

Lavender Newswire

2,200 Religious Leaders Say: NO ON 8

More than 2,200 Faith Leaders Across Country Express Support in Open Letter

SAN FRANCISCO — October 20, 2008 — **Multi-faith leaders of the National Religious Leadership Roundtable (NRLR), convened by the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force, gathered today on the steps of San Francisco City Hall, where they sent a strong and unified call of support for the freedom to marry.** They were joined by local faith leaders to amplify the message of treating all California citizens equally under the law. Californians will vote Nov. 4 on Proposition 8, an initiative aimed at eliminating the fundamental right of same-sex couples to marry.

“Faith leaders are called to stand up when anyone is marginalized and to look to those core values of love and justice when determining how to act responsibly. It is wrong for same-sex couples to be singled out and treated differently by taking away their fundamental right to marry. The Task Force is proud of its work, through the NRLR, in support of those loving same-sex couples who wish to affirm their relationships through marriage,” says the Rev. Darlene R. Nipper, deputy executive director of the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force.

During the press conference today, it was also announced that 2,200 ordained clergy from more than 50 faith traditions and every state in the U.S. have endorsed the Open Letter to Religious Leaders on Marriage Equality, a call for recognition of civil and religious marriages for same-sex couples. The letter, sponsored by the Religious Institute on Sexual Morality, Justice, and Healing, states that the “biblical call to justice and compassion (love neighbor as self) provides the mandate for marriage equality. We find support for marriage equality in scripture and tradition in their overriding messages about love, justice, and inclusion of the marginalized. ... As religious leaders, we believe that all persons have the right to lead lives that express love, justice, mutuality, commitment, consent and pleasure, including but not limited to civil and religious marriage.” The open letter ends with a powerful statement: “The faiths we affirm challenge us to speak and act for justice for all who seek to express their love in the commitment of marriage.”

The Rev. William G. Sinkford, president of the Unitarian Universalist Association of Congregations, made a call to preserve marriage equality in California, saying, “Unitarian Universalists know from experience the many blessings that same-sex couples and their families bring to our congregations and communities. ... If we’re serious about promoting ‘family values,’ we must do all we can to support families who seek the rights and responsibilities that can only come with legal marriage.”

The Rev. John H. Thomas, general minister and president of the United Church of Christ, said in a statement, “The General Synod of the United Church of Christ, through sound biblical and theological reflection over many years, has affirmed the full dignity, humanity, and worth of all persons regardless of sexual orientation, an affirmation grounded in our creation in the image of God. ... Many, if not most of our congregations, include same-sex couples who are models to us of family life. We have opposed discrimination in civil society and we believe that public policy should be informed by faith, but not controlled by the religious teachings of any one denomination or tradition in our pluralistic society.”

“Spiritual leaders have long advocated that spirits and human beings are equal. Spiritual leaders have long advocated against injustice in any form,” says Patricia Kevena Fili, National Religious Leadership Roundtable member and vice president of the Pagan Alliance. “In this light, many

multi-faith leaders and leaders of justice joyfully proclaim that everyone has the right to marry the person of their choice. The denial of such a basic right is clearly unjust. Community and national leaders have come together to praise spirit and justice in the issue of marriage equality.”

The National Religious Leadership Roundtable, an interfaith network of leaders from pro-LGBT faith, spiritual and religious organizations convened by the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force, was meeting in San Francisco, Calif., for its biannual gathering.