



California Council of CHURCHES

Summer 2009

Dear friends in the California Faith Community,

Over the past year, Californians have been engaged in a vigorous discussion about marriage, civil rights and religious traditions. The debate over marriage equality for gays and lesbians erupted in the media, on the steps of courthouses and city halls, within our faith communities and even in our families. In many cases, family, coworkers and neighbors disagree. Fault lines run between generations, races, ethnicities and religious denominations and for many, the division has caused great pain.

As faith leaders, we are in a unique position to help heal our congregations and provide a roadmap for how our society will emerge from these turbulent times. Members of our communities have and will continue to come seeking guidance and context to understand this societal change. We know, of course, that our places of worship are the ideal places to find answers, community and support.

Some of us have already been approached by members of our communities who love and cherish gay and lesbian friends, colleagues and family members, but feel conflicted about the right to marry. Many gay and lesbian members of our congregations may be dealing with the pain of public and private rejection. They may or may not share these crises of faith with us. **Men, women and children will need our guidance to see the love that God has for all of us.**

We hope that **Get To Know Us First IN FAITH** can serve as a tool in your ministry. It was developed by a grassroots organization of gay and lesbian families that are directly affected by the current marriage equality debate. We have partnered with *California Faith for Equality* to provide support to over 5,000 faith communities across the state, as you introduce the topic of Marriage Equality and amplify the message of God's inclusive love among your congregants over the next months.

The DVD includes:

1. Authentic stories of gay and lesbian Californians and their children;
2. Interpretation of biblical passages used to condemn homosexuality;
3. Testimony from faith leaders speaking on Marriage Equality
4. Printable documents to support your Screening & Discussion (study guides, handouts, etc.)

If you would like assistance thinking about how to begin or facilitate the discussion, or help in facilitation itself, please contact Kerry Chaplin at kerry@cafaithforequality.org or (310) 598-5866. To help us to track the discussions across the state, please register your use of the materials at the website:

<http://www.GetToKnowUsFirst.org/infaith.html>

In partnership for faithful discipleship,

The Rev. Dr. Rick Schlosser
Executive Director
California Council of Churches

Rev. Phil Lawson
Civil Rights Leader and
Board of Directors, Soulforce

The Rt. Rev. J. Jon Bruno
Episcopal Bishop of the
Los Angeles Diocese

The Rev. Mark W. Holmerud
Bishop of the Sierra Pacific Synod of the
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

The Rev. Eric Lee
President/CEO, Southern Christian Leadership
Conference of Greater Los Angeles