

Unitarian Universalist Church of Annapolis • Rev. Fredric John Muir, D.Min.

Testimony for the House Judiciary Committee January 31, 2006 House Bill 48 OPPOSE

The likelihood is that you have heard from some of your constituents who have supported this legislation for religious reasons. Perhaps you, alone, have determined that your faith tradition supports a vote for this legislation. I hope you are open to hearing another understanding and interpretation – one not based in fear and punishment, but trust and celebration.

My call to ministry and my religious tradition are deeply rooted in the biblical promise—a promise that speaks of the inherent worth and dignity of all people, a promise that names justice, equity, and compassion as central to the vision of the Beloved Community. These promises are not exclusive to the prophetic, pastoral, scriptural teachings in Jewish, Christian, or Islamic texts, but are embraced by all the religions of the world. But there are many, I regret to say, who urge that the marriage option be closed to many Marylanders and they have based their opinion on a twisted and misleading reading of sacred scripture that is rooted in mistrust, fear, and a denial of love for all God’s people.

It is at times like this that all people must remember— though it is often painful—of how the Bible and religion have been misused and mischaracterized by wounded and broken men and women over the course of history. Not long ago, the same scriptures used by those who seek to bar marriage equality, these same texts were used to justify slavery, apartheid, segregation, the oppression of women and the abuse of children. And before this, the same perverted reading and twisted logic used Holy Scripture to justify the Inquisition, the Crusades, death camps, and abominable horrors still difficult to name. It is out of this heritage—this line of fear, mistrust and hysteria—that many disguise themselves as teachers and supporters of religious truth and distort scripture and holy texts that have brought inspiration, comfort, meaning, love, and life to generations. I count myself as one from these generations and stand appalled with all others who grow tired of these expressions of fear and mistrust masquerading as religion. It is my hope that you will choose to let this legislation “die” in committee. By doing so, you will be affirming, in the strongest language, a message of trust, security and love for all Marylanders, and not a select group. If you choose to do this, what I believe is the right, moral, and ethical thing to do, you will reaffirm that Maryland is the Free State and remind everyone that:

Marylanders are people who live with a vision not based on fear, hate, prejudice and closed-mindedness, but people who seek to live and work in an atmosphere rooted in respect, fairness, progress and goodwill.

Marylanders are people who will openly name the challenges and issues that need to be addressed; then walk together in a spirit of mutual cooperation and trust, not persecution or abuse.

Marylanders will witness what we want, which means naming fear and mistrust when we see it, correcting stereotypes when we hear them, sharing the good news of equality and community when we feel it, and encouraging good words and works when needed.

Marylanders will hold accountable our teachers, politicians and religious leaders, and others, who agree with and use the language of fear and exclusion; at the same time, Marylanders will also hold accountable those who choose to remain silent or who simply distance themselves from those who participate in this misguided hysteria.

Finally, you must reassure those whom we love, trust, and value—our family, friends, and co-workers—that hate, exclusion, fear, and mistrust are not a family values, they not a values of faith, they will not shape the future of Maryland.

Thank you,
Fredric J. Muir

Where minds are free and all souls are welcome.

Unitarian Universalist Church of Annapolis
333 Dubois Road, Annapolis, MD 21401-2123
410.266.8044

