

## **Marriage at Mount Auburn Presbyterian Church: All Are Welcome**

At Mount Auburn Presbyterian Church (MAPC), all are welcome to Christ's Table and to the full life and worship of the church. In 1991, MAPC adopted its "Policy on the Inclusion of Gays and Lesbians," which states that "our loving welcome is unconditional" and further affirms a commitment to "full civil rights and justice for all persons, regardless of sexual orientation, in society and the church."

These core values are embodied in MAPC's "Statement on Covenant Services (Holy Unions, Marriages, Etc.)" – a progressive and inclusive new service model that celebrates the covenant of love between two persons that was adopted on January 28, 2004 by the Session of MAPC. This groundbreaking, nondiscriminatory policy, simply stated, declares that all persons will be treated equally when seeking God's grace on their union and pledge to one another.

Our world, country, and faith institutions continue to struggle with the limited definition of marriage as between a man and a woman. Our own denomination, the Presbyterian Church (USA), sends mixed messages on the subject. Its Constitution on one hand states that "marriage is a gift God has given to all humankind for the well-being of the entire human family." On the other hand, the Constitution maintains that marriage belongs uniquely to "one man and one woman," thus excluding our gay and lesbian brothers and sisters.

In the spirit of equality for all persons, MAPC strives to see the question of marriage through the eyes of an all-loving, inclusive God rather than through the eyes of a society susceptible to discrimination and heterosexism. Therefore, its Session will not approve the use of its facilities for any service that is not available for heterosexual and homosexual couples alike.

As the MAPC Session prayerfully examined the prejudice within our nation and the Presbyterian Church (USA) about marriage, it rediscovered the essential Christian truth that couples do not

become married by the declaration of a pastor. They make a commitment to and marry one other with the exchange of their promises. Acting upon this truth, in any type of covenant service at MAPC, it is the couple who will declare their relationship and covenant, not the Pastor. At this moment of commitment, MAPC is ready and honored to bear witness.

Couples who are interested in such a service are encouraged to consult with the pastor of MAPC.