

Only Heterosexual Marriage Ordained by God, Mormons Affirm

Mormon leaders are reaffirming their faith's belief that only heterosexual marriage is ordained by God, in a letter to be read to congregations this holiday weekend following the U.S. Supreme Court's ruling that legalized gay nuptials.

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints has long held that marriage is a sacred union between a man and a woman, in life and in the hereafter, and the "only legitimate, authorized expression of the powers of procreation."

Immediately after last Friday's high court ruling, which said the U.S. Constitution gave same-sex couples the right to wed, the Utah-based Church put out a statement acknowledging that same-sex marriages were now legal in the United States.

While respecting those who think differently, it said, the LDS Church would continue to teach and promote marriage between a man and a woman as a central part of its doctrine and practice.

The faith's top leaders have followed up on that with a letter to be read to rank-and-file Mormons at Church meetings across the United States and Canada beginning this Sunday.

"Marriage between a man and a woman was instituted by God and is central to His plan for His children," reads the letter by the Church's highest governing boards, the First Presidency and the Quorum of Twelve Apostles.

"Strong families, guided by a loving mother and father, serve as the fundamental institution for nurturing children, instilling faith, and transmitting to future generations the

moral strengths and values that are important to civilization and vital to eternal salvation,” it says.

“Changes in the civil law do not, indeed cannot, change the moral law that God has established.”

It tells local lay leaders to meet with all adults, young men and young women on July 5 or July 12, “in a setting other than sacrament meeting,” and read them the whole statement.

Under freedom-of-religion protections enshrined in the First Amendment, the U.S. Supreme Court ruling does not force churches to recognize gay marriages.

The 5-4 ruling was the court’s most important expansion of U.S. marriage rights since its 1967 ruling in the case *Loving v. Virginia*, which struck down state laws barring interracial marriages.

In their letter, the Mormon leaders urged members “to love and treat all people with kindness and civility, even when we disagree.”

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