

Press Statement

Eden Church Celebrates SCOTUS Rulings on DOMA and CA Prop 8, Decries Weakening of VRA

**The Rev. Dr. Arlene K. Nehring
Senior Minister, Eden United Church of Christ, Hayward, CA
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“Eden United Church of Christ joins justice-loving people around the world today in celebrating the US Supreme Court’s rulings striking down the Defense of Marriage Act, and denying the plaintiffs’ standing opposing a lower court’s ruling overturning California’s Proposition 8,” said the Rev. Dr. Arlene K. Nehring, pastor of the 148-year old Hayward-based congregation.

“Meanwhile, we are dismayed by the Supreme Court’s ruling yesterday, which weakened the Voting Rights Act,” Nehring said, “and we look forward in faith to the day when all people are granted the civil rights to marry whom they love and to vote their conscience without deterrence.”

“As Christians,” Nehring explained, “we believe that the right to marry, the right to vote, and the right to equal protections under the law are human rights.”

“The church’s views,” Nehring further explained, “are reflective of Eden’s ‘Open and Affirming’ identity and ‘Open Door’ Wedding Policy, and our denomination’s historic role in the human rights movement.”

“Eden Church,” Nehring said, “is one of over 820 congregations in the United Church of Christ that identifies as ‘Open and Affirming’ (ONA). ‘ONA’ means that Eden welcomes lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender persons into full membership, leadership, and worship life. The Open Door policy states that couples of any gender do not have to be members of the church to be married at Eden or by our clergy,” Nehring explained. The congregation claimed this ONA identity in 1995, and adopted an Open Door wedding policy in 2004.

“Eden Church traces its roots to the Congregational, Christian, Evangelical, and Reformed denominations who were first in the US to found a free press, oppose slavery, protest the British tea tax, ordain women, support voting rights for all, demand community access to broadcasting, and join the farm workers’ movement,” said Nehring.

Founded in 1865, Eden is part of the United Church of Christ denomination, which includes 1.1 million members in 5,100 congregations.

The Rev. Dr. Arlene K. Nehring is Senior Minister of Eden United Church of Christ in Hayward, California. She was ordained in 1988, and has been Eden’s pastor since 2002. She and her spouse, Stephanie S. Spencer, were legally married at Eden Church on October 11, 2008. The couple celebrated twenty years of committed life together last October.