

1 **16-Resolution to Do No Harm Across the Northeast Jurisdiction**

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 (BWWARM)

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

7 **Whereas:** Jesus modeled an inclusive love that took him to the margins of his society, offering
8 love, healing and reconciliation to all; and we seek to follow Jesus' way by welcoming all — in
9 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 denied 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

16 **Whereas:** our understanding of Scripture leads us to understand God's love and inclusion for all
17 outweighs church laws that incorrectly interpret God's words in Scripture as being exclusionary;
18 and

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

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

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

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

35 **Whereas:** more recent research shows that religious identity, greater religiosity (stronger faith),
36 and more active practice of religion are among the factors that increase the risk of suicide,
37 suicide attempts, and suicide ideation of LGBTQIA+ youths and young adults (2); and

38 **Whereas:** the church's understanding based in reason leads us to understand the actual harm that
39 the church is committing through its discriminatory policies placing LGBTQIA+ youth and
40 young adults who perceive higher levels of institutionalized forms of discrimination at greater
41 risk of suicide, suicide attempts, and suicide ideation as well as other health risks such as
42 substance abuse and internalized homophobia (3); and

43 **Whereas:** research has shown that religion and religiosity provided protective factors that lead
44 to improved mental health status and provided a protective factor against suicide and suicide
45 ideation (4), but that the reverse is true for LGBTQIA+ youth and young adults today, where
46 religion, religiosity and church-based institutional discrimination actually increase the likelihood
47 of suicide, suicide attempts, and suicide ideation (5) ; and

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

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

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

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

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

66 **Whereas:** we know from our understanding of Scripture, tradition, reason, and experience, that
67 the current Book of Discipline, ¶ 341.6, that prevents clergy from celebrating homosexual unions
68 and churches from hosting such celebrations, also imposes harm on LGBTQIA+ persons as a
69 form of institutionalized discrimination and thus violates the first General Rule, to "Do No
70 Harm," as suicide, suicide ideation, and self-harm are extreme forms of harm that are being
71 imposed on LGBTQIA+ youth and young adults based on the church's practices proscribed in ¶
72 341.6; and

73 **Whereas:** in light of the actions of the Baltimore-Washington Conference to adopt the
74 resolutions named “Do No Harm through Ordination Prohibition,” “Do No Harm through
75 Marriage Prohibitions,” “Representation of LGBTQIA+ On Conference Commissions,
76 Committees and Agencies,” “Conservation of Conference Ministry Funding,” and/or “Caucus
77 Funding to Do No Harm,” we seek to inform and promote consistent policies among the Annual
78 Conferences of the Northeast Jurisdiction; therefore

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

82 **Be it Further Resolved:** that the Secretary of the Baltimore-Washington Conference shall share
83 with the Conference Secretaries and bishops of each of the Annual Conferences of the Northeast
84 Jurisdiction the following resolutions: “Do No Harm through Ordination Prohibition,” “Do No
85 Harm through Marriage Prohibitions,” “Representation of LGBTQIA+ On Conference
86 Commissions, Committees and Agencies,” “Conservation of Conference Ministry Funding,” and
87 “Caucus Funding to Do No Harm;” and

88 **Be it Further Resolved:** that we urge the Bishop of the Baltimore-Washington Conference to
89 work with the Northeastern Jurisdiction College of Bishops to develop nondiscriminatory
90 LGBTQIA+ ministries, policies and procedures governing the Annual Conferences of the
91 Northeast Jurisdiction.

92 **Footnotes:**

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

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

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101 (2) Megan C. Lytle, et al., “Association of Religiosity With Sexual Minority Suicide Ideation
102 and Attempt,” *American Journal of Preventive Medicine*, 54 (2018):5, 644–651. URL accessed
103 3/24/19 at: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.amepre.2018.01.019>.

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105 (3) David Barnes and Ilan Meyer, “Religious Affiliation, Internalized Homophobia, and Mental
106 Health in Lesbians, Gay Men, and Bisexuals,” *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry* 82 (2012):4,
107 505-515. 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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109 Jeremy Goldbach, et al., “Minority Stress and Substance Use in Sexual Minority Adolescents: A
110 Meta-analysis.” *Prevention Science* 15 (2014), 3: 350-363. URL accessed 3/24/19 at:
111 <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007%2Fs11121-013-0393-7> .

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113 Mark Hatzenbuehler, “The Social Environment and Suicide Attempts in Lesbian, Gay and

114 Bisexual Youth,” *Pediatrics* 127 (2011):5, 896-903. URL accessed 3/24/19 at:
115 <https://pediatrics.aappublications.org/content/127/5/896>.
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117 (4) LA Taliaferro, et al., “Spiritual well-being and suicidal ideation among college students,”
118 *Journal of American College Health*, 58 (2009)1, 83-90. URL accessed 3/24/19 at:
119 <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/19592357>.
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121 YJ Wong, et al., “A systematic review of recent research on adolescent religiosity/spirituality
122 and mental health.” *Issues in Mental Health Nursing* 27 (2006)2:161-183. URL accessed
123 3/24/19 at: <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/16418077>.
124
125 (5) Jeremy Gibbs, “Religious Conflict, Sexual Identity, and Suicidal Behaviors among LGBT
126 Young Adults.” *Archives of Suicide Research* 19 (2015)4: 472-488. URL accessed 3/24/19 at:
127 <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4706071/>.
128
129 Kelly Schuck and Becky Liddle, “Religious Conflicts Experienced by Lesbian, Gay, and
130 Bisexual Individuals,” *Journal of Gay and Lesbian Psychotherapy* 5 (2001) 2, 63-82. URL
131 accessed 3/24/19 at: https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1300/J236v05n02_07.
132
133 (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/)
134 [death/](https://rmnetwork.org/shamed-how-the-umc-contributed-to-my-sons-death/).
135 For a powerful personal testimony on how a local church through its witness of inclusion
136 changes lives and offers hope, listen to Eric P.’s testimony at Capitol Hill UMC on March 17,
137 2019 on how the church saved his life; found at: <https://chumc.net/eric-p-testimonial/>.

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