



St. George's Church

Glenn Dale Parish – The Episcopal Diocese of Washington

The People of God, Ministers
The Rev. Connie Reinhardt, Rector

February 14, 2008

Testimony for Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee St. George's Episcopal Church Affirms Civil Marriage Equality

As members of St. George's Episcopal Church in Glenn Dale, residents of legislative district 23 and neighboring districts, we call upon our representatives to:

- Enact civil marriage equality through adoption of the *Religious Freedom and Civil Marriage Protection Act*. **SB 290/HB 351**
- Oppose Maryland's Marriage Protection Act or any constitutional amendment that denies equal civil marriage protections to same-sex couples. **SB 169/HB 1345**

We believe that supporting civil marriage equality is an expression of our faith commitment, contained in our Baptismal Covenant, by which we pledge:

to “strive for justice and peace among all people...to love our neighbors as ourselves and to respect the dignity of every human being.”

This foundational statement of our faith has been reinforced by successive resolutions of our denomination's highest governing body for more than 30 years as far back as 1976 when our General Convention declared that **“homosexual persons are entitled to equal protection of the laws with all other citizens.”** Most recently, our General Convention in 2006 called upon all states to provide same-sex couples **equal access to civil marriage:**

“Civil marriage provides legally recognized rights and protections for families involving child custody, medical decisions and inheritance.

The freedom or the right to marry, if a couple so chooses, is a matter of justice, basic fairness, civil rights and love.”

We believe that the Religious Freedom and Civil Marriage Protection Act protects religious freedom. Religious institutions ought to determine for themselves what constitutes a religious marriage in the eyes of God and God's people; in the civil arena, all citizens should be treated equally and with dignity with the right to civil marriage.