

Gay Marriage from p 13

“Five years ago, I took the position that I was not going to sign any marriage licenses until I could sign them for *all* couples who wanted to get married,” she said. “For me, this is a really powerful day. To have same-sex couples and families in our congregation be given the same status as everyone else is amazing.

She signed 13 licenses by the end of the day.

Frederick-Gray and many of the other clergy there had the couples they married write their names on their signs as a keepsake for the day.

One young woman stood with her hands covering her mouth as she watched the women who had raised her affirm their love, their marriage legally recognized in Arizona for the first time. She hugged one of the women after the ceremony made it official, whispering just one word: “Mom.”

On paper, the change wasn't huge. The marriage licenses handed out by the clerk's office simply featured an extra box, now allowing parties to be called “bride,” “groom,” or “spouse.”

But the feel of the day was joyous. There was at least one proposal in the courtyard. People there cheered on those who came out with licenses in hand. Friends were surprised to see couples they had known for years showing up to take the plunge. One passerby stopped to check out the scene and stayed for at least an hour,



Ashley Cusick

watching ceremony after ceremony alone, tears streaming down his cheeks.

Maybe because the change in the law came so suddenly, no protesters marred the cheery scene, though the Center for Arizona Policy's Cathi Herrod almost immediately vowed to continue battling against same-sex marriage.

The day had some of the makings of traditional weddings. People handed out solution so bubbles could be blown during the celebrations. Drivers honked horns in support as they passed by the scene.

One man, who wished to remain anonymous, went to the courtyard after a friend suggested there might not be a photographer there. He took photos for free, capturing dozens of weddings and thousands of images by day's end.

Pastor Vernon Meyer of Sun Lakes United Church of Christ in Chandler, Rabbi Mari Chernow of Temple Chai in Phoenix, Rabbi Ilana Mills of Temple Solel in Paradise Valley, and Reverend John Dorhauer of the United Church of Christ were some of the many clergy members gathered outside the Maricopa County Superior Court Clerk's Office to perform same-sex marriages on October 17.

By the end of the day, things quieted in the courtyard, but a ceremony still was held every few minutes. The clerk's office opted not to count the number of same-sex marriage licenses issued — it does not plan to distinguish between same-sex and other marriages — but an informal count by courtyard observers placed the total at 70 marriage ceremonies in the courtyard alone that day.

Many of the couples marrying did not have vows prepared, but one woman ad-libbed hers. “It doesn't take a law,” she said. “But it sure makes it nice.

Each time a ceremony neared its close and the famous phrase “by the power vested in me” began, the crowd would cheer and applaud its new, now legal, ending: “by the state of Arizona.”

Friday's happenings were both a long time coming and a complete shock. Same-sex marriage had been banned in Arizona for almost two decades, first by a 1996 legislative statute >>p 19

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