

Order of Service "Marriage Equality"
Sunday, November 13—9:30 and 11:00 AM

Welcome and Announcements

Introit: *Standing on the Side of Love* by Jason Shelton

Chalice Lighting: #473 by James Vila Blake

Time for All Ages: "Princess Amalia" by Tracy Duncan

Candles/Offertory

Meditation

Reading: "To Know Us is to Love Us"

by Frank Bruni NY Times 6/25/11

Opening Song: #95 *There is More Love Somewhere*

Sermon: "Marriage Equality"

Anthem: *Land of The Free* by David Maddux

Meditation

Closing Song: #311 *Let It Be a Dance*
(verses 1 & 2)

Closing Words: #694 by Frederick E. Gilles

Closing Song: #311 *Let It Be a Dance*
(verse 3)

Princess Amalia: A Welcoming Story for All Ages

Once upon a time, there lived a princess named Amalia. She was loving and caring and tried hard not to hurt any living thing. One day a messenger came to the palace where she lived, telling the court about a young prince whom an evil sorcerer held captive in a faraway fortress. He had a spell on him and only someone who had never deliberately killed anything could rescue him. The sorcerer thought there would never be anyone like that; because almost everybody kills things that annoy them, like mosquitoes or things they fear, like spiders or even wolves. But, the princess knew she had never killed anything, and if she was afraid of anything....she told herself that was her problem and not the creatures and she either walked away or sought help. She knew she was the only one who could help and she stepped forward.

"I'll go"

Her parents the King and Queen said, "Absolutely not. It's far too dangerous. In fact, they locked her into her room just in case.

But there was in the corner of the courtyard a young milkmaid Helen. Helen had always admired Princess Amalia for her gentleness and her courage. (It takes a lot of courage not to hurt something you're afraid of.)

Helen knew Amalia felt she must go to rescue the prince, so she devised a plan. She took some cheese and milk from the dairy on a tray up to Amalia's room saying that she'd brought the Princess's dinner. The guard by the door let her in. Once in, Helen told the surprised princess that she admired her and supported her decision to rescue the Prince. They switched clothing and the Princess left the room with the empty dinner tray dressed as the milkmaid, while Helen dressed as the Princess stayed in the room.



The plan worked and soon Amalia was off! When the Queen came in later to say good night to her daughter and discovered Helen instead...you can imagine the chaos! In the middle of all the running and shouting, Helen made her own escape, got a horse from the stables and followed Amalia's trail.

Well, to make a long story short, they met up and traveled together and became very good friends. They talked to pass the time, they watched glorious sunrises and sunsets together. They got wet and cold and miserable in the rain and snow together. They took care of each other when they got sick or hurt. They talked about their hopes and dreams. Finally after a lot of times—both good and bad, they reached the fortress where the Prince was held. The minute Amalia set foot on the castle grounds, she broke the spell and the Prince awoke.

Amelia and Helen ran up the tower to meet the Prince. He was very charming as Amalia expected and they all ended up laughing and joking as good friends do. Finally the Prince said, "You are my rescuer. Will you marry me Amalia?" Uh...Amalia looked at him and then at Helen. You are very charming and nice and funny and I like you as a friend but I am in love with Helen. It's better if you find a wife who can love you the way I love her.

So Amalia and Helen rode back to Amalia's land all the while planning their lives together and along the way they promised to love each other and take care of each other just as they had on their adventure. "For better or worse. For richer or poorer, in sickness and in health, and until death--- That is how they felt.

When they returned home from their adventure, the King and Queen wondered where their new son-in-law might be. "Where is that charming Prince—surely you will marry him?"

"No, Helen and I love each other" answered Amalia, "I want to marry her."

"But two women can't get married!" exclaimed her parents.

"But we've already promised to care for each other and love each other. Why can't WE live happily ever after? What makes our love different from yours?" asked Amalia

Well! The King and Queen thought about that and they asked their wise counselors (and their Unitarian- Universalist ministers) about that. And there were all kinds of discussions and some arguments but Amelia and Helen always had an answer: "We love each other. How can that hurt anyone? We made the same promises that men and women who want to marry make to each other. Why is it different for us?"

Well the King and the Queen thought about that and it seemed logicalso since they made the laws, they made a new law in their land—that gay people could marry! So Amalia and Helen got married and as to whether or not they lived happily ever after well... they're trying hard!

Sermon: Marriage Equality

Dearly beloved....we are gathered here today to join these two people in the bonds of holy.....domestic partnership??? How about the bonds of holy civil union? Lacks a little something doesn't it?

What is it about the "M" word that makes us a little squeamish even if we're okay with civil unions? Why is it that marriage is so important to the gay community? And, why is such an emotional issue?

Well first I have to clear up a little misunderstanding--this is not the 1970's version of marriage equality—why housework isn't equivalent to cleaning the garage. I lost that argument with my "domestic partners" several times in the 70's....and the 80's....and the 90's. The only resolution that I've found to that domestic disturbance is to agree collaboratively to ignore the dust and the dishes and the dirty laundry -until somebody's mother comes to visit.

I want to talk about "marriage equality" first cuz it is a religious issue—in fact it may be primarily a religious issue.... certainly it's a symbolic issue. So, it's appropriate that as a religious community we address it. And, if we look back, we see that most of the civil rights gains in this country have only really taken hold after the churches got involved.

Churches and synagogues have been very important in pushing for all kinds of civil rights—and the battle for marriage equality will be no different. Yes, there are still far right churches that love the "sinner" but hate the "sin" but the religious right has ceased to be the only religious voice (although they still get far too much attention).

So the topic is marriage equality (because, let's be clear.... there is no such thing as "gay marriage". ...There is only marriage and culturally we all know what it means ---and isn't that the point.

