What is the denomination's position on homosexuality?

Only the General Conference speaks for The United Methodist Church. When the lay and clergy delegates to General Conference approve a statement, it is published in the Book of Discipline and/or the Book of Resolutions. These words come from the people of The United Methodist Church.

Regarding church membership
¶ 4. Article IV. Inclusiveness of the Church
The United Methodist Church is a part of the church universal, which is one Body in Christ. The United Methodist Church acknowledges that all persons are of sacred worth. All persons without regard to race, color, national origin, status, or economic condition, shall be eligible to attend its worship services, participate in its programs, receive the sacraments, upon baptism be admitted as baptized members, and upon taking vows declaring the Christian faith, become professing members in any local church in the connection. In The United Methodist Church no conference or other organizational unit of the Church shall be structured so as to exclude any member or any constituent body of the Church because of race, color, national origin, status or economic condition.

¶ 214. Eligibility
The United Methodist Church is a part of the holy catholic (universal) church, as we confess in the Apostles’ Creed. In the church, Jesus Christ is proclaimed and professed as Lord and Savior. All people may attend its worship services, participate in its programs, receive the sacraments and become members in any local church in the connection (¶ 4). In the case of persons whose disabilities prevent them from reciting the vows, their legal guardian(s), themselves members in full covenant relationship with God and the Church, the community of faith, may recite the appropriate vows on their behalf.

Regarding clergy
¶ 304.3
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.

1. "Self-avowed practicing homosexual" is understood to mean that a person openly acknowledges to a bishop, district superintendent, district committee of ordained ministry, board of ordained ministry, or clergy session that the person is a practicing homosexual.

¶ 341.6
Ceremonies that celebrate homosexual unions shall not be conducted by our ministers and shall not be conducted in our churches.

Regarding the General Council on Finance and Administration
¶ 806.9
[The General Council on Finance and Administration] shall be responsible for ensuring that no board, agency, committee, commission, or council shall give United Methodist funds to any gay caucus or group, or otherwise use such funds to promote the acceptance of homosexuality or violate the expressed commitment of The United Methodist Church "not to reject or condemn lesbian and gay members and friends" (¶ 161.F). The council shall have the right to stop such expenditures.

This restriction shall not limit the Church’s ministry in response to the HIV epidemic.

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From the United Methodist Social Principles

Human Sexuality

¶ 161 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.

Equal Rights Regardless of Sexual Orientation

¶ 162 J) Equal Rights Regardless of Sexual Orientation—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.

Marriage

¶ 161 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.

Assembly retains stance on homosexuality

By J. Richard Peck*
April 30, 2008 | FORT WORTH, Texas (UMNS)

After a long and emotional debate, the 2008 General Conference voted April 30 to retain statements in the Social Principles that the “United Methodist Church does not condone the practice of homosexuality and considers this practice incompatible with Christian teaching.”

The final action replaced a “majority report” from a legislative committee, which called for recognition that “faithful and thoughtful people who have grappled with this issue deeply disagree with one another; yet all seek a faithful witness.” The assembly replaced the majority report by a 517-416 vote.

The committee had voted 39-27 to ask for United Methodists and others “to refrain from judgment regarding homosexual persons and practices as the Spirit leads us to new insights.” Frederick Brewington, a layman in the New York Annual (regional) Conference who chaired the legislative committee, said the proposed statement would eliminate a sentence that has “caused festering sores among the body for three decades.”

The Rev. Eddie Fox, director of world evangelism for the World Methodist Council, led the effort to retain the current language. “My integrity will not allow me to be silent,” he said in introducing the “minority report” to keep the church’s stance unchanged. He said the Social Principles must be faithful to biblical teaching, and he suggested that any change in the language would harm the global church.

In approving the minority report, the assembly affirmed that all persons are “individuals of sacred worth created in the image of God.” Delegates also retained statements asking “families and churches not to reject or condemn lesbian and gay members and friends.”

The conference also retained a rule that prohibits United Methodist clergy from conducting ceremonies that celebrate homosexual unions.

United Methodists uphold homosexuality stance

By Robin Russell*
April 30, 2008 | FORT WORTH, Texas (UMNS)

Delegates to the 2008 General Conference on April 30 rejected changes to the United Methodist Social Principles that would have acknowledged that church members disagree on homosexuality.

Delegates instead adopted a minority report that retained language in the denomination’s 2004 Book of Discipline describing homosexual practice as “incompatible with Christian teaching.”

The adopted wording in Paragraph 161G also states that “all persons are individuals of sacred worth created in the image of God,” and that United Methodists are to be “welcoming, forgiving and loving one another, as Christ has loved and accepted us.”

Delegates also approved a new resolution to oppose homophobia and heterosexism, saying the church opposes “all forms of violence or discrimination based on gender, gender identity, sexual practice or sexual orientation.”

