

Same Sex Marriage
Appeared in the “Faith Section” on June 28, 2014
Lama Chuck Stanford

Question: “Whether to accept same sex marriage has riven some faiths. How do your's stand on the issue?”

Answer: Within the ancient Buddhist texts and specifically the teachings (sutras) of the Buddha there is no mention of homosexuality. Recently, His Holiness the Dalai Lama said that gay marriage was ultimately one’s individual business.

Buddhism encourages practitioners to cultivate the virtues of compassion, loving kindness, and generosity within their own hearts. It is believed that by doing so, one is better equipped to enter into an intimate, committed, loving relationship with another. Such relationships have the potential for us to grow spiritually. From the Buddhist perspective a person's sexual preference does not matter. What does matter is what is in your heart. Living your life with love and compassion for all beings and trying not to harm others is what is most important. As Buddhists we believe that all persons, regardless of who they are, have Buddha-nature. Buddha-nature is the potential for all sentient beings to attain enlightenment. So on a fundamental level we are all the same, and all want love and to be happy.

While not yet recognized as legal in our state, I’ve performed a number of both gay and lesbian marriage ceremonies (civil unions). Love between two people is a beautiful thing and has the potential for both partners to grow spiritually. A great Sufi master once said, “The only reason for two people to marry is so that they may grow closer to the sacred.” It is through the challenges and successes of a relationship that we have the opportunity to grow spiritually. Where else but in an intimate relationship with another will we learn what life and the sacred are really about?