In preparation for this service, I asked several gay couples male and female (all friends of mine) if they would be willing to talk publically about their desire for marriage and what that would mean for their relationship and they all very politely said,-- NO..., no thanks, not now and maybe not later.

I was surprised...shocked really --so then I thought about it and decided I would asked my hetero friends if they'd talk publically about what their marriage was all about and they said "HELL NO; ARE YOU KIDDING? What are you trying to do START TROUBLE? My MARRIAGE IS JUST FINE—DON'T MESS WITH IT.

So, it's very clear to me that we all need to have a conversation about marriage—at least as a cultural phenomenon—if not as a personal one. Sounds like a good topic for a covenant group....I hope some of us might choose to do that.

Now we turn to...

Why do gay people want to get married?---well, they don't all personally want to marry but they do want the choice. Similar to abortion or death with dignity—we don't WANT to have one, but if circumstances change and we need to—We want the *choice*. We UUs like to make our own choices.

A civil rights lawyer I talked to said that it could cost a gay couple between \$4000 and \$7000 dollars to get all the legal documentation together to provide most of what we get when we sign a marriage license—and it's more complicated if there are kids involved.

And, none of that will do you any good if you happen to be in the wrong state....or having a medical emergency in an unsympathetic hospital (perhaps one that is church run).

But for me, the best statement about why the gay community wants marriage equality was given to me by a woman I don't even know -she was just on the periphery of a conversation I was having. She leaned in, looked me straight in the eye and said: ..."because I want the same rights you have".....And she's right, that should be enough.

I really don't know but I think that for many of you I am singing to the proverbial choiryou're fine with civil unions or marriage or whatever. One of my straight friends said, "I think we should allow the gay community to have the opportunity to have a divorce rate that equals ours!" Some of us are skeptical of the worth of marriage so we've abdicated from this discussion...another reason why I think we should be talking about what marriage really means...what we think the institution is all about and what it does or doesn't do for our relationships.

When I first proposed this sermon last spring, I sent to the worship committee this title: "Marriage Equality: How To Talk To Your Uncle Harold at the Thanksgiving Dinner Table". Not only was the title too long but the topic was too big. But, unlike most of the sermons we hear from the UU pulpit I am going to ask you to do something on the basis of this talk...or really your thinking about this talk.

Whether you are gay/straight/confused or certain—whether you are in favor of civil unions or opposed to marriage for everybody. Whatever you think—or think you think, let's talk about it—yes, even at the Thanksgiving table too.

As many of you know Basic Rights Oregon has just decided that we will not be fighting for a ballot measure in 2012. They've made the decision that this is not the right time for that political battle. So actually, this is the best time for us to start having this conversation amongst ourselves, our friends our neighbors and with our conservative family/friends. It's not yet politically charged and positions are not so locked in and we have some time to get people to think about it before they listen to the ads & cast their votes.

Could this community agree to wrap a ribbon around this facility and take a public stand on marriage equality? Maybe. How long would it take and how much energy would it cost us? Would we lose people in the process? Is that worth it?

Those are questions for the larger community but for you personally—could you convince your mythical uncle to just listen to your ideas—oh and that would mean you'd have to really listen to him too....with your heart as well as your head.

I'm asking you to have one conversation over the coming Thanksgiving holiday—not long, not disagreeable, just maybe a tad uncomfortable. The research tells us that we are more persuasive if we really understand the others position...and I for one, do not understand the fear and the near panic I hear from the religious right. I don't get why it was worth it for the Mormon church to spend 18 million dollars to fight marriage equality in California—that was the number reported after it was all over.

So, I think that individually we could start by having a real conversation with someone in our world who we suspect doesn't agree with us.

And then, as a community could we learn more about civil discourse and manage to be passionate as well as respectful? If we want to be more persuasive in the town square—and I do.... I suggest we've got to hone our skills right here.

I have one Republican friend—ONE. Although I prefer to think of him as a truly compassionate conservative...We are very different and we became friends mostly by accident but we've been having lunch about once a month for over 15+ years. I've come to treasure that relationship and those conversations (we've talked about politics, religion and sex, money and what our friendship is all about what I did that hurt his feelings and what he said that made me mad.

Those conversations embody what I want—in my marriage, my church and my country—the ability to really talk and listen to one another about what matters most in our lives.... what hurts, what helps and what we each call holy.

I care about civil rights and am committed to being an outspoken ally of the GLBT community. But whatever it is that comes up next for us: who our new minister should be or the cost and configuration of our new building....(yeah we'll get there) but it wouldn't it feel even better if we knew that wherever we start....however far apart.

We have the commitment and the skills and the patience to work it out? To get to "yes". If we aren't committed to working it out -whatever IT is—in this beloved community—well then, we'll have to stop tsk tsking about what the Senate can't do; what the politicians won't do; We'll have to stop complaining that our work place is dysfunctional because "they" can't/won't/don't communicate—because we are part of the problem.

One of the things that I value about this place is that our pulpit is free. In 30+years I've heard some pretty strange stuff from this pulpit...that means that you are willing to listen to me (and god knows that I love to be listened to). But I also think that it means I have to -want to—to a better job of listening to you... in the pulpit -or cleaning the kitchen---or in a meeting....or in line for coffee. I want us to joyfully notice when have an opportunity to talk about something we may not agree on. I want us to commit to being persuadable as well as persuasive. I want us to learn to love the diversity—not in the abstract race/class/gender stuff but the messy, challenging, might-bruise-my-ego stuff that makes up our committee work, our decision-making and our real lives -----and I sincerely hope that you agree with me! But if you don't-----let's talk about it.

