

TROY PERRY

b. July 27, 1940

*“God did not create gays and lesbians so
He could have something to hate.”*

Troy Perry is the founder of the United Fellowship of the Metropolitan Community Churches (UFMCC), a Protestant denomination ministering to the gay community. UFMCC reflects Perry's commitment to provide a safe space for gays and lesbians to celebrate their faith.

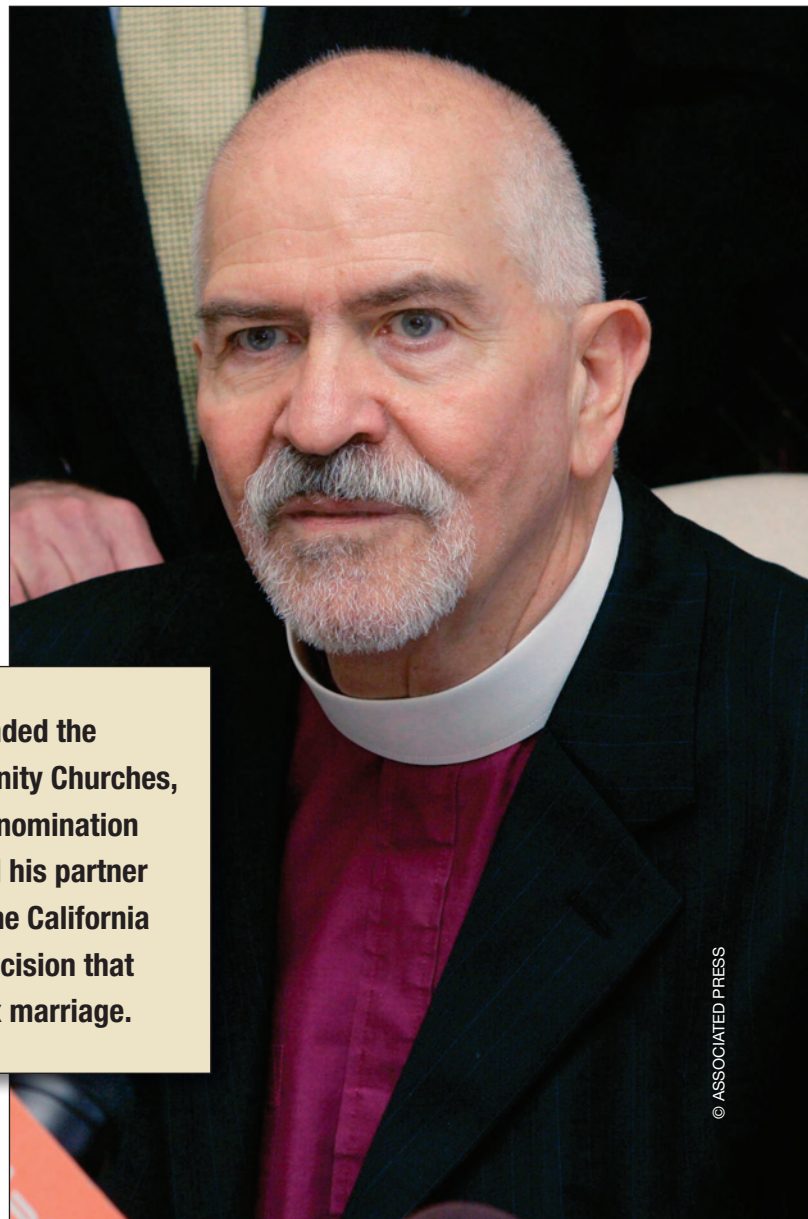
Perry was born in Tallahassee, Florida. He was drawn to the church at an early age and delivered his first sermon when he was 13. At the age of 15, he was licensed as a Baptist minister. In 1959, Perry married a woman and had two sons. The couple separated in 1964 and later divorced.

Perry overcame hardships on his journey to becoming the founder of the UFMCC. He was stripped of a religious position because of his homosexuality, became estranged from his two sons and attempted suicide. He lost hope that he could reconcile his homosexuality with his faith. The seemingly homophobic arrest of a friend convinced Perry to start a church providing spiritual support to the gay community.

In October 1968, Perry launched UFMCC with a service for 12 people in his living room. UFMCC has grown to include more than 40,000 members with churches around the world. In 1969, he performed the first same-sex wedding. In the next year, he filed the first lawsuit seeking legal recognition of same-sex marriages.

Perry and his partner, Philip Ray DeBlieck, have been together since 1985. In 2003, they married at a UFMCC church in Toronto, Canada. The newlyweds sued the state of California for legal recognition of their marriage. They were among the plaintiffs in the May 2008 California Supreme Court decision that legalized same-sex marriage.

Perry has been awarded honorary doctorates from Episcopal Divinity School, Samaritan College and Sierra University. He received Humanitarian Awards from the American Civil Liberties Union and the Gay Press Association.



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