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May 14, 2004

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**TOP COURT SAYS "I WILL" HEAR UNITARIANS ON EQUAL MARRIAGE**

The Canadian Unitarian Council has been granted intervener status before the Supreme Court of Canada in the matter of equal marriage rights for same sex couples.

"Our participation is in keeping with a long tradition of Canadian Unitarians seeking equal marriage rights for gays," said J McRee Elrod, of the CUC Working Group on Equal Marriage Rights.

"Thirty years ago, in 1974," he said, "the Rev. Norm Naylor read the banns for Chris Vogel and Richard North in the First Unitarian Church of Winnipeg. Chris and Richard are still together, and they still continue to seek legal recognition of their now lengthy union."

The July 2003 British Columbia court decision legalizing same sex marriage was based on a case brought by five couples, including Dawn and Elizabeth Barbeau, members of the Unitarian Church of Vancouver.

Rev Elrod (Mac) supplied materials for the CUC's Factum. Prepared by CUC's pro bono lawyer Rob Hughes of Smith and Hughes in Vancouver, the Factum draws on US as well as Canadian legal precedents.

"In 1967, the US Supreme Court struck down laws against interracial marriage," said Rev Elrod, "finding marriage a human civil right. More recently, the Supreme Court of Canada found in *Chamberlain v the Surrey School Board* that law should not be used to enforce the tenets of a particular religion."

For Elrod, however, the overriding concern is that, "new truth makes ancient good uncouth". He argues that, "Law does neither society nor religion a favour by impeding the necessary process of rethinking the relevance of Scripture to new scientific findings."

While the CUC legal team argues that barring same-sex couples from equal marriage is blatant discrimination, Elrod will argue privately that, "The Supreme Court of Canada should be on the side of advancing human awareness."

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