

1 **15-Resolution to Do No Harm through Marriage Prohibitions**

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:** Debbie Scott, Baltimore-Washington Area Reconciling Methodists (BWARM)

5 **Co-Sponsors:** Rev. Angela Flanagan, BWARM; BWARM Steering Committee

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

9 **Whereas:** Jesus refused to deny ministry to those defined as outside church laws (for example,
10 the woman at the well, John 4:4-26) and refused to cast judgment on those deemed to have
11 violated church laws (for example, Jesus refusing to cast blame on the man born blind in John
12 9:1-7), so too we should refuse to deny being in ministry with those defined by UMC laws as
13 being “incompatible with Christian teaching” and we too should refuse to cast judgment on those
14 deemed to have violated church laws by participating in same-sex marriages; and

15 **Whereas:** our understanding of Scripture leads us to understand God’s love and inclusion for all
16 outweighs church laws that incorrectly interpret God’s words in Scripture as being exclusionary;
17 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% to 400% greater than for heterosexual youth and young adults
33 (1); 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 (2); 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 (3); 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 (4), 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 (5) ; and

47 **Whereas:** the church's understanding based in experience leads us to understand from our own
48 ministry practice (6) the actual harm that the church's discriminatory ministries, policies and
49 procedures are inflicting upon our LGBTQIA+ siblings; and

50 **Whereas:** the Baltimore-Washington Conference is a vital conference that is proud to be
51 welcoming LGBTQIA+ people in our churches and encourages its churches to be in ministry
52 with the LGBTQIA+ community; and

53 **Whereas:** the Baltimore-Washington Conference in 2011 passed the resolution, "Allowing a
54 Pastoral Response to Requests for Same-Gender Marriages and Civil Unions," which states that
55 "Notwithstanding the foregoing [¶ 341.6], in those civil jurisdictions where homosexual persons
56 have been granted the right to same gender marriage or civil union, ceremonies celebrating those
57 marriages or unions may be conducted in our churches and by our ministers, the decision being
58 the right and responsibility of the pastor;" and

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

62 **Whereas:** the rule to "Do No Harm" is also protected under the "Restrictive Rules" of the Book
63 of Discipline's Constitution, specifically by ¶ 21 Article V, which states that "The General
64 Conference shall not revoke or change the General Rules of Our United Societies;" and

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

68 **Whereas:** we know from our understanding of Scripture, tradition, reason, and experience, that
69 the current Book of Discipline, ¶ 341.6, that prevents clergy from celebrating homosexual unions
70 and churches from hosting such celebrations, also imposes harm on LGBTQIA+ persons as a

71 form of institutionalized discrimination and thus violates the first General Rule, to “Do No
72 Harm,” as suicide, suicide ideation, and self-harm are extreme forms of harm that are being
73 imposed on LGBTQIA+ youth and young adults based on the church’s practices proscribed in ¶
74 341.6; therefore

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

78 **Be it further resolved:** we aspire that ¶ 341.6 of the Book of Discipline would be considered by
79 the Baltimore-Washington Conference to be in contradiction to the General Rules of Methodism,
80 specifically to do “Do No Harm,” and is thus no longer binding on the ministries, policies and
81 procedures of the Baltimore-Washington Conference; and

82 **Be it further resolved:** that we aspire to see the decision of the February 2019 Special Session
83 of General Conference, to adopt the Traditional Plan and uphold and strengthen sanctions related
84 to ¶ 341.6, would also be considered to be nonbinding on the ministries, policies and procedures
85 of the Baltimore-Washington Conference; and

86 **Be it further resolved:** that we aspire to understand ¶ 2702.1 sentence (b) of the Book of
87 Discipline—which identifies chargeable offenses against clergy to include: “conducting
88 ceremonies which celebrate homosexual unions,” or “performing same-sex wedding
89 ceremonies”—would also be considered nonbinding within the Baltimore-Washington
90 Conference; and

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

- 94 • Clergy are free to officiate any weddings, regardless of the couple’s sexual orientation or
95 gender identities, based on the clergy member’s conscience concerning the
96 appropriateness of their union.
- 97 • No charges shall be made against any clergy for officiating weddings for same-sex
98 couples.
- 99 • Individual congregations are free to set their own policies as to who may have weddings
100 on church property, so long as all such policies treat all couples, regardless of their
101 gender identity/gender expression or sexual orientation, the same.

102 *Footnotes:*

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

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108 Michael King, et al., “A systematic review of mental disorder, suicide, and deliberate self harm
109 in lesbian, gay and bisexual people,” *BMC Psychiatry* (2008)8:70. URL accessed 3/24/19 at:

110 <https://doi.org/10.1186/1471-244X-8-70>.

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112 (2) Megan C. Lytle, et al., “Association of Religiosity With Sexual Minority Suicide Ideation
113 and Attempt,” *American Journal of Preventive Medicine*, 54 (2018):5, 644–651. URL accessed
114 3/24/19 at: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.amepre.2018.01.019>.

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116 (3) David Barnes and Ilan Meyer, “Religious Affiliation, Internalized Homophobia, and Mental
117 Health in Lesbians, Gay Men, and Bisexuals,” *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry* 82 (2012):4,
118 505-515. URL accessed 3/24/19 at: [10.1111/j.1939-0025.2012.01185.x](https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1939-0025.2012.01185.x).

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120 Jeremy Goldbach, et al., “Minority Stress and Substance Use in Sexual Minority Adolescents: A
121 Meta-analysis.” *Prevention Science* 15 (2014), 3: 350-363. URL accessed 3/24/19 at:
122 <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007%2Fs11121-013-0393-7> .

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

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

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132 YJ Wong, et al., “A systematic review of recent research on adolescent religiosity/spirituality
133 and mental health.” *Issues in Mental Health Nursing* 27 (2006)2:161-183. URL accessed
134 3/24/19 at: <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/16418077>.

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

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140 Kelly Schuck and Becky Liddle, “Religious Conflicts Experienced by Lesbian, Gay, and
141 Bisexual Individuals,” *Journal of Gay and Lesbian Psychotherapy* 5 (2001) 2, 63-82. URL
142 accessed 3/24/19 at: https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1300/J236v05n02_07.

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144 (6) For example, see: [https://rmnetwork.org/shamed-how-the-umc-contributed-to-my-sons-](https://rmnetwork.org/shamed-how-the-umc-contributed-to-my-sons-death/)
145 [death/](https://rmnetwork.org/shamed-how-the-umc-contributed-to-my-sons-death/).

146 For a powerful personal testimony on how a local church through its witness of inclusion
147 changes lives and offers hope, listen to Eric P.’s testimony at Capitol Hill UMC on March 17,
148 2019 on how the church saved his life; found at: <https://chumc.net/eric-p-testimonial/>.

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