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04/01/2013
April 1, 2013

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April 1st, 2013 Posted in Opinion

Story & Photos by Jessica Sonderegger

LOGAN—Shades of red decorated the steps of the historic Cache County Courthouse as nearly 140 community members gathered in support of same-sex marriage equality and equal rights.

“We are here to take a stand for justice and equality,” said Pastor Paul Heins of Logan’s First Presbyterian Church. “You have been waiting long enough.”

Nearly 140 Cache Valley residents turned out for a vigil at the Old Cache County Courthouse in support of marriage equality. JESSICA SONDEREGGER photo

The candlelight vigil was part of the nationwide “Lighting Our Way to Justice” campaign, sponsored by Marriage Equality USA.

The vigils came as the U.S. Supreme Court began arguments in two related cases over same-sex marriage—the 1996 Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA), a federal law defining marriage as between a man and a woman only; and California’s Proposition 8, passed in 2008 to outlaw same-sex marriage.

The local vigil was the work of three groups—the Logan chapter of PFLAG (Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays), and USU’s Allies on Campus and LIFE (Love Is For Everyone)—which put the event together to raise awareness within Cache Valley and localize a national issue.

Amy Bailey, a member of the steering committee of Allies on Campus, said that because constitutional challenges to both DOMA and Prop 8 have succeeded in lower federal courts, there is a definite chance that at least some of the provisions of these laws could be overturned.

It’s time to extend civil rights to all couples and families across America, Bailey said. “Equality matters to me, because I want a wedding album for Chris,” she said, recognizing her nephew as a key motivator in her push for marriage equality.

Many supporters, including Cary Youmans, president of the local PFLAG branch, and LIFE President Kennedy Tripp, find hope in the outcomes of equal rights movements throughout the nation’s history. Referring to the Civil Rights movement of the 1960s, Youmans said the country is once again divided.

“The issue is getting the whole country on the same page,” he said, “just as we had to on the issue of slavery.”

It wasn’t just women or people of color who voiced opposition to discrimination, Tripp said. “Other people had to stand up and say, ‘I think this is wrong,’” he said.
The gay rights and same-sex marriage movements are creating the same kind of societal support, he said.

“I believe we are on the winning side,” Heins said. “My friends, we stand with you.”

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