

Praying that the Supreme Court feels the love

By [Janet Edwards](#)

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Who can deny that the heart of marriage is the love and commitment between the partners? Can you? So, it makes perfect sense to me that public opinion in the United States has moved inexorably toward supporting marriage for same-sex couples.

Many who are joining a growing number of Americans in support of the freedom to marry have moved there by knowing couples, like my friends Ralph and Van.

In the last few years, those coming out in support of marriage for same-sex couples are often touched by the love and long-term commitment of those couples looking for the legal protections of marriage. Ralph and Van have been together for 32 years.

Many have also been moved by how gay couples, like heterosexual couples, work tirelessly to nurture and sustain their relationships despite the differences that two people bring to a relationship. For Ralph and Van, one's a Republican and the other is a Democrat. I admire the way they have worked all that out in our contentious times. They have loved one another for better, for worse, in sickness and in health.

Many also admire the contributions that couples like Ralph and Van make to strengthen our communities. Despite busy and successful professional careers, they have also made time to serve in all kinds of volunteer capacities throughout the years. Just looking to their church activities, Ralph is an elder who has chaired both his presbytery and synod nominating committees. He is a Sunday morning greeter and is on the fellowship committee of his congregation. In their church, Van has chaired both the board of trustees and the board of deacons. He especially enjoys visiting homebound elderly church members and plays cribbage weekly with a 102-year-old church friend.

Their strong life together has empowered them individually, and this is without any of the legal supports that make life easier for other married couples. Last August, Ralph and Van were married in their home state, New York, so that they now receive

the benefits offered to married couples by that state. However, their marriage is still not recognized by the federal government, which means they are denied benefits afforded heterosexual couples, like the right to file a joint tax return.

During Holy Week, the Supreme Court of the United States has the opportunity to change that. They will hear challenges to Prop 8 and DOMA. Prop 8, passed by California voters, took away the freedom to marry from couples in the state after their state Supreme Court granted that right to same-sex couples. DOMA is a federal law that prevents the federal government from recognizing the legal marriages of gay couples.

This summer, the Court could rule that our Constitution's guarantees of freedom and justice extend to same-sex couples – like Ralph and Van – when it comes to marriage.

The constitutional right to equal protection under the law cries out for the Supreme Court Justices to affirm that the love and commitment shown by Ralph and Van deserves the same rights and responsibilities afforded to heterosexual couples.

That our country lives by the rule of law should carry the Court to this conclusion. But we know that is not all there is. The Court also moves in accord with the winds of popular opinion. Though embrace of marriage equality has increased dramatically, we cannot depend on those trends to carry the day for love this year. Every one of us must do two things.

First, we must continue to seek out those who remain conflicted about marriage for same-sex couples. Get to know them better and help them get to know you better or get to know about a couple like my friends, Ralph and Van. Share the love! Surely there is enough to go around!

Have a good conversation about love—what it means to them and what it means to you—especially love in marriage. Do you know anyone who does not value love? Trust that commonality with the other person, especially if they are religious. Love is the source of every blessed human religious impulse. Gently probe for an answer to how Ralph and Van's married love hurts or threatens anyone. Build upon the truth that there is enough love to go around. Inevitably, imperfect human love needs all the help it can get.

Second, pray for the Supreme Court in its hearings on March 26, 2013. Find the [candle light vigil or worship service](#) dedicated to that in your community or create one. Here in Pittsburgh, we will be hosting special worship at the 1st Methodist Church on March 25th. Come join us or get to Washington, if you can. Pray for the court to do the right thing, as the California Supreme Court did back in 2008, of upholding the rule of law, despite loud public opinion against the freedom to marry.

The United States of America is committed to the rule of law because we, as a people from the beginning, have acknowledged that all are created equal and loved by our Creator equally. Yet, history shows clearly how often we, frail human beings, can thwart that conviction. The greatest challenge has always come in times when a majority of the voters use their power to tip the balances of justice away from fairness.

Law is here to preserve our equality when human frailty or fear tempts us to be less than we, at our best, want to be. "There is no fear in love. Perfect love casts out fear (1 John 4:18)." But we are not perfect and so we have the law. In this case, it's the loving principle of equal protection under the law.

Pray that the Justices find their way to recognize the love among the people of our land and also embedded in our constitutional law. So that, at the end of the day, we all can lift our hands in praise: Alleluia! Love, all love, prevails.

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