affirm a common and deeply-held conviction: Marriage must be defined in our civil law as the union of one man and one woman. Each of the traditions we represent has long upheld the institution of marriage as a unique bond between a man and a woman, a bond which is the very foundation of the family and of our society.

This understanding of marriage is not, however, primarily a religious doctrine. It is based on common sense and human reason. It has been shared by every human culture for thousands of years. The marriage of one man and one woman is the basis for family life, into which children are born, nourished, and educated. This understanding of marriage and family predates and precedes the authority of the state.

Should the Supreme Judicial Court's decision to redefine marriage as any voluntary union of persons become the law of the land, it would have an enormously negative impact on our society. The citizens of the Commonwealth know that such a law, which places all voluntary relationships on the same level as marriage, would inevitably lead to far-reaching changes in the institutions of our society, more importantly those which educate our children and grandchildren.

The court's re-definition of marriage explicitly divorces the institution of marriage from the procreation and education of children. Despite the experience of all human cultures and the empirical data of sociological studies, the court ignores the fact that the stable, permanent relationship of a husband and wife is the optimal basis for child rearing. The court's decision will harm our children, who are entitled to be able to count on their parents' marriages as the secure foundation of their family lives.

John Adams, when writing the Constitution of the Commonwealth, enshrined in it the principle of the separation of powers, Executive, Legislative and Judicial. Four Justices of the Supreme Judicial Court have overstepped their authority in redefining marriage. We believe that the people of Massachusetts have a right to vote to maintain the definition of marriage as the union between a man and a woman. Therefore, we urge the members of the legislature, in the strongest of terms, to allow the citizens of the Commonwealth to vote on this most important issue. We also ask that Senate President Robert Travaglini allow the amendment to come before the legislators in the joint session scheduled for February 11.

We encourage all members of our religious traditions to offer prayers concerning this issue, to be active in the public debate, and to encourage others to be active as well. This matter is crucially important for the good of society as a



whole. In the spirit of unity, let us stand together for the good of our families, state, country, and all humanity. All eyes are on Massachusetts; may they see our courage and resolve to safeguard the fundamental institution of marriage.

The Reverend Ernest Bergeson, New England Synod ELCA
The Reverend Douglas M. Bernhart, Christ Church (Episcopal)
Rabbi Naftoly Bier, Kollel of Greater Boston
The Reverend Jeffrey Brown, Pastor, Union Baptist Church Cambridge
The Most Reverend George Coleman, Roman Catholic Bishop of Fall River
The Reverend Deliann Coops, Newton Presbyterian Church
Dr. Ron Crews, President, Mass Family Institute, Evangelical Presbyterian Church
The Reverend John Chung, Pastor, Bethany Presbyterian Church
The Most Reverend Thomas Dupre, Roman Catholic Bishop of Springfield
The Reverend Herbert Eddy, New England Conference,
African Methodist Episcopal Church
The Reverend Michael P. Fruth, First Lutheran Church
Rabbi Dr. Gershon C. Gewirtz, Young Israel of Brookline
The Reverend Dr. Ray Hammond, Bethel AME Church.
The Reverend Gordon P. Hugenberg, Senior Minister, Park Street Church
The Islamic Council of New England
Dr. M. Saleem Bajwa, Executive Director
Dr. Seraj-ul Haque, President of the Islamic Council of New England
The Reverend Stan Johnson, First Presbyterian Church of Quincy
The Reverend Barton L. Kelso, Pastor, First United Presbyterian Church, Cambridge
Grand Rabbi Y. A. Korff, Zvhil-Mezbuz Rebbe
Reverend William Leahy, S.J., President of Boston College
The Reverend Young Ghil Lee, Korean Church of Boston
Metropolitan Methodios, Presiding Hierarch of the Greek Orthodox Diocese of Boston and All New England
The Reverend Dr. David M. Midwood, President, Vision New England
Archbishop Sean O'Malley, Roman Catholic Archbishop of Boston
Dr. Alvin Padilla, Gordon Conwell Theological Seminary, Boston (Center for Urban Ministerial Education)
The Reverend Rob Perkins, Newton Presbyterian Church
The Reverend Dr. Rodney L. Petersen, New England Presbytery
The Most Reverend Daniel Reilly, Roman Catholic Bishop of Worcester
The Reverend Eugene F. Rivers III, Azusa Christian Community. Co-Founder,
Boston Ten-Point Coalition
The Reverend Wesley Roberts, President, Black Ministerial Alliance, and Pastor,
Peoples' Baptist Church of Boston

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