



Finding a Way Forward ► Together



Table Talks

Finding a Way Forward as United
Methodists together



Tenderness

We bring some of our deepest most powerful life experiences to this conversation:

- Intimacy
- Shame
- Violation
- Ecstasy
- Communion

We must be careful of one another.



Tenderness

Negative emotions sometimes
mask for one another

- Fear
- Anger
- Sadness



Luke 10: 25-28

Just then a lawyer stood up to test Jesus.

“Teacher, he said, “what must I do to inherit eternal life?” He said to him, “what is written in the law? What do you read there?” He answered,

“You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbor as yourself.” And he said to him, “You have given the right answer; do this, and you will live.”



How did we get here?

- 44 years of rancorous debate
- Increasing global representation
- Resistance to church law
- Legalization of gay marriage in US
- 2016 General Conference
- Commission on a Way Forward
- Special General Conference, Feb 2019



Human Sexuality

A Church-dividing issue since 1972



1968

METHODIST: We believe that sexual intercourse within holy matrimony with fidelity and love is a sacred experience and constitutes a needed expression of affection. We also believe that sexual intercourse outside the bonds of matrimony is contrary to the will of God.

EVANGELICAL UNITED BRETHREN: Marriage is an institution of divine appointment, upon the proper establishment of which are conditioned human happiness and well-being and the maintenance of the most important factor of civilization – the Christian home. Virtue and morality in society, stability and permanence of free government can be had only as the Christian home is maintained in its integrity.



1972

UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

We assert the sanctity of the marriage covenant. Marriage between a man and woman has long been blessed by God and recognized by society. We do not recommend marriage between two persons of the same sex.

Homosexuals no less than heterosexuals are persons of sacred worth, who need the ministry and guidance of the church. . .

. . . We insist that all persons are entitled to have their human rights ensured, though we do not condone the practice of homosexuality and consider this practice incompatible with Christian teaching.



1976

We assert the sanctity of the marriage covenant which is best expressed by love and mutual support. Marriage between a man and woman has long been blessed by God and recognized by society. We do not recognize a relationship between two persons of the same sex as constituting marriage.



1980

Although men and women are sexual beings whether or not they are married, sex between a man and a woman is only to be clearly affirmed in the marriage bond.



1984

Since the practice of homosexuality is incompatible with Christian teaching, self-avowed practicing homosexuals are not to be accepted as candidates, ordained as ministers, or appointed to serve in The United Methodist Church. . .

Clergy to agree to: fidelity in marriage an celibacy in singleness. . .



1988

Although we do 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 commit ourselves to be in ministry for and with all persons.



1992

Rights of Homosexual Persons. -- *Certain basic human rights and civil liberties are due all persons.*

We are committed to support those rights and liberties for homosexual persons. We see a clear issue of simple justice in protecting their rightful claims where they have: shared material resources, pensions, guardian relationship, mutual powers of attorney . . .

Moreover, we support efforts to stop violence and other forms of coercion against gays and lesbians.



2000

We implore families and churches not to reject or condemn their lesbian and gay members and friends. We commit ourselves to be in ministry for and with all persons.

General Council on Finance and Administration shall be responsible for ensuring that no board, agency. . .

Or council shall give United Methodist funds to any gay caucus or group, or otherwise use such funds to promote the acceptance of homosexuality.



2004

Added to clergy chargeable offenses:

Immorality including but not limited to, not being celibate in singleness or not faithful in heterosexual marriage. . . .being a self-avowed practicing homosexual or conducting ceremonies which celebrate homosexual unions, or performing same-sex wedding ceremonies



2008

[No Change]



2012

[No Change]



2016

Added to Social Principles:

We reject laws that criminalize homosexuality.



Our Theological Task

... Every generation must appropriate creatively the wisdom of the past and seek God in their midst in order to think afresh about God, revelation, sin, redemption, worship, the church, freedom, justice, moral responsibility, and other significant theological concerns. Our summons is to understand and receive the gospel promises in our troubled and uncertain times.

The United Methodist Book of Discipline, 2016, ¶ 105 section 4.



Together or To-part?

- Shall we do this work together?
- Or shall we split over our different perspectives?
- Is there a way to create space for United Methodists holding a variety of views on these matters to live together as we continue to seek God's guidance?



QUADRILATERAL

Wesley believed that the living core of the Christian faith was. . .

*revealed in **SCRIPTURE**,
illuminated by **TRADITION**,
vivified in personal **EXPERIENCE**,
and confirmed by **REASON**.*

The United Methodist Book of Discipline, 2016, pp 82-88



Complexifying Questions

Is “incompatible with Christian teaching”
informed by

- SCRIPTURE?
- TRADITION?
- EXPERIENCE?
- REASON?



Complexifying Questions

- What are some biblical teachings that are not understood and observed today the way they were in biblical times?
- Why and how do you think the church changed its attitude toward these teachings?
- What is your belief today?



Facts

- LGBT young adults who experience religious identity conflict are at significant risk for suicide.
- LGBT young adults who leave their religious communities seeking more self-acceptance are at higher risk of suicide.
- Parental and religious community relationships may have more influence on deterring suicide than one's own gay self-concept.

“Religious Conflict, Sexual Identity, and Suicidal behaviors among LGBT Young Adults,” Gibbs 2015



Facts

People aged 22-37 view Christianity as

- Hypocritical
- Uncaring
- Anti-homosexual
- Sheltered from the world
 - Too political
 - Judgmental

unChristian: What a New Generation Really Thinks, David Kinnaman, 2012.



Stresses and Strains

- How do you think the Church's teaching and prohibitions affect the suicide rate of LGBTQ people?
- How is your church "in ministry for and with" LGBTQ people?



Today in the Church

“When I sit with African colleagues, and we struggle to find a way for our church to stay together, they remind me that their context is different from ours here in the US. The sexual issues they struggle with include polygamy and pedophilia.”

Bishop Elaine JW Stanovsky



Spirits at Work

Can we adopt a posture of convicted humility?

Can we learn to be curious about what we don't understand?

Can we invite the Holy Spirit into the conversation?





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