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ceremonies for couples regardless of gender. "That option is open, but I haven't had any takers yet," he said. "We have gay members of the congregation and have for many years."

Isaak says that while there is no fee for the ceremony, it's an option that is only open to members of the congregation at this point.

Temple Beth Israel (503-222-1069, www.bethisrael-pdx.org) is also offering to bless same-sex unions between members of that congregation. "Our congregation has been long welcoming to same-sex couples. This is not anything new," said senior Rabbi Michael Z. Cahana, who took over from Rabbi Emanuel Rose last year when he relocated to Portland from New York.

"I'm offended that this is not recognized as a marriage by the state. I honestly don't understand that," said Cahana. "If we can help to create rituals that will publicly connect couples, I very much want to participate in that."

While the temple's services are only open to members of that congregation, Cahana says no one has approached him yet to ask him to bless a same-sex union.

Buddhist Monk Clark Hansen (503-292-4004, clark@clarkhansen.com) identifies as gay/bisexual, although he has taken a vow of celibacy. He is happy to officiate all sorts of ceremonies for Buddhists and non-Buddhists alike. "I've done big church weddings and small, casual weddings on my deck, which overlooks Forest Park," he said, noting that the Buddhist tradition is open to people of any sexuality. "I think that's one reason why so many gay people have been interested in Buddhism—it has a very tolerant and loving, kind philosophy. It's not who your sexual partner is but how you treat them and how you live your life that's important."

Hansen serves as vice president for the Northwest Dharma Association, and he says most of what he does is meditation and other spiritual work, although he has presided over wedding ceremonies in the past. As a monk, he cannot charge for these services, but he welcomes donations of any amount.

Jacqueline Mandell (www.pureheartsangha.com) can help out couples who are looking for something a little more extravagant. She performs nondenominational ceremonies and specializes in world faiths and Buddhist ceremonies. An interview with Mandell appears in the book *Meetings with Remarkable Women Buddhist Teachers in America*.

Mandell not only officiates but coordinates customized ceremonies. "I design or co-design the ceremony according to the desires of the couple," she said. "Some couples would like to write their own commitments, and if they don't know how, I have a succinct process that I have developed. And I include any ritual or poetry or words or ways of including the people attending to honor their day."

She admits that her fees tend to run high, and she says if her services aren't exactly what people are looking for, she is happy to make other recommendations.

At the other end of the extravagance spectrum is **Voodoo Donuts** (503-241-4704, www.voodoo-doughnut.com), where Kenneth "Cat Daddy" Pogson and Tres Shannon have been performing nondenominational ceremonies since they opened the downtown shop in 2003. Both Pogson and Shannon are Universal Life Church ministers.

"We do a wham-bam-thank-you-ma'am ceremony," said Shannon. "Ours is a lot of voodoo mumbo jumbo and the caldron of fat in the back where we conjure up the spirits. We're having a good time with it. We'll do it 24 hours a day. We just need a little bit of notice."

Shannon will not be available for services Jan. 2, but anytime after that \$175 will get you a wedding ceremony as well as doughnuts and coffee for 10.

Mississippi Studios (503-754-9619, www.mississippistudios.com) is another place couples can go for a nonreligious ceremony. Private event coordinator Heather Bryse-Harvey is also a Universal Life Church minister.

"I have a couple of gay couples that are considering using the place at the moment; I don't really differentiate," she said. "I am not limited to doing it here. I've done it in private homes and in public parks." She charges \$100 for her services.

Working Out the Kinks

Although many couples are ready and willing to tie the knot as soon as possible, others are finding themselves in uncharted territory. Even if there's nothing terribly wrong in the relationship, it might not hurt to seek out a little professional advice. Mike Binks, a therapist at Samaritan Counseling Center, says couples who go through nine hours of premarital or preunion education increase their likelihood of staying together for the next five years by 30 percent.

Binks, who is gay, says of the nine therapists on staff at Samaritan, four are queer-identified. "All of us are versed in queer issues," he said.

With the help of a Collins Foundation grant, Samaritan will offer daylong preunion workshops specifically for queer couples starting in December. For \$249, couples will get a six-hour workshop that addresses communication, conflict regulation, creating friendship and bonding in the relationship as well as a detailed Facilitation Open Couple Communication Understanding and Study compatibility survey and two 90-minute follow-up sessions with a counselor.

"We definitely work from the idea that conflict is inevitable, and it's nice to be equipped with skills to manage and regulate the conflict when it comes up," said Binks.

He explained that the preunion workshops will address issues specific to queer couples. "It's difficult to tease out where public issues begin and your own issues end," he explained. "How do you show each other your affection for each other when at the same time there may be a sense of discomfort in showing that affection in public?"

According to Binks, timing is among the issues that come up for couples as they consider taking advantage of the new law. "They have to wrestle with...are we doing it now because if we don't get in now we might not be able to, or are we doing it now because we feel ready now?" he said. "The more you can come to some clarity about why now, the better off you are going to be as a couple."

Basic Rights Oregon is also working to educate and raise awareness about the domestic partnership law and all that it entails. Its Web site, www.basicrights.org, offers answers to frequently asked questions as well as a cheat sheet to help familiarize couples with their rights. The advocacy organization will also hold "Know Your Basic Rights" workshops and information sessions around the state in the coming months.

"We're excited to work with people who are ready to do it," said BRO communications director Karynn Fish. "If they're ready to do it, they should do it, but if they're not, they shouldn't rush into anything. It's a serious thing to sign a contract with another human being." □

SAMARITAN COUNSELING CENTER offers ongoing workshops that address issues pertinent to the sexual minorities community. Its first preunion workshop will be held from 8:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. Dec. 1 at Hotel deLuxe, 729 S.W. 15th Ave. Find out more at www.sccpdx.org.

"No matter how we deal with the legal side of things, there is something sacred about love."

—The Rev. Tara Wilkins

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