In its majority report, the legislative committee, chaired by Frederick Brewington, New York Conference, recommended that delegates delete the incompatibility sentence and adopt the statement, “Faithful, thoughtful people who have grappled with this issue deeply disagree with one another; yet all seek a faithful witness.”
The revision also would have asked United Methodists and others “to refrain from judgment regarding homosexual persons and practices as the Spirit leads us to a new insight.” Brewington told delegates the petition would be “an exciting and mature way forward,” calling it “an honest, yet humble approach to how we are to view one another.” “Moving forward means we have come to a point of telling the truth. And we do not agree,” he said. “We can make the determination to move forward, and stop the hurt.”

In presenting the minority report, however, the Rev. Eddie Fox said that any United Methodist statement on human sexuality needs to be “clear, concise and faithful to biblical teaching.” Leaving out the statement that homosexuality is “incompatible with Christian teaching” would be confusing, especially for members of the church outside the United States, Fox said. “I have seen and experienced the pain and the brokenness in parts of our global movement whenever our church has failed to hold fast to this essential teaching of the Holy Scripture,” he said.

The delegates’ action prompted a coalition of gay advocacy groups immediately to stage a silent vigil outside the Fort Worth Convention Center. Members of Soulforce, Affirmation, Reconciling Ministries Network and Methodist Federation for Social Action lined the entrance as delegates returned from a dinner break.

Earlier in the day, the petition opposing homophobia generated some heated debate from the floor when a delegate from the Democratic Republic of Congo described homosexual practice as among the things “that come from the devil.” “Homosexuality is a practice that is incompatible with the love of God,” he said. “We love homosexual people, but we detest what they do.”

But the Rev. Judy Stevens, New York Conference, countered: “We are all aware of the violence used against homosexual people in the world today. … It’s time to stand with people whose orientation may be different from us.”

The Rev. Debbie Fisher, from the Northern Illinois Conference, told delegates about a gay relative who was beaten to the point of being unable to function as an adult. “I ask you to think about Wesley’s three rules,” she said. “Great harm was done to this man who loved God.”

The Rev. Steve Wende of the Texas Conference said the debate was painful, but cautioned delegates against changing the Discipline’s language: “If we do this as a way of making some people happy, it won’t make anyone happy.”

Will Green of the New England Conference urged delegates to adopt the committee’s recommendation. “It allows for gay and lesbian people like myself to stay in the church in a safe way that doesn’t cause us to be sacrificed for the sake of church unity,” he said.

The Rev. Kent Millard, South Indiana Conference, said the petition reflects reality among United Methodists. “The truth is, we are divided,” he said. “Let’s just acknowledge that it doesn’t say one is right and one is wrong. It just says we disagree.”

After replacing the majority report with the minority report, delegates approved it 501-417. In other action on sexuality issues, delegates voted to:

- Add the words “sexual orientation” to an existing resolution regarding a commitment to educational opportunity regardless of gender, sexual orientation, ethnic origin or economic or social background;
- Retain language of Paragraph 341.6 in the Discipline that prohibits United Methodist ministers from conducting ceremonies that celebrate homosexual unions;
- Reject a proposal to add “civil unions” to a list of basic civil liberties in Paragraph 162.H because delegates felt the language was already inclusive;
- Reject amending Paragraph 161.C to include “committed unions” in a section describing the sanctity of the marriage covenant.
Methodist denominations have differing views on homosexuality, people who are in homosexual relationships, and same-sex marriage. These views have changed over time. Methodist Views on Homosexuality. The United Methodist Church has approximately 12.8 million members worldwide. As part of their social principles, they are committed to supporting basic human rights and civil liberties for all persons, regardless of sexual orientation. The Church supports efforts to stop violence and coercion against persons based on sexual orientation. The United Methodist Church, 2019. "What is the denomination’s position on homosexuality?" The United Methodist Publishing House, 2016. The view that homosexuality should be accepted by society is prevalent in most of the European Union countries surveyed. About three-quarters or more in Spain (88%), Germany (87%), the Czech Republic (80%), France (77%), Britain (76%), and Italy (74%) share this view, as do more than half in Greece (53%). Poland is the only EU country surveyed where views are mixed; 42% say homosexuality should be accepted by society and 46% believe it should be rejected. Canadians, who already expressed tolerant views in 2007, are now even more likely to say homosexuality should be accepted by society; 80% asked this question, and you will probably receive one of two responses: Yes. People choose to be gay. They are making an immoral choice, which government should discourage. Or. No. Sexual preference is biologically determined. Government should protect gay people from discrimination because homosexuality is an unalterable aspect of their identity. These two answers have something in common: With both of them, the science conveniently supports the moral decision. “Being gay is bad. How wonderful it is that nobody has to be gay!” Homosexual behavior should be allowed to take place. Isn’t it fan