



MAYO UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

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June 20, 2024

Dear Disciples in Christ at Mayo UMC,

The General Conference of the UMC met from April 23-May 3, 2024. General Conference is a world-wide gathering of up to 1000 delegates (split evenly between clergy and laity) that typically occurs every four years. Due to the pandemic, this is the first General Conference since the special General Conference gathered in 2019 and the first regular General Conference since 2016.

The General Conference functions in similar ways to our congress, in that they are the body responsible for making any changes (addition or subtraction) to our existing church laws, which are recorded in the UMC's Book of Discipline. In 2024, the General Conference delegates considered more than 1000 pieces of proposed legislation. If you would like to know more about the variety of these decisions, please visit [General Conference Resources](#).

Of the many decisions made, there are some key outcomes regarding human sexuality, specifically how human sexuality relates to marriage and ordination of clergy, that we want to be sure you understand. They are listed below for informational and educational purposes. Actual printed copies will not be available for some time, so the list below may not be complete for every change made regarding human sexuality but does cover the impact of those changes. To access the 2016 Book of Discipline click [here](#). We have done our best to site the correct paragraphs from the 2016 Book of Discipline to help guide you.

We recognize that there are a variety of interpretations of scripture, as well as, cultural understandings regarding human sexuality. If you have questions or concerns, please reach out to Pastor Amanda or our DS Rev. Sarah Schlieckert (sschlieckert@bwcumc.org). DS Schlieckert will be hosting several listening sessions in response to General Conference sometime this summer. Mayo UMC will be a host sight for one of these sessions. When we have those dates and times we will share them with the congregation.

At this time, it is the position of the Administrative Council that it would not benefit Mayo UMC, or the clergy person, if an LGBTQ clergy was appointed to our congregation. We have, and will continue, to express that conviction to the cabinet. Also, Pastor Amanda has agreed to have conversation with our Administrative Council prior to agreeing to officiate a same-gendered wedding in the Mayo UMC sanctuary. At this time there is no couple requesting a same-gendered wedding, nor is it anticipated that there will be one in the near future. If you have an idea that you feel would be helpful as our congregation processes this change, please feel free to share them with Pastor Amanda or a member of our Administrative Council.

May God Bless and Keep You,

Mayo UMC Administrative Council
(individual members listed alphabetically by last name below)

Jacki Baker, Elizabeth Davis, Lisa Grazioli, Carol Hurley, Bob Lamb, Susan and Bruce Lanier (shared position), Ray Leone, Rev. Amanda McMurtrey, Jennifer Sewell, Art Smith, Janet Tanner, Todd Watson

Response from the Northeastern Jurisdiction's College of Bishops:

“The Northeastern Jurisdiction of The United Methodist Church embraces theological differences and, without creating more harm to any group, will lead so that within the jurisdiction, there will be room for different theological understandings. Further, we will work with everyone to honor Jesus Christ and advance the mission and ministry within the Northeastern Jurisdiction.”

Changes Made by 2024 General Conference

(Italicized text below removed and no longer part of church law.)

¶304.3 (Qualifications for Ordination): While persons set apart by the Church for ordained ministry are subject to all the frailties of the human condition and the pressures of society, they are required to maintain the highest standards of holy living in the world. *The practice of homosexuality is incompatible with Christian teaching. Therefore, self-avowed practicing homosexuals are not to be certified as candidates, ordained as ministers, or appointed to serve in the United Methodist Church.*

(entire paragraph below removed and no longer part of church law)

¶613.19 (Annual Conference Responsibilities): To ensure that no annual conference board, agency, committee, commission, or council shall give United Methodist funds to any gay caucus or group, or otherwise use such funds to promote the acceptance of homosexuality or violate the expressed commitment of The UMC “not to reject or condemn lesbian and gay members and friends” (¶161G). The council shall have the right to stop such expenditures. This restriction shall no limit the Church’s ministry in response to the HIV epidemic, nor shall it preclude funding for dialogs or educational events where the Church’s official position is fairly and equally represented.

(entire paragraph below removed and no longer part of church law)

¶806.9 (Fiscal Responsibilities of GCFA): It shall be responsible for ensuring that no board, agency, committee, commission, or council shall give United Methodist funds to any gay caucus or group, or otherwise use such funds to promote the acceptance of homosexuality or violate the expressed commitment of The UMC “not to reject or condemn lesbian and gay members and friends” (¶161G). The council shall have the right to stop such expenditures. This restriction shall no limit the Church’s ministry in response to the HIV epidemic.

(Italicized text below removed and no longer part of church law.) Note: This language was added in 2004 and made effective in 2005; in 2019 minimum penalties were added – these have also been removed)

¶2702.1.b (from Chargeable Offenses related to clergy): practices declared by the United Methodist Church to be incompatible with Christian teachings, *including but not limited to: being a self-avowed practicing homosexual; or conducting ceremonies which celebrate homosexual unions; or performing same-sex wedding ceremonies;*

New clauses were added to ¶2549 that will empower the Annual Conference Trustees to establish a process for disaffiliation. It is likely that process will include a payment of some or all of the value of the church’s property to the Annual Conference if they wish to maintain the current local church property, but we will not know until the process is established and shared in the months to come.

¶2553 – special disaffiliation paragraph was added in 2019 and was set to expire in December 2023; subsequently it has been removed. To the best of our understanding -

There were also two additions to church law. Since they are new we cannot provide you with a paragraph reference or exact language. When the 2024 Book of Discipline is published we can provide all members with those references:

- Clause added: cannot compel a UMC congregation to receive a homosexual clergy person as their appointed clergy
- Clause added: cannot compel any clergy person to officiate a same-gendered union or marriage ceremony

From the Preface to UMC Social Principles (p. 105 of the 2016 Book of Discipline):

...The Social Principles, while not to be considered church law, are a prayerful and thoughtful effort on the part of General Conference to speak to the human issues in the contemporary world from a sound biblical and theological foundation as historically demonstrated in United Methodist traditions. They are a call to faithfulness and are intended to be instructive and persuasive in the best of the prophetic spirit...

At the 2024 General Conference there are many changes made to the Social Principles. Below are the changes related to the topic of human sexuality (please note that there may be others, but we do not know how to reference them until the 2024 Book of Discipline is published):

(Italicized text below added)

¶161C (Marriage): We affirm the sanctity of the marriage covenant that is expressed in love, mutual support, personal commitment, and shared fidelity between a man and a women *or two consenting adults*.

(Italicized text below removed)

¶161G (Human Sexuality): ...We affirm that all persons are individuals of sacred worth, created in the image of God. All persons need the ministry of the Church in their struggles for human fulfillment, as well as the spiritual and emotional care of a fellowship that enables reconciling relationships with God, with others, and with self. *The United Methodist Church does not condone the practice of homosexuality and considers this practice incompatible with Christian teaching...*