

All Praise to our redeeming Lord, who joins us by his grace, and bids us, each to each restored, together seek his face. He bids us build each other up; and gathered into one, to our high calling's glorious hope we hand in hand go on. The gift which he on one bestows, we all delight to prove, the grace through every vessel flows in purest streams of love. Amen.

(Charles Wesley's Hymn: "All Praise to Our Redeeming Lord")

BoD = The Book of Discipline of the United Methodist Church: 2008

BoR = The Book of Resolutions of the United Methodist Church: 2008

Human Sexuality

I. **BoD:** ¶ 161.

II. THE NURTURING COMMUNITY

B) Marriage—We affirm the sanctity of the marriage covenant that is expressed in love, mutual support, personal commitment, and shared fidelity between a man and a woman. We believe that God's blessing rests upon such marriage, whether or not there are children of the union. We reject social norms that assume different standards for women than for men in marriage. We support laws in civil society that define marriage as the union of one man and one woman.

F) Human Sexuality—We affirm that sexuality is God's good gift to all persons. We call everyone to responsible stewardship of this sacred gift.

Although all persons are sexual beings whether or not they are married, sexual relations are affirmed only with the covenant of monogamous, heterosexual marriage.

We deplore all forms of the commercialization, abuse, and exploitation of sex. We call for strict global enforcement of laws prohibiting the sexual exploitation of children and for adequate protection, guidance, and counseling for abused children. All persons, regardless of age, gender, marital status, or sexual orientation, are entitled to have their human and civil rights ensured and to be protected against violence. The Church should support the family in providing age-appropriate education regarding sexuality to children, youth, and adults.

We affirm that all persons are individuals of sacred worth, created in the image of God. All persons need the ministry of the Church in their struggles for human fulfillment, as well as the spiritual and emotional care of a fellowship that enables reconciling relationships with God, with others, and with self. The United Methodist Church does not condone the practice of homosexuality and consider this practice incompatible with Christian teaching. We affirm that God's grace is available to all. We will seek to live together in Christian community, welcoming, forgiving, and loving one another, as Christ has loved and accepted us. We implore families and churches not to reject or condemn lesbian and gay members and friends. We commit ourselves to be in ministry for and with all persons.

II. **BoR:** 2041. Church to Be in Ministry to Persons of All Sexual Orientations

We affirm our belief in the inestimable worth of each individual because we are human beings created by God and loved through and by Jesus Christ, and we affirm all persons as equally valuable in the sight of God (Preamble to Social Principles). Baptism is God's gift of unmerited grace through the Holy Spirit and marks the entrance of persons into the church and its ministries of love, justice, and service (¶ 305, 2008 Book of Discipline), and we affirm that through baptism God has made us members of one body of Christ so that all who follow Jesus have spiritual gifts to share for the common good (1 Corinthians 12:4-27). In addressing the nurturing function of Christian fellowship, our United Methodist Social Principles assert that human sexuality is a complex gift of which we have limited understanding (¶ 161F). We also believe that homosexual persons no less than heterosexual persons are individuals of sacred worth and that all persons need the ministry and guidance of the church in their struggles for human fulfillment, as well as the spiritual and emotional care of a fellowship that enables reconciling relationships with God, with others, and with self (¶ 161F). An individual confronting his or her own minority sexual orientation and/or that of a close family member, friend, or associate often experiences isolation, confusion, and fear when he or she needs

information, guidance, and support ("Teens at Risk," 2000 Book of Resolutions); and we recognize that teens dealing with questions about sexual orientation are at a greater risk for suicide ("Teen Sexual Identity and Suicide Risk," 2004 and 2008 Book of Resolutions). The teachings and actions of Jesus demonstrated radical inclusion of those rejected by mainstream society, we are called to renew our commitment to become faithful witnesses to the gospel, not alone to the ends of the earth, but also the depths of our common life and work (Preamble to the Social Principles).

