

Resolution to Prohibit Discrimination in Receiving Members into United Methodist Congregations

WHEREAS, the United Methodist Church (UMC) acknowledges that all persons are of sacred worth; and

WHEREAS, the United Methodist Church has historically welcomed into membership “all persons without regard to race, color, national origin, status, or economic condition” per Article IV of the Constitution; and

WHEREAS, in its Decision 1032 the Judicial Council of the United Methodist Church supported one UMC pastor’s refusal of membership to a person seeking membership because of the “aspiring member’s sexual orientation and practice”, and overruled decisions by the district superintendent, bishop, and the Annual Conference clergy session requiring that the pastor welcome this individual into membership; and

WHEREAS, the UMC Bishops unanimously stated in a November 2, 2005 Council of Bishops Pastoral Letter that “homosexuality is not a barrier [for membership] ...and ... the General Conference has clearly spoken through the denomination’s Constitution on inclusiveness and justice for all as it relates to church membership”;¹ and quoted from paragraph 161g of the Book of Discipline: “... God’s grace is available to all, and we will seek to live together in Christian community. 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”; and

WHEREAS, the Council of Bishops Pastoral Letter (Nov. 2, 2005) further affirmed “our Wesleyan practice that pastors are accountable to the bishop, superintendent, and the clergy on matters of ministry and membership”²; and

WHEREAS, the United Methodist Church has implemented the advertising strategy “Open Hearts, Open Minds, Open Doors” to welcome newcomers and win disciples for Christ; and

WHEREAS, John Wesley preached that the church is the means of dispensing the grace of God to all who seek it; Romans 15:7 says “Welcome one another, therefore, just as Christ has welcomed you”; Mark 10:14 says “But when Jesus saw this, he was indignant and said to them, “Let the children come to me; and do not forbid them; for of such is the kingdom of God”; 1 Corinthians 12:13a says “For in the one Spirit we were all baptized into one body”; Galatians 3:28 says “There is no longer Jew or Greek, slave or free, male or female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus”; and John 13:35 says “everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.”

Now, **THEREFORE**, be it resolved that the Baltimore-Washington Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church believes that Judicial Council Decision 1032 is inconsistent with Christian teachings, and contrary to the United Methodist Church Constitution; and

Be it **FURTHER** resolved, that from this day forward, the Baltimore-Washington Annual Conference will model inclusive behavior by expecting and encouraging its congregations and clergy to abide by the principle: Membership in any local church in the Baltimore-Washington Annual Conference shall not be denied on the basis of race, color, national origin, economic condition, gender, marital status, sexual orientation, ability or disability, or any other status.

Endorsing Churches and Organizations:

Bethesda UMC, Baltimore, MD	St. John the Evangelist UM/Presbyterian (USA) Church, Columbia, MD
Capitol Hill UMC, Washington, DC	St. John’s of Baltimore City UMC
Christ UMC, Columbia, MD	St. Luke’s UMC, Washington, DC
Dumbarton UMC, Washington, DC	University UMC, College Park, MD
Emmanuel UMC, Laurel, MD	Wesley Grove UMC, Gaithersburg, MD
First UMC, Hyattsville, MD	Wesley UMC, Washington, DC
Foundry UMC, Washington, DC	Baltimore-Washington Area Reconciling United Methodists
Grace UMC, Baltimore, MD	Methodist Federation for Social Action (Baltimore-Washington Chapter)
North Bethesda UMC, Bethesda, MD	

¹ Article IV of the United Methodist Constitution: “**Inclusiveness of the Church** - 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 the vows declaring the Christian faith, become professing members in any local church in the connection.”

² The rules on accountability are in The Book of Discipline at ¶¶ 304.1i, 306, 307, 325, 326.3, 328, 343.1, et cetera.