

Total Number of Pages: 8

Suggested Title: **“Enabling Ministry with LGBTQ Persons”**

Discipline Paragraphs: 161.F, 304.3, 341.6, 2702.1

General Church Budget Implications: NONE

Global Implications: YES

WHEREAS the 2012 *Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church (Book of Discipline)* in its *Social Principles* states:

*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. [¶161.F]*

WHEREAS the *Book of Discipline* states:

*Inclusiveness means openness, acceptance, and support that enables all persons to participate in the life of the Church, the community, and the world; therefore inclusiveness denies every semblance of discrimination. The services of worship of every local church of The United Methodist Church shall be open to all persons. [¶140]*

WHEREAS the *Book of Discipline* states:

*Certain basic human rights and civil liberties are due all persons. We are committed to supporting those rights and liberties for all persons, regardless of sexual orientation. We see a clear issue of simple justice in protecting the rightful claims where people have shared material resources, pensions, guardian relationships, mutual powers of attorney, and other such lawful claims typically attendant to contractual relationships that involve shared contributions, responsibilities, and liabilities, and equal protection before the law. Moreover, we support efforts to stop violence and other forms of coercion against all persons, regardless of sexual orientation. [¶162.J]*

WHEREAS the *Book of Discipline in Our Social Creed* states:

*We commit ourselves to the rights of men, women, children, youth, young adults, the aging, and people with disabilities; to improvement of the quality of life; and to the rights and dignity of all persons. [¶166]*

WHEREAS John Wesley, in his sermon *Catholic Spirit* states:

*Every wise man, therefore, will allow others the same liberty of thinking which he desires they should allow him; and will no more insist on their embracing his opinions, than he would have them to insist on his embracing theirs. He bears with those who differ from him, and only asks him with whom he desires to unite in love that single question, "Is thy heart right, as my heart is with thy heart", and further states: And how shall we choose among so much variety. No man can choose for, or prescribe to, another. But every one must follow the dictates of his*

*own conscience, in simplicity and godly sincerity. He must be fully persuaded in his own mind and then act according to the best light he has. Nor has any creature power to constrain another to walk by his own rule. God has given no right to any of the children of men thus to lord it over the conscience of his brethren; but every man must judge for himself, as every man must give an account of himself to God.*

WHEREAS these current statements in the *Book of Discipline* prohibit United Methodist clergy from ministering to lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) individuals on parity with heterosexual members, including but not limited to performing same-sex wedding ceremonies (where permitted by law), and/or offering blessing services for LGBT couples and families without putting her or his career in jeopardy:

*The United Methodist Church does not condone the practice of homosexuality and considers this practice incompatible with Christian teachings. [¶161.F]*

*The practice of homosexuality is incompatible with Christian teachings. Therefore self-avowed practicing homosexuals are not to be certified as candidates, ordained as ministers, or appointed to serve in The United Methodist Church [¶304.3]*

*A bishop, clergy member of an annual conference, 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...**[¶2702.1]*

WHEREAS congregations are likewise prohibited from hosting same-sex wedding ceremonies or blessing services,

AND WHEREAS Annual Conferences are prohibited from considering LGBT persons as candidates for ministry,

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that in order to permit United Methodist Clergy to minister with all persons freely and equally, and *...follow the dictates of his [her] own conscience, in simplicity and godly sincerity...* and in order to permit United Methodist local churches to do the same, as each congregation weighs its conscience and chooses, and in order to permit Annual Conferences to consider all persons for ministerial candidacy, the following changes be made to *The United Methodist Book of Discipline*:

¶161.F [Amend as marked below]

*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 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 and gay members and friends. We commit ourselves to be in ministry for and with all persons.

[Add following after ¶161.F as amended]:

The United Methodist Church has understood the “practice” of homosexuality as “incompatible with Christian teachings,” and has not permitted “self-avowed, practicing homosexuals” to be candidates for ministry, nor has it permitted its clergy to perform same-sex unions or churches to host these ceremonies.

During the same period, a significant portion of the United Methodist Church has questioned the official position of the church.

Because of this continuing theological and ethical conversation concerning homosexuality, The United Methodist Church allows freedom in the decisions of annual conferences regarding candidacy for ministry; freedom of clergy regarding the performance of same-sex unions; and freedom of local churches regarding hosting of same-sex marriages or unions.

¶304.3 [Amend as marked below]

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.~~

¶341.6 [Delete point 6 and renumber ¶341]

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

¶2702.1 [Amend as marked below]

A bishop, clergy member of an annual conference (¶370), 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 ceremonies;~~ (b) crime; (c) dis-obedience to the order and discipline of The United Methodist Church; (d) dissemination of doctrines contrary to the established standards of doctrine of The United Methodist Church; (e) relationships and/or behavior that undermines the ministry of another pastor; (f) child abuse; (g) sexual abuse; (h) sexual misconduct; (i) harassment, including but not limited to racial and/or sexual harassment; or (j) racial or gender discrimination.

Date: September 30, 2015

Signature of Petitioner:

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