Therefore, be it resolved, that The United Methodist Church dedicate itself to a ministry of Christ-like hospitality and compassion to persons of all sexual orientations, and to a vision of unity through openness to the spiritual gifts of all those who have been baptized into the Body of Jesus Christ. Such ministry and openness may include: welcoming sexual minorities, their friends, and families into our churches and demonstrating our faith in a loving God; a willingness to listen and open our hearts to their stories and struggles in our churches, districts, annual conferences, and General Conference; encouraging study and dialogue around issues of sexuality; and praying for all those who are in pain and discord over our Christian response to this controversial issue.

ADOPTED 2000
AMENDED AND READOPTED 2008

Homosexuality

I. Clergy & Churches

A. **BoD:** ¶ 304. *Qualifications for Ordination*

3. While persons set apart by the Church for ordained ministry are subject to all the frailties of the human condition and the pressures of society, they are required to maintain the highest standards of holy living in the world. The practice of homosexuality is incompatible with Christian teaching. Therefore self-avowed practicing homosexuals are not to be certified as candidates, ordained as ministers, or appointed to serve in The United Methodist Church.

B. **BoD:** ¶ 341. *Unauthorized Conduct*

6. Ceremonies that celebrate homosexual unions shall not be conducted by our ministers and shall not be conducted in our churches.

C. **BoD:** Chargeable Offenses and the Statute of Limitations

¶ 2702. 1. A bishop, clergy member of an annual conference (¶ 369), local pastor, clergy on honorable or administrative location, or diaconal minister may be tried when charged (subject to the statute of limitations in ¶ 2702.4) with one or more of the following offenses: (a) immorality including but not limited to, not being celibate in singleness or not faithful in a heterosexual marriage; (b) practices declared by The United Methodist Church to be incompatible with Christian teachings, including but not limited to: being a self-avowed practicing homosexual; or conducting ceremonies which celebrate homosexual unions; or performing same-sex wedding ceremonies; (c) crime; (d) failure to perform the work of the ministry; (e) disobedience to the order and discipline of The United Methodist Church; (f) dissemination of doctrines contrary to the established standards of doctrine of The United Methodist Church; (g) relationships and/or behavior that undermines the ministry of another pastor; (h) child abuse; (i) sexual abuse; (j) sexual misconduct*** or (k) harassment, including, but not limited to racial and/or sexual harassment; or (l) racial or gender discrimination.

II. Rights of Homosexuals

A. **BoR:** 5062. **Military Service Regardless of Sexual Orientation**

The United Methodist Church has historically been opposed to discrimination in society including the military. Our anti-discrimination stance is supported primarily through Jesus' teachings about radical love and the acceptance of those persons living on the margins of society. Throughout Jesus' life, this radical love was shared when Jesus healed the sick, conversed with

women, ate with the rejected and brought hope to the hopeless. We see visibly the call to embrace others and not make judgment: "Do not judge, so that you may not be judged. For with the judged, and the measure you give will be the measure you get" (Matthew 7:1-2). Although The United Methodist Church "deploras war and urges the peaceful settlement of all disputes among nations" it "also support[s] and extend[s] the Church's ministry to those persons who conscientiously choose to serve in the armed forces. . . ." A commitment to the civil rights of people and their ability to follow a "call" to ministry, such as military service, should not be denied.

The United States of America, a nation built on equal rights, presently denies the right of professing homosexuals to actively serve their country, forcing men and women who are gay, lesbian, bisexual, or transgender to assume a "don't ask, don't tell" position when enlisting into military service. This situation is discriminatory, unethical, and regrettable; therefore, we affirm the stance that the US military should not exclude persons from service solely on the basis of sexual orientation or gender identity.

B. BoR: 2046.Rights of All Persons

A portion of the world's population is gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender (GLBT). Around the world, political and religious institutions have targeted GLBT persons for discrimination in housing, employment, health care, and access to redress for such discrimination. Some falsely portray the basic human rights laws that protect GLBT persons from hate crimes as unfair "legal preference."

It is particularly disturbing when religious values are used to justify persecution of select groups. Christians proclaim that all people are God's children deserving the protection of their human and civil rights. Our Social Principles gives us clear direction in this matter:

We insist that all persons, regardless of age, gender, marital status, or sexual orientation, are entitled to have their human and civil rights ensured (§ 161F).

