

1 **14-Resolution on Doing No Harm through the Ordination Prohibition**

2 *As per Baltimore-Washington Conference Rule Para. 3006.2.c, this resolution was reviewed by*  
3 *the Conference Secretary and was found consistent with the current Book of Discipline.*

4 **Submitted by:** Rev. Debbie Scott, Baltimore-Washington Area Reconciling United Methodists  
5 (BWARM)

6 **Co-sponsors:** Rev. Angela Flanagan, BWARM; and the BWARM Steering Committee

7 **Whereas:** Whereas, Jesus modeled an inclusive love that took him to the margins of his society,  
8 offering love, healing and reconciliation to all; and we seek to follow Jesus’ way by welcoming  
9 all — in the fullness of who they are — into the fullness of the Body of Christ today; and

10 **Whereas:** Jesus refused to deny ministry to those defined as outside church laws (for example,  
11 the woman at the well, John 4:4-26) and refused to cast judgment on those deemed to have  
12 violated church laws (for example, Jesus refusing to cast blame on the man born blind in John  
13 9:1-7), so too we should refuse to deny being in ministry with those defined by UMC laws as  
14 being “incompatible with Christian teaching” and we too should refuse to cast judgment on those  
15 deemed to have violated church laws by participating in same-sex marriages; and Whereas, our  
16 understanding of Scripture leads us to understand God’s love and inclusion for all outweighs  
17 church laws that incorrectly interpret God’s words in Scripture as being exclusionary; and

18 **Whereas:** we recognize the good the church has done throughout the centuries in bringing the  
19 Gospel message to people throughout the world, and we acknowledge that the church has not  
20 always done so without error and without inflicting harm; and

21 **Whereas:** the church’s acceptance of the larger societal belief systems that are sexist, racist,  
22 xenophobic, and homophobic have hampered the church’s witness in the world and caused harm  
23 to people based on who they are, wrongly believed to be “less than” by these ideologies, in  
24 contrast to God’s creation of all things that are good (Genesis 1:26-31); and

25 **Whereas:** the church’s understanding of tradition is guided by an ever-broadening proclamation  
26 of the Gospel to include all people and welcome all people as members of the church in the  
27 fullness of who they are, just as, over the centuries, The United Methodist Church has realized  
28 the errors of its ways and opened its ministry practices to include people of color, women, and  
29 other people once deemed to be outsiders; and

30 **Whereas:** social and demographic research over the last two decades has shown consistently  
31 higher rates of suicide, suicide attempts, and suicidal ideation among LGBTQIA+ youth and  
32 young adults, ranging from 50 percent to 400 percent greater than for heterosexual youth and  
33 young adults; and

34 **Whereas:** more recent research shows that religious identity, greater religiosity (stronger faith),  
35 and more active practice of religion are among the factors that increase the risk of suicide,  
36 suicide attempts, and suicide ideation of LGBTQIA+ youths and young adults; and

37 **Whereas:** the church’s understanding based in reason leads us to understand the actual harm that  
38 the church is committing through its discriminatory policies placing LGBTQIA+ youth and  
39 young adults who perceive higher levels of institutionalized forms of discrimination at greater  
40 risk of suicide, suicide attempts, and suicide ideation as well as other health risks such as  
41 substance abuse and internalized homophobia; and

42 **Whereas:** research has shown that religion and religiosity provided protective factors that lead to  
43 improved mental health status and provided a protective factor against suicide and suicide  
44 ideation, but that the reverse is true for LGBTQIA+ youth and young adults today, where  
45 religion, religiosity and church-based institutional discrimination actually increase the likelihood  
46 of suicide, suicide attempts, and suicide ideation; and

47 **Whereas:** the church’s understanding based in experience leads us to understand from our own  
48 ministry practice the actual harm that the church’s discriminatory ministries, policies and  
49 procedures are inflicting upon our LGBTQIA+ siblings; and

50 **Whereas:** the first rule of Methodism is to “Do No Harm” (¶103), which is found in the “Our  
51 Doctrinal Standards and General Rules” in the Book of Discipline to give it priority over other  
52 matters of doctrine; and

53 **Whereas:** the rule to “Do No Harm” is also protected under the “Restrictive Rules” of the Book  
54 of Discipline’s Constitution, specifically by ¶21 Article V, which states that “The General  
55 Conference shall not revoke or change the General Rules of Our United Societies;” and

56 **Whereas:** individual clergy promise to uphold the General Rules of the Church (¶336, number 7)  
57 as an article of their ordination, thereby committing that they will do no harm in the practice of  
58 their ministry; and

59 **Whereas:** we know from our understanding of Scripture, tradition, reason, and experience, that  
60 the current Book of Discipline, ¶304.3, declaring “homosexuality” as “incompatible with  
61 Christian teaching” imposes actual harm on LGBTQIA+ persons and thus violates the first  
62 General Rule, to “Do No Harm,” as suicide, suicide ideation, and self-harm are extreme forms of  
63 harm that are being imposed on LGBTQIA+ youth and young adults based on the church’s  
64 teaching in ¶304.3; therefore

65 **Be it resolved:** that the Baltimore-Washington Conference repents of the harm that church laws  
66 and practices have done to members of the LGBTQIA+ community, all those who love them,  
67 and those who are in ministry with them; and

