

How Does “Gay Marriage” Play in the Heartland?

by Wayne Walker

On June 26, 2015, following the United States Supreme Court’s recent ruling on the oxymoronic concept of “gay marriage,” supposedly making same sex marriage legal in all fifty states, Gary Abernathy, the editor and/or publisher of my hometown newspaper, the Hillsboro, OH, Times-Gazette, wrote an article headlined “Gay marriage brings mixed reactions locally.” I was especially interested in two sets of Abernathy’s contrasting opinions. He noted that “the mayor of Hillsboro and his opponent in the November election expressed different opinions on the subject. Mayors typically perform many marriages during their terms in office.”

The current mayor was Republican Drew Hastings, who is not known to be a flaming conservative. He “said he has probably performed 100 marriages so far since taking office in 2012” and that “the court’s ruling on gay marriage was not a surprise.” Yet he also said that if a same sex couple asked him to marry them, he would “probably not,” pointing out that he is not required to marry anyone and could “stop next week,” but “that would be to the detriment of people who want to get married.” The mayor said, “It’s a thorny issue. I have longtime gay friends. But I’m not convinced gay marriage is something we should recognize.”

Democrat Pam Limes was Hastings’ opponent in the November election. I went to high school with two of her brothers, Phil and Jeff, the latter in my class, so I know the family. She said Friday she was happy with the court’s ruling. She said gay couples “have a perfect right to get married.” Her view is that “People need to marry who they love” (would that include a brother, sister, son, or daughter, or plural spouses?), affirming that recognition of rights for the LGBT communities is “long overdue” and adding that as mayor she would not hesitate to marry same sex couples. “It was a good day today,” she concluded. By the way, Hastings later won in a landslide.

Abernathy also noted that the ruling “was greeted with mostly negative reactions from clergy members in Highland County, with one stark exception.” Mark Edwards, pastor of the Open Door Community Church, said that the court’s ruling was a welcome development. “I’m excited about it,” said Edwards of the court’s ruling. “I’m gay and I have a partner, and I’m a pastor. God loves each and every one equally.” God loves murderers and rapists too, but He doesn’t approve of their actions. Edwards’ church has met since October at the old church building that was formerly the South Liberty Church of Christ on Danville Road, between Fairview and Danville. My grandmother Walker was baptized at the South Liberty Church of Christ.

Edwards, who “pastored” in Dayton for eight years prior to relocating to Hillsboro, said he disagrees with other clergy members who believe the Bible condemns homosexuality. “That’s Old Testament,” said Edwards. “We do not live in Leviticus days.” Uh, Mr. Edwards, the last time I looked, Romans 1:26-27, which say that women with women and men with men are against nature and shameful error which is due a penalty, and 1 Corinthians 6:9-11, which say that homosexuals and sodomites will not inherit the kingdom of God, are in the New Testament. And besides, Jesus Himself defined marriage as male and female, or a man and his wife, in Matthew 19:4-5. Oh yeah, that’s in the New Testament too!

In contrast to this, my friend Tom Stoops, evangelist at the Marshall Church of Christ who was also in my high school class, said, “I am appalled” at the

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