The rights and privileges a society bestows upon or withholds from those who comprise it indicate the relative esteem in which that society holds particular persons and groups of persons. We affirm all persons as equally valuable in the sight of God. We therefore work toward societies in which each person's value is recognized, maintained, and strengthened (§ 162).

Therefore, all United Methodists are called upon:

1. to refrain from signing petitions and to vote against measures that advocate the denial of basic human and civil rights to anyone;
2. to educate congregation and community alike about the position of the United Methodist Discipline on civil rights and its broad applications; and
3. to stand against any political or physical acts that deny human and civil rights and the sacred worth of all persons.
4. to advocate for initiatives which would prohibit job and housing discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity throughout the world; and
5. to advocate for initiatives which provide for extra penalties for crimes which are expressly committed for the purpose of harming someone based solely on their race, color, national origin, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender, or disability.

Therefore, be it resolved, that the General Board of Church and Society develop education tools designed to provide for open and healthy dialogue and understanding of sexuality in the world with the specific goal of protecting the human and civil rights of gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender persons.

We do this as part of our Christian witness and ministry. Never let it be said that United Methodists were silent during this attack on the rights of all.

C. 3421. Grieving and Repenting from Acts of Hate and Violence

Confessing the Sins of Hate and Violence

Violence permeates our society, perpetrated by those who hurt others because of the color of their skin, their sexual orientation, their religious identity, or no reason at all. Violence exists as persons and groups from around the world have lashed out in anger and fear, persecuting those whom they see as different. These acts of hate include such actions as “ethnic cleansing,” deportations, genocide, torture, tyrannical rule, religious intolerance and persecution, church burnings, rape, murder, war, and civil unrest that scar the lives of millions.

One deplorable form of violence is hate crimes. Hate crimes result from the intentional selection of victims or property as the object of violence because of the actual or perceived race, color, religion, national origin, class, ethnicity, gender, gender identity, disability, or sexual orientation of the individual victim or owners of the property. . . .

Assaults against people perceived to be gay or lesbian are increasing at alarming rates and are characterized by viciousness. According to the 2004 US Federal Bureau of Investigation statistics, hate crimes based on sexual orientation constituted the third highest category reported and made up 15.5 percent of all reported hate crimes in the United States. Human Rights organizations such as Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International regularly report discrimination and violence against people throughout the world based solely on their sexual orientation or gender identity.

Conviction and Sorrow about the Sins of Hate and Violence

Although The United Methodist Church is in conflict over the place of gay and lesbian people in The United Methodist Church, we grieve over the violence committed against the gay and lesbian community. We also grieve over the violence committed against transgender persons. We urge United Methodist congregations, youth and campus ministries, and church agencies to promote opportunities where we may be a witness, helping to heal wounds of violence in our communities and congregations, witnessing through work groups, Bible studies, community missional outreach, prayer, and involvement in ecumenical and interfaith groups and coalitions.

The United Methodist Church grieves as God grieved when Cain killed Abel and Abel’s blood cried out to the Lord from the ground (Genesis 4:10). We grieve as God grieved over the oppression and enslavement of the Israelites. God saw their misery, heard their cries, and was concerned for their suffering (Exodus 3:7). We grieve as Jesus grieved over Jerusalem which killed and stoned the prophets sent by God to proclaim the word of God to the people of God (Matthew 23:34-37). Yet, in each of these passages God does not meet violence with violence. Instead, God offers the option of repentance to those who perpetuate violence and hate.

III. Scriptures:

A. Human Sexuality

- i. Song of Solomon – aka Song of Songs
- ii. 1 Corinthians 7:1-9

B. Homosexuality

- i. Genesis 19:4-8 (full context 19:1-11); see also Judges 19:22-24 (full context 19)
- ii. Leviticus 18:22 / 20:13
- iii. Romans 1:26-27 (full context 1:18-32)
- iv. 1 Corinthians 6:9
- v. 1 Timothy 1:10