



Issue Paper

The United Methodist Church and Homosexuality

Official Position as of the 2004 Book of Discipline

Relevant statements of ¶161.II.G:

- “Homosexual persons no less than heterosexual persons are individuals of sacred worth. 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. The United Methodist Church does not condone the practice of homosexuality and considers this practice incompatible with Christian teaching.”

- We affirm that God’s grace is available to all, and we will seek to live together in Christian community. 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.”

Relevant Resolutions From the 2004 Book of Resolutions

Resolution # 33—***Church to be in ministry to persons of all Sexual Orientations***

- All persons have equal worth in the eyes of God and all who are baptized share in the fellowship of the church.
- Resolution contains a restatement of the Social Principle stated above.
- It remembers the 1996 General Conference which issued a call to our churches to reach out in love and compassion to all persons regardless of sexual orientation.
- It resolves that “the United Methodist Church dedicates 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. “
- The resolution then suggests ways in which that hospitality and compassion may be extended.
- Resolution was first adopted in the 2000 General Conference.

Resolution #35--***Report of the Task Force on Homosexuality and the Unity of the Church***

- This resolution was the work of a task force created by the 2000 General Conference that was to be directed by the General Commission on Christian Unity and Interreligious Concerns.
- This task force was to lead the church on issues related to homosexuality and the unity of the church.
- The resolution recognizes the struggle of the church with the issue of homosexuality and affirms that this issue can and does affect the unity of the church.

Why This Is an Issue for the Church

- The first public debate on homosexuality began at the 1972 General Conference—36 years ago.
- In 1972 a committee that studied the Social Principles recommended new language which included, “Homosexuals no less than heterosexuals are persons of sacred worth, who 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 which enables reconciling relationships with God, with Others and with self. Further, we insist that all persons are entitled to have their human and civil rights ensured.” In floor debate following the recommendation the following phrase was added, “Although we do not condone the practice

of homosexuality and consider this practice incompatible with Christian teaching.

- Efforts at the 1976 conference to rescind the official condemnation of homosexual practice failed. The delegates also adopted three reports that focused on church funding.

- No agency shall give United Methodist funds to any to promote the acceptance of homosexuality.”
- Boards and agencies of the church could only fund programs that were consistent with the Social Principles of the Church
- Funds favoring homosexual practice were prohibited.

- In the 1988 General Conference, a study group was to bring recommendations back to the 1992

Conference regarding the condemnation of homosexuality.

- There were 27 members of that study group and they recommended to the General Conference that the phrase, “Although we do not condone the practice of homosexuality and consider this practice to be incompatible with Christian teaching” be removed from the Social Principles.
- In making this recommendation the study group concluded that there was a “lack of common mind” in the church regarding the issue.
- The Conference voted 710 to 238 to retain the language in the Social Principles.

- After 36 years, there continues to be a “lack of common mind” in the church and thus, homosexuality will continue as one of the most divisive issue in the history of our church.