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Disaffiliation Discernment Meetings UMC Book of Discipline Official Position on Homosexuality

The Book of Discipline is the official by-laws and beliefs of the United Methodist Church. Only General Conference can change it. General Conference is scheduled to meet in 2024. Listed below are the official rules concerning homosexuality of the United Methodist Church.

2016 Book of Discipline paragraph 161.g

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.

2016 Book of Discipline paragraph 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.

2016 Book of Discipline paragraph 341.6

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

Disaffiliation Discernment Meetings Summary of Positions and Concerns

Disaffiliating Churches' Positions and Concerns

Churches that are disaffiliating from the United Methodist Church *affirm* the official Book of Discipline position on homosexuality. But disaffiliating churches have lost confidence in denominational leadership who have neither upheld nor enforced the Book of Discipline. For years there have been homosexual clergy, and recently some of these clergy have entered homosexual marriages, including two bishops. Disaffiliating churches say that denominational leadership has ignored these violations. Instead, denominational leadership voted in the November 2022 Jurisdictional Conferences to work toward fully including LGBTQ+ persons in the life of the church and its ministries. Also, they voted to neither bring punitive measures against gay clergy nor clergy who officiate gay weddings. Leaders of the disaffiliating churches firmly believe General Conference will remove the rules about homosexuality in the Book of Discipline. They encourage churches to disaffiliate now because the special provision that allows disaffiliating churches to keep their property ends in 2023.

Position of Churches Remaining UMC

Churches that are choosing to remain UMC fall into two different categories.

The first category of churches is choosing to wait and see what happens. They emphasize the fact the Book of Discipline has not changed. They question the motives of the leaders of the disaffiliating churches who have encouraged churches to disaffiliate before any changes have occurred.

The second category of churches is ready for the official position of the UMC change. They hope General Conference will remove the rules concerning homosexuality found in the Book of Discipline so that LGBTQ+ persons are fully included in the life of the church and its ministries. They are concerned that LGBTQ+ persons will reject God if they are not fully accepted and affirmed.