68 **Be it further resolved:** that we aspire to understand that ¶ 304.3 of the Book of Discipline is  
69 hereby considered by the Baltimore-Washington Conference to be in contradiction to the General  
70 Rules of Methodism, specifically to do “Do No Harm,” and would thus be no longer binding on  
71 the ministries, policies and procedures of the Baltimore-Washington Conference; and

72 **Be it further resolved:** that the decision of the February 2019 Special Session of the General  
73 Conference, to adopt the Traditional Plan and uphold and strengthen sanctions related to 304.3,

74 is also considered to be nonbinding on the ministries, policies and procedures of the Baltimore-  
75 Washington Conference; and

76 **Be it further resolved:** that we aspire that ¶ 2702.1 sentences (a) and (b) of the Book of  
77 Discipline — which identifies chargeable offenses against clergy to include: “being a self-  
78 avowed practicing homosexual,” “conducting ceremonies which celebrate homosexual unions,”  
79 or “performing same-sex wedding ceremonies”— are also considered to be nonbinding within  
80 the Baltimore-Washington Conference; and

81 **Be it further resolved:** that we would aspire that the nonbinding nature of ¶304.3 of the Book of  
82 Discipline that removes guidance from the Board of Ordained Ministry and the clergy session of  
83 the Baltimore- Washington Conference to make such determinations as to how they should  
84 proceed on matters of ordination concerning ordination of self-avowed practicing homosexuals is  
85 also considered to be nonbinding within the BWC; and

86 **Be it further resolved:** that in its desire to take no actions that do harm to LGBTQIA+ children  
87 of God, the Baltimore-Washington Conference aspires to neither make nor follow rules or  
88 policies that discriminate against LGBTQIA+ persons, including specifically the following:

- 89 • The Board of Ordained Ministry and the clergy session shall determine the qualifications  
90 and suitability for ministry based on criteria relevant for the practice of ministry without  
91 regard for the gender identity/gender expression or sexual orientation of ministry  
92 candidates;
- 93 • No charges shall be made against any clergy for “being a self-avowed practicing  
94 homosexual,” as per ¶ 2702.1.

95 **Footnotes to resolution:**

96

97 1. Ann Haas, et al., “Suicide and Suicide Risk in Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender  
98 Populations: Review and Recommendations,” *Journal of Homosexuality*, 58 (2010):1, 10-51.  
99 URL accessed 3/24/19 at: <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3662085/>.

100

101 Michael King, et al., “A systematic review of mental disorder, suicide, and deliberate self harm  
102 in lesbian, gay and bisexual people,” *BMC Psychiatry* (2008)8:70. URL accessed 3/24/19 at:  
103 <https://doi.org/10.1186/1471-244X-8-70>.

104

105 2. Megan C. Lytle, et al., “Association of Religiosity With Sexual Minority Suicide Ideation and  
106 Attempt,” *American Journal of Preventive Medicine*, 54 (2018):5, 644–651. URL accessed  
107 3/24/19 at: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.amepre.2018.01.019>.

108

109 3. David Barnes and Ilan Meyer, “Religious Affiliation, Internalized Homophobia, and Mental  
110 Health in Lesbians, Gay Men, and Bisexuals,” *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry* 82 (2012):4,  
111 505-515. URL accessed 3/24/19 at: 10.1111/j.1939-0025.2012.01185.x.

112

113 Jeremy Goldbach, et al., “Minority Stress and Substance Use in Sexual Minority Adolescents: A

114 Meta-analysis.” *Prevention Science* 15 (2014), 3: 350-363. URL accessed 3/24/19 at:  
115 <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007%2Fs11121-013-0393-7> .  
116

117 Mark Hatzenbuehler, “The Social Environment and Suicide Attempts in Lesbian, Gay and  
118 Bisexual Youth,” *Pediatrics* 127 (2011):5, 896-903. URL accessed 3/24/19 at:  
119 <https://pediatrics.aappublications.org/content/127/5/896>.  
120

121 4. LA Taliaferro, et al., “Spiritual well-being and suicidal ideation among college students,”  
122 *Journal of American College Health*, 58 (2009)1, 83-90. URL accessed 3/24/19 at:  
123 <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/19592357>.  
124

125 YJ Wong, et al., “A systematic review of recent research on adolescent religiosity/spirituality  
126 and mental health.” *Issues in Mental Health Nursing* 27 (2006)2:161-183. URL accessed  
127 3/24/19 at: <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/16418077>.  
128

129 5. Jeremy Gibbs, “Religious Conflict, Sexual Identity, and Suicidal Behaviors among LGBT  
130 Young Adults.” *Archives of Suicide Research* 19 (2015)4: 472-488. URL accessed 3/24/19 at:  
131 <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4706071/>.  
132

133 Kelly Schuck and Becky Liddle, “Religious Conflicts Experienced by Lesbian, Gay, and  
134 Bisexual Individuals,” *Journal of Gay and Lesbian Psychotherapy* 5 (2001) 2, 63-82. URL  
135 accessed 3/24/19 at: [https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1300/J236v05n02\\_07](https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1300/J236v05n02_07).  
136

137 6. For example, see:  
138 <https://rmnetwork.org/shamed-how-the-umc-contributed-to-my-sons-death/>.  
139 For a powerful personal testimony on how a local church through its witness of inclusion  
140 changes lives and offers hope, listen to Eric P.’s testimony at Capitol Hill UMC on March 17,  
141 2019 on how the church saved his life; found at: <https://chumc.net/eric-p-testimonial/>.

142 *The Connectional Table voted concurrence on this resolution.*