

Unitarians in midst of gay wedding marathon: In Massachusetts

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Gay couples lined up for a 12-hour wedding marathon at Boston's Arlington Street Church on May 20 as a week of wedding fever reached its apex for Massachusetts Unitarians.

As the required three-day waiting period elapsed for gay couples who had won the right to marry on May 17, Unitarian churches called in retired ministers to help meet the demand. Particularly busy were churches in Cambridge, Boston and Provincetown, where the state's gay communities are most densely concentrated.

At Arlington Street Church, three clergypersons married 48 couples at 20-minute intervals between 9 a.m. and 9 p.m. "The whole church community has been galvanized around this issue," said church administrator Peter Johnston. All week, he said, the church has been receiving bouquets from friends as signs of good will. For the state's Unitarians, many of whom have supported gay marriage rights for decades, a weeklong celebration began the previous Sunday with rousing church services proclaiming that victory had arrived.

Then the next day, denomination President William Sinkford marked the occasion by officiating at the marriage of Julie and Hillary Goodridge, plaintiffs in the suit that led to the new law. "It was a great privilege to participate in the marriage of this loving and committed couple," Sinkford said. "It is a great and happy day for Unitarian Universalism and for all of the citizens of the Commonwealth."

Before that Monday, Sinkford had refused to sign any marriage licenses until gays had received a legal right to wed. With the new law in effect, he and other sympathetic Massachusetts clergy ended their wedding boycott. *-Religion News Service*