

July 25, 2011
Dear Friends,

23 Tammuz 5771

Last month, we asked the question: When is a right time to take a stand as a congregation? Specifically, the Board posed to the congregation the question: Can we take a stand opposing the Constitutional Amendment on Marriage on the 2012 Ballot vote? We can now report on the congregational feedback and subsequent Board action.

We heard from about 80 people: thirty attended the July 6th Open Forum and an additional fifty people corresponded by e-mail. Of all the responses, the vast majority were in support of Mount Zion seeking to defeat the constitutional amendment. Three respondents felt that Mount Zion ought not take a stand on what could be a political issue, but only one felt so strongly. Some – including the majority of those who gathered on July 6 – felt that the language of the resolution was not strong enough and proposed alternative language. No one articulated a stand in support of the proposed constitutional amendment.

At the Board of Directors' meeting on July 11th, the congregational input was shared and discussed. After much discussion, including a well-reasoned dissenting voice, the Board voted to pass the resolution as stated. As part of the discussion, the Board recognized and affirmed that Mount Zion will not often go through this kind of process, however in this case, our voice can make a difference. Part of the rationale for taking a stand now is that marriage is often discussed in religious terms in public discourse. There will be congregations seeking to pass the amendment. Therefore it is important to have a congregational voice speak clearly on the other side.

Resolution: *To urge our membership and the wider community to vote “No” on the 2012 ballot proposition “Shall the Minnesota Constitution be amended to provide that only a union of one man and one woman shall be valid or recognized as a marriage in Minnesota?” This position would authorize our clergy, President and/or authorized designees to speak on Mount Zion’s behalf on this issue and to join coalitions that will seek to defeat the proposition.*

Rationale: The position of being against this constitutional amendment on marriage is about justice. Specifically it is about the unique historical phenomenon of the United States of America, and that in our country’s history, amendments to the federal and state constitutions have always included more and more classes and groups of the population and not the opposite. This amendment would formally add discrimination to our Minnesota constitution. We, as Jews, are sensitive to injustices that arise from legalizing discrimination. While Jewish values, affirmed nationally by the Reform Movement, strongly support the full legal rights of same-gender couples, even voting “No” on this amendment would not give any marriage or union rights to same-gender couples. Thus, regardless of one’s feelings about marriage, voting “no” means voting “no” to legalizing discrimination and “no” to favoring one religious view over another.

Based on our approval of this resolution, we will be joining coalitions with other organizations seeking to defeat the constitutional amendment and will publicize periodic updates in our bulletin, *Iton Tzion*. Of course, feel free to be in touch with either of us with any thoughts or questions.

Wishing you a wonderful summer,

Robert O. Mast, President
rmast@comcast.net

Adam Stock Spilker, Rabbi
aspilker@mzion.org