



ORANGE CHAPEL

United Methodist Church

1634 Orange Chapel Clover Garden Road
Chapel Hill, NC 27516

Rev. Carl Belcher

Office Phone: 919-968-4102 / www.orangechapel.org

carldbel@gmail.com

W/CORRECTIONS (PGS. 1, 7, 8)

MAY
2012



From the Pastor

On May 8 (unless you have voted early), we will go to the voting polls for the precursor to one of the most important elections in at least the modern history of our nation. With this election, the subject getting the most attention and eliciting the most emotion is NC Amendment One. I think it is time to weigh in and offer some guidance and information as a/your pastor.

My personal opinion is that this is a red herring or a political slight-of-hand. With all of our state and country's problems, why is NC Amendment One at the top of the list? Waste and corruption in our government is rampant. Continuing this list of problems are taxes, the economy, an out-of-control and spiraling debt, a loss of our freedoms with controls and regulations outside of the legislative process, etc. Last but certainly not least, is the ginormous issue of government takeover of our health care and all aspects of the government eventually 'looking out' for us. This threatens to be an intrusion into our daily lives and habits beyond even what George Orwell's classic novel, *1984*, re the fear of Big Brother imagined.

Why is this the issue given us in the first two years of a new leadership after 100+ years of the old? It may be a diversion specifically because of these potentially devastating issues mentioned above. There are no answers, or at least none palatable to our politicians and their power of the purse. In the Gospel of John, Chapter 4, Jesus spoke with a Samaritan Woman at a well. When the conversation became too personal, revealing a sinful lifestyle, she changed the subject with a question about which mountain was the true one for worship. She may have had a burning desire to know, but it is much more likely she wanted to change the subject and get off the hot seat. I suspect this to be the same tactic use by our politicians to escape hard questions with very difficult and unpopular answers.

Having said this, let us step aside and examine the proposed NC Amendment One (see pg. 4). You may ask yourself what changes if it *passes* or what changes if it *fails*? What *difference* does it make? The answer is quite honestly - *none; nothing changes*. There is no change positive or negative from present law or practice. It is currently illegal. Currently, marriage between same-sex or even multiple partners is illegal - it is *not recognized*. There are no rights given to 'common law' or co-habitation situations.

If 'YES' passes, nothing changes. The status-quo is confirmed. If 'NO' prevails, nothing changes: there is no connection or change in the status-quo. What does happen is that 'marriage defined as between a man and a woman' is given constitutional protection. At present, it is quite possible for a judge to find the current law unconstitutional and set up a multiple-year and multi-dollar fight to the US Supreme Court for final declaration. Or, the legislature itself could change the law, but either would face a more difficult task with it set in the constitution.

There are two major questions though. The first and most daunting is a Federal suit over the subject. If you are married in a state such as Massachusetts and move to NC, are you still married ... or do you revert to a different status? This question will almost certainly come up and be resolved again by the Supreme Court. A decision here would 'trump' whatever NC decides and writes into law or constitution. The other question is rights of those committed to relationships that are not 'marriage' or of different sex. Concerns called into question by some are pension, health insurance coverage, inheritance, visitation rights and authority in the hospital, child custody, and even their standing in domestic violence issues. None of these are recognized as rights and implied as so by current law. You can, however, enter into a contract granting and defining them. This is much like a prenuptial agreement or a will or a health care power of attorney, etc. The difference is that they must be stated and are not implied and protected as is in the case of conventional marriage. They can be contracted and are recognized as such and the amendment specifically states this will continue.

There is one overriding rule in that this is not the final solution most people think. It is certainly the continuation of a long run of 'discussion' and legal battles from either side.

The major positive is that the interest will stir up the vote on those who should have the responsibility to address the looming problems before us. This gives a greater responsibility and complete voice in choosing those who will work on the problems facing us.

--Rev. Carl Belcher

OUR MISSION. *The mission of Orange Chapel UMC is to make disciples of Jesus Christ by reaching out, nurturing, and serving through the love, knowledge, and practice of the Christian faith.*