

Vivian and Rochelle Mccarty of Phoenix, surrounded by TV cameras, witnesses and reporters, were among the first to be married in an ultra-casual ceremony that lasted less than three minutes. Reverend James Pennington of the First Congregational United Church of Christ, who was wearing a gray suit jacket and white stole decorated with a crucifix and rainbows, performed the service.

"So if you're willing to seek love, compassion and forgiveness and you pledge your loyalty to each other as spouses, please say 'I do,'" Pennington told the couple after a brief introduction and reading of a Bible passage.

"I do," they said. Having dated for about five years, they were already wearing rings. They removed them, then put them on again ceremoniously.

"I give you this ring as a sign of my love and faith," Rochelle repeated after Pennington.

"You better," Vivian joked, to general laughter.

Pennington put a hand on Rochelle's shoulder. "Oh good and Holy God we are grateful today to Vivian and Rochelle, for the love they've shared over the last five years. And that today, this love is considered legal in the eyes of Arizona. We are grateful, we are blessed... We ask you to bless their union in Jesus' name."

"Amen," they said.

"So now, Rochelle and Vivian, because you've chosen each other, and you've promised each other your love and devotion, and have symbolized this with the receiving and giving of rings, by the authority invested me by the church and by the state, I pronounce you wife and wife."

The happy couple shouted, "We did it!" and pumped their fists in the air after Vivian and Rochelle Mccarty, with Reverend James exchanging their first kiss as a legally married couple.

Pennington

"We've been dating for five years," Vivian Mccarty said after the ceremony. "We finally got our day."

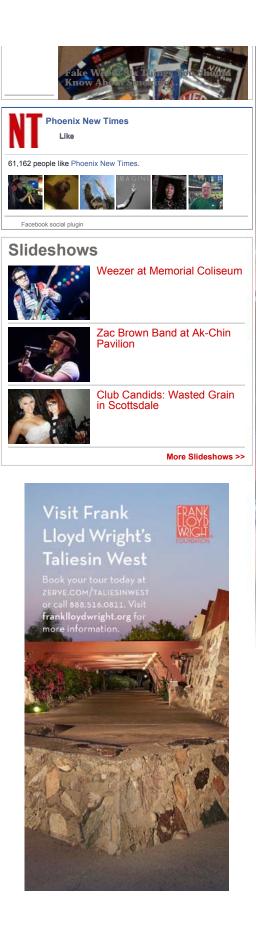
Like others marrying today, the couple had first purchased a marriage license for \$76 that was historic itself. The license, as well as the application for the license, for the first time gives the engaged couple three choices to check: bride, groom or the generic "spouse."

Following the decision by U.S. District Court Judge John Sedwick that Arizona's ban on same-sex marriage was unconstitutional, Clerk of the Court Michael Jeanes, issued a news release saying his office would comply with the court's decision.

"The staff at the Clerk's Office excel at treating all customers with dignity and respect," Jeanes said in a statement. "We're ready."

Couples began lining up at the marriage-license counter on Friday morning. With paperwork in hand, partners joined up with the several pastors from various faiths on hand at the plaza and took the plunge. The ceremonies were short and sweet

Alex Kuhn, 45, and Kimberly Lacount, 37, decided just this morning to get married and left their rings at home. Pastor Vernon Meyer of the Sun Lakes United Church of Christ performed their ceremony. (Pictures of the service below.)







Kuhn and Lacount have six children, including one adopted child and five biological kids that Lacount had in a previous heterosexual relationship before she began dating Kuhn 10

years ago. This is actually the couple's second wedding; the first was in Hawaii earlier this year.

At one point, multiple weddings were going on at once at the plaza, with each concluding to the sound of cheering and laughter.

No gay-marriage opponents were on hand to spoil the street-side ceremonies.

"It's just fantastic that love does win out," Kimberly Lacount said.



After-publication addition:

Plaintiffs and their lawyers in the federal court case that resulted in Judge Sedwick's ruling today (see below for document) gave statements to the media and posed for photographs.

"We're delighted that Judge Sedwick moved so quickly to strike down Arizona's discriminatory marriage ban," said Carmina Ocampo of Lambda League Defense and Education, Inc., who represented the plaintiffs along with lawyers from Perkins Coie LLP. She praised Arizona Attorney General Tom Horne "for not appealing and not standing in the way of progress."

Two of the plaintiffs, Nelda Majors and Karen Bailey, standing next to her, "have been waiting since Eisenhower was president to get married, and now they don't have to wait anymore," Ocampo said. "They just got their license today, and finally there's justice and equality in Arizona."



Nelda Majors and Karen Bailey

"We feel this is a major victory to the faith community as well," said Terry Pochert, 66, one of the plaintiffs, crying with emotion. "We're just so grateful to everybody."

"We are now responsible for upholding the sanctity of marriage," said Pochert's partner, Joseph Connolly, 55. Both men live in the city of Maricopa. He suggests gay partners who marry dwell deeply on what they're doing -- but also to "have a great party."



(Left to right) Jeremy Zegas, project director for Why Marriage Matters Arizona; Carmina Ocampo of Lambda League; and Heather Macre of Aiken Schenk (another law firm assisting with the Arizona federal case. At the right are Joseph Connolly (red shirt), and Terry Pochert, (blue shirt).

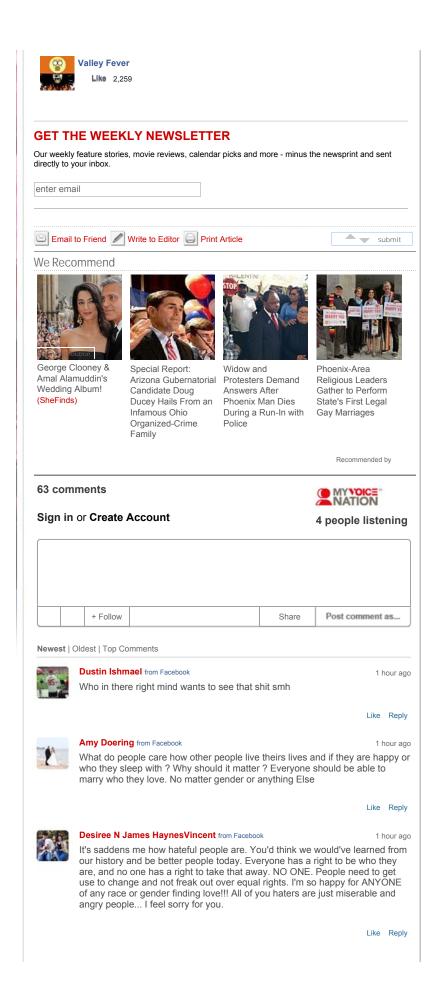


Scottdale residents David Chaney and Clark Rowley with their Maricopa County marriage license.

Click here for Judge Sedwick's decision in PDF format.

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