**Information Sheet: LGBTQ Inclusion and The United Methodist Church**

2019.02.20

**JOHN WESLEY, SERMON ON A CATHOLIC SPIRIT**

“*Though we cannot think alike, may we not love alike? May we not be of one heart, though we are not of one opinion? Without all doubt, we may. Herein all the children of God may unite, notwithstanding these smaller differences. These remaining as they are, they may forward one another in love and in good works.*”

**UNITED METHODIST HISTORY & GENERAL CONFERENCES (GC)**

GC1968, EUB and Methodist Church merge to form The United Methodist Church

GC1972, incompatibility motion passed, issue debated every four years since

Multiple clergy trials & conflicts over the years, including Rev. Amy DeLong & Bishop Karen Olivetto

GC2016, denominational schism averted and the Way Forward Commission

GC2019, February 23-26, Kansas City

**United Methodist Church’s official position from the 2016 *Book of Discipline***

(http://www.umc.org/what-we-believe/homosexuality-full-book-of-discipline-statements)

1. “We affirm that all persons are of sacred worth and are welcome in the church.” (paragraphs 4 & 214).
2. “…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. 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 or gay members and friends. We commit ourselves to be in ministry for and with all persons.” (par. 161G)
3. We do not ordain “self-avowed, practicing homosexuals” (par. 304.3).
4. Our clergy may not perform same-sex union ceremonies (par. 341.6).
5. Our denomination does not fund ministries that either support LGBTQ issues or oppose LGBTQ issues (par. 613 & 806.9).

**The Way Forward proposals for General Conference 2019 (St. LOUIS, MO, February 23-26)**

(http://www.umc.org/who-we-are/the-commission-on-a-way-forward-report-what-you-should-know)

1. One Church Plan: would allow but not require United Methodist clergy to perform same-gender weddings where legal, and allow but not require annual conferences to ordain LGBTQ pastors. Removes the LGBTQ restrictive language from the *Discipline* while adding protections for those who follow their conscience on this issue. Endorsed by the Council of Bishops.
2. Connectional Conference Plan: would create three values-based connectional conferences in the U.S., and provide for central conferences to align with one of those connectional conferences or become one of their own. Requires complicated constitutional and *Discipline* changes.
3. Traditionalist Plan: would maintain our global United Methodist teaching on human sexuality, with a timeline for bishops, pastors, and churches to comply or leave the denomination. Some legal issues.
4. Simple Plan: an unofficial option favored by progressives that removes all identity-based, discriminatory, and punitive language from the *Discipline*.

**FOR MORE INFORMATION**

1. Uniting Methodists (https://unitingmethodists.com): advocates for the One Church Plan
2. Wesleyan Covenant Association (https://wesleyancovenant.org): advocates for the Traditionalist Plan
3. UM-Forward (https://um-forward.org/): advocates for the Simple Plan
4. United Methodist Insight (https://um-insight.net): articles and blog posts from several perspectives

**GC2019 CLERGY DELEGATES LAY DELEGATES**

Rev.Dan Dick, ddick@wisconsinumc.org Lisa King

Rev. Sam Royappa, samroy@wisconsinumc.org Barbara Dick

Rev. Steve Zekoff, szekoff@wisconsinumc.org Gail Burgess

Rev. Amanda Stein (first reserve), pastorastein@gmail.com Katie Crise (first reserve)

**Biblical verses about homosexuality**

Genesis 19, the story of Sodom being destroyed. *Traditional interpretation emphasizes the men of the cities sought to rape male visitors (who were angels in disguise) / Progressives note that the town was just plain sinful and did not show proper hospitality. Ezekiel 16:49-50 seems to assume the latter interpretation.*

Leviticus 18:22, “You shall not lie with a male as with a woman; it is an abomination.”

Leviticus 20:13, “If a man lies with a male as with a woman, both of them have committed an abomination; they shall be put to death; their blood is upon them.” *Traditionalists quote two of the many holiness codes. / Progressives note this includes other material no longer relevant or binding for Christians.*

1 Samuel 18:1, “the soul of Jonathan was bound to the soul of David; Jonathan loved him as his own soul.”

2 Samuel 1:26, “I am distressed for you, my brother Jonathan; greatly beloved were you to me; your love to me was wonderful, passing the love of women.” *Traditionalists read these verses as portraying a brotherly love relationship between David and Jonathan. / Progressives interpret it as consenting same-sex love.*

Romans 1:26-27, “For this reason God gave them up to degrading passions. Their women exchanged natural intercourse for unnatural, and in the same way also the men, giving up natural intercourse with women, were consumed with passion for one another…” *Traditionalists quote part of a long diatribe Paul unleashes against a variety of sins. / Progressives note this is the prelude to Paul’s “gotcha” in 2:1,* “Therefore you have no excuse, whoever you are, when you judge others; for in passing judgment on another you condemn yourself, because you, the judge, are doing the very same things.”

1 Corinthians 6:9-10, “Fornicators, idolaters, adulterers, male prostitutes, sodomites, thieves, the greedy, drunkards, revilers, robbers – none of these will inherit the kingdom of God...”

1 Timothy 1:8-10, “...the law is laid down not for the innocent but for the lawless and disobedient, for the godless and sinful, for the unholy and profane, for those who kill their father or mother, for murderers, fornicators, sodomites, slave traders, liars, perjurers, and whatever else is contrary to the sound teaching that conforms to the glorious gospel of the blessed God, which he entrusted to me.” *Traditionalists note homosexuality is included in a list of sins. / Progressives suggest Greek words for “male prostitutes” and “sodomites” refer to men raping boys, or ritual temple prostitution, not consenting same-sex relationships.*

**A WESLEYAN FRAMEWORK FOR INTERPRETATION**

SCRIPTURE: Our primary authority. How do other passages help us interpret difficult texts?

TRADITION: How have church leaders and scholars interpreted the text in the past?

REASON: How can we use our God-given intelligence to think through the interpretation?

EXPERIENCE: If our interpretation is true, do we see it confirmed in our experience of life?

**Range of theological opinions about homosexuality**

1. It’s an abominable sin; even the inclination is evil. It cannot be tolerated in the church.
2. It’s a sinful inclination which can be resisted (like a predisposition to alcoholism). Celibate LGBTQ people are welcome. Love the sinner, hate the sin.
3. It’s sinful, but no different from many other sins. Many people in the church sin and seek forgiveness. We welcome LGBTQ people but will not officially bless their unions. Who am I to judge?
4. Don’t know, or don’t care, whether it’s a sin. Christians have other more important things to focus on: Love God and love neighbor, and make disciples of all people.
5. It isn’t a sin now; God has released the prohibition on this issue under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Homosexuality in a committed, married relationship is something to celebrate.
6. It was never a sin; the prohibitions in the Bible do not address committed, loving, same-sex relationships. God made LGBTQ people this way. Homosexuality in a married relationship is something to celebrate.

*Traditional/Incompatible* ⬄ *Traditional/Compatible* ⬄ *Progressive/Compatible* ⬄ *Progressive/Incompatible*

**The church’s evolving understanding on social issues**

Purity laws regarding circumcision, clean/unclean foods (Leviticus) – vs – accepting Gentiles (Acts 10 & 15)

Slavery, “Slaves obey your masters” (Ephesians 6:5) – vs – “Love your neighbor as yourself” (Mark 12:31)

Female clergy, “Women be silent in church” (1 Corinthians 14:34) – vs – Mary the evangelist (John 20:17)