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Do you believe anything that comes out of George Bush's mouth?
. yes . no

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Celebrating same-sex marriage around the globe in 2005

In North America, Africa and Europe gays and lesbians say 'I do' while the debate rages on around the globe

by Mark Smith

A little bit of history

Same-sex couples have enjoyed the right to civil partnerships in Denmark since 1989. The Netherlands followed suit in 1998, also legalizing same-sex partnerships. Both countries later offer full marriage benefits, as does Belgium and parts of Canada in 2003.

Back in the U.S., Vermont becomes the first state to offer civil unions in 2000.

In 2004 New Zealand passes civil union legislation, as does Israel (with certain limitations). Late in 2004, the state of Massachusetts announces same-sex marriage is legal for residents of that state.

What happened in 2005

The big boom comes in 2005, when Canada legalizes same-sex marriage across the country and Spain tells the Vatican to buzz off as President José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero holds true to his campaign promise and offers up marriage for gay couples in that country.

Connecticut falls in line behind Vermont, becoming yet another state to offer civil unions for same-sex couples.

Zurich, Switzerland, begins to offer limited legal recognition for registered gay couples, as does Geneva. Swiss authorities are now considering whether to introduce a national law to offer the rights throughout the country.

The United Kingdom now offers civil marriage for gay couples and South Africa recently announced same-sex marriage will

come into law in 2006.

When that happens, an estimated 155 million people worldwide will live in places where same-sex marriage is legal.

While conservative politicians and anti-gay activists here in the U.S. continue to wrestle with the issue, around the world, countries are coming to terms with how to treat gay and lesbian couples — and the trend in many is toward liberalizing laws.

Britain's rock royalty ties the knot

It was in England where the most noise was made about same-sex marriage — presumably because one of the country's most notable celebrities, Elton John, is gay and threw a post-wedding bash bigger than the Liza Minelli-David Gest fiasco back in '03.

Held on Dec. 21, John and long-time partner David Furnish exchanged vows and diamond rings during a ceremony held in the 17th century town hall where Prince Charles and Camilla Parker Bowles wed in April.

"Being such a high profile couple and the fact that we decided to do it straight away does carry a certain message," John was quoted as saying by *Attitude* magazine.

"I'm doing this first and foremost because I want to do it for David and I want to be with David for the rest of my life, but I also want to do it to say that [the civil union law] shouldn't be something that just sits there in law. It should be embraced," he said.

Prime Minister Tony Blair, speaking to



Rock artist Elton John tied the knot with his partner David Furnish in London Dec. 21.

reporters at a news conference, congratulated the couple for exercising their newfound legal rights.

"This is a modern, progressive step forward for the country and I'm proud we did it," Blair told a news conference. In an earlier newspaper column, Blair had called the *Civil Partnership Act* enacted by his government "long overdue."

"This will give hope to millions of isolated, vulnerable, lesbian and gay people especially those living in repressive and homophobic countries," said Peter Tatchell, spokesman for the gay and lesbian human rights group OutRage.

Another celebrated Brit pop singer, George Michael, announced Nov. 28 that he would

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Evangelicals on the attack

Anti-gay forces hard at work in 2005

by Donald Miller

"The literal blood of the thousands of gay people physically wounded by hate ... is on the hands of Jerry Falwell, James Dobson, Tony Perkins, and so many others who spew hate for partisan gain and personal enrichment."

— Matt Foreman, President National Gay and Lesbian Task Force
The American Family Association. Focus on the Family. The Liberty Counsel. Family Research Council.

These are just a few of the names of anti-gay, evangelical Christian-based organizations that have cozied their way into the breast pocket of the Republican Party.

Over the past year their efforts against the

LGBT community have intensified as has their control and influence over the White



Faces of gay hate: Perkins, Dobson, Wildmon and Staver.

House, U.S. House and Senate. Here's a look at some of their efforts:

• The American Family Association (AFA)

In January the crackpots at AFA threw a hook into *SpongeBob SquarePants* and the producer of a pro-tolerance music video for kids, which features scores of children's TV heroes ranging from the *Muppets* to *SquarePants*. The video itself involves a rendition of the 1979 hit song "We Are Family," that Nile Rodgers co-wrote, and contains no reference to gay rights or sexual orientation. In a detailed article by the editor of its monthly journal, AFA insisted the endeavor has a pro-gay subtext. "On the surface, the project may appear to be a worthwhile attempt to

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