

Written by
MELISSA BURKE
The News Journal

First civil union takes place in Delaware

WILMINGTON -- Two women became the first couple in Delaware joined in a same-sex civil union ceremony Sunday during a historic and emotional service at their Wilmington church.



Lisa Goodman (left) and her partner, Drewry Fennell, are the first couple in Delaware to unite under Delaware's new civil-union law, which they helped to write. They are flanked by son David Goodman (left), 12, and Fennell's son Witt Godden (right), 23, as the Rev. Patricia Downing performs the ceremony at Trinity Episcopal Church in Wilmington. (THE NEWS JOURNAL/ FRED COMEGYS)

Fellow Delaware attorneys, as well as judges, legislators, friends and family members witnessed the tearful exchange of vows between Lisa B. Goodman and Drewry N. Fennell at Trinity Episcopal Church on North Adams Street.

A friend of the couple, U.S. Sen. Chris Coons, delivered the sermon. During the liturgy, Lt. Gov. Matthew Denn and Superior Court Judge Jan R. Jurden each read from the Bible. Both know the couple from their days at the law firm Young, Conaway, Stargatt & Taylor.

At 10 a.m. Sunday, Delaware's law adopting same-sex civil unions took effect. After years of debate and hours of testimony in Dover, the General Assembly adopted the measure in April 2011. Gov. Jack Markell signed the bill in May.

Delaware joins 14 other states and the District of Columbia in providing spousal rights or the equivalent to same-sex couples, according to the Human Rights Campaign. Hawaii's civil-union law also took effect Sunday.

Goodman, 48, is president of the advocacy group Equality Delaware, which helped to draft the civil-union legislation and steer it through the Legislature. Fennell, 51, is executive director of the Delaware Criminal Justice Council.