

Marriage Myths and Realities

(continued from inside)

Myth: Churches and ministers will be required to officiate 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 US Constitution. They are not required to perform activities contrary to their faith. In fact, Iowa 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.

Congregations and clergy that DO wish to perform civil marriage ceremonies for gay and lesbian couples and can now more freely exercising their religious beliefs in Iowa.

Myth: Marriage equality will hurt families and marriage.

Reality: Marriage equality is a GOOD and fair thing for Iowa 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. When we stop some people from getting married, it does not 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 Iowa's communities.

For more information about Faithful Voices and to learn how you can support marriage equality in Iowa, please contact us.



**INTERFAITH
ALLIANCE
OF IOWA**
PROTECTING FAITH AND FREEDOM

Faithful Voices
a project of *Interfaith Alliance of Iowa*

P.O. Box 41086
Des Moines, IA 50311

Web: InterfaithAllianceIowa.org
FaithfulVoices.org

Email: info@faithfulvoices.org

Faithful Voices

people of faith and goodwill supporting marriage equality in Iowa

Marriage Equality myths and realities



Information for fair & faithful Iowans

- Two kinds of marriage - civil and religious
- Protecting religious freedom
- Strengthening marriage for all Iowa families

Civil vs. Religious Marriage

In our country, marriage has a civil side and for many couples a religious side as well. In the conversation about marriage equality, we are talking about civil marriage.

Civil Marriage is the legal contract a couple enters into when they sign a marriage license issued by the state. It offers a host of protections and responsibilities affecting many areas of family life including insurance, inheritance, parentage and the right to make medical decisions for a loved one. In Iowa, civil marriage services may be officiated by judges and clergy. Clergy who do not wish to perform particular civil marriage ceremonies out of matters of conscience or church policy may do so. Their choice is protected by the First Amendment of the US Constitution. For example, some clergy choose to not perform marriage services for interfaith couples or when one or both persons of the couple have been divorced.

Religious Marriage ceremonies are sacred relationships many couples enter into as a part of their faith beliefs. In many faith traditions, religious ceremonies are officiated by a clergy person and celebrated by the congregation. Some faith communities choose to not perform these sacred ceremonies for gay and lesbian couples. This choice is protected by the Constitution of the United States. However, there are many faith traditions such as the United Church of Christ, Unitarian Universalist and Reform Judaism which already recognize and bless, through religious marriage ceremonies, the relationships of loving, committed gay and lesbian couples. This choice too is protected by the United States Constitution.

The confusion some people experience is thinking the religious service is the same as the civil service. In many parts of the world, civil and religious marriage services are completely separate. Couples go to a government office, like a city hall, to have their civil service and, if they choose, have a religious service following. In the US, clergy can perform both a civil and religious marriage service simultaneously, by acting as both an agent of the state (signing the civil marriage certificate) and as a religious leader (performing the religious service).

Marriage Myths & Realities

There is much misinformation disseminated in the debate about marriage equality, particularly as it relates to religion, religious freedom and religious institutions. The Interfaith Alliance of Iowa, which works daily to protect both faith and freedom, wishes to clear up the confusion and set the record straight.

Myth: *People of faith don't believe in marriage equality.*

Reality: We often hear and see in the media only the loud voices of those who are against marriage equality. Actually though, there is a wide variety of opinions among Iowans of faith about marriage equality, including many who support marriage equality. 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 has ALWAYS been between one man & one woman.*

Reality: In reality, the marriage of modern Iowans looks nothing like marriages portrayed in the Bible and the sacred texts of other religions. For example, marriage in biblical times meant women were 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 inter-racial marriage. Marriage has changed over the years to reflect progress in critical thinking and in human rights.

Myth: *The purpose of marriage is procreation.*

Reality: While having children is important to many Iowa couples, few would say it is the only reason they chose to marry. Committed gay and lesbian couples wish to marry for the many 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, couples unable to have children or who choose to not have children are allowed to marry.

(myths and realities continued on back)