

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

February 7, 2004

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. Hugenberger, 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

BLACK CLERGY STATEMENT ON MARRIAGE

February 6, 2004

It is with a clear conscience that the Black Ministerial Alliance adds our voice to those speaking on the subject of marriage. We believe our voices are critical to the debate because of who we are and whom we represent. We are Christians, with a faith that was forged from a uniquely American experience. As Black religious leaders we speak from our theological, historical and ethical understanding of the institution of marriage.

We believe marriage to be a unique covenant established between a man and a woman. Our understanding of marriage is fundamentally rooted in our beliefs. It is a tenet seminal to Christianity, other faith traditions and also secular society. The

marriage covenant is both a religious and social contract. It is the primary basis for the establishment of the rules of social engagement and community.

We acknowledge the pain and suffering of the men and women in the gay and lesbian community who are in long term relationships. However, given the most recent opinion of the Supreme Judicial Court eliminating the possibility of Civil Unions, we support the call for a Constitutional Amendment to define marriage as a covenant between a man and a woman.

The Black Ministerial Alliance of Greater Boston, Inc.
The Boston Ten Point Coalition
The Cambridge Black Pastors Conference

Contact:

BMA – The Reverend Dr. Wesley Roberts, President
BTPC – The Reverend Jeffrey Brown, Co-Founder
CBPC - The Reverend Lorraine Thornhill, President