



May 1, 2024

The postponed 2020 General Conference voted May 1 to remove The United Methodist Church's ban on the ordination of clergy who are "self-avowed practicing homosexuals" — a prohibition that dates to 1984.

The vote on the consent calendar was 692-51, with approval at 93%. Also on the consent calendar, delegates voted that superintendents are not to penalize clergy or churches for holding— or refraining from holding — same-sex weddings. [Learn more in this UM News article...](#)

Following the vote, Bishop Sue said, "I am grateful that The United Methodist Church has removed provisions from church law that have done great harm to a group of people made in the image of God and called by God to ministry. I am also grateful that our *Book of Discipline* is now written in a way that includes and welcomes all people, whether they characterize themselves as progressive, centrist, or traditionalist. We remain one in service to Christ, sent forth in mission in his name, as agents of his amazing grace and sacrificial love."

Here are talking points from the VAUMC to assist you in your communications about this General Conference action:

- This is a historic change in The United Methodist Church that allows the Church to be a more welcoming space. **All are welcome.**

- This change allows clergy and local churches the freedom of conscience. A clergyperson can choose whether or not to perform any wedding. Local church trustees will be given authority to decide about whether or not their building can be used for weddings on a case by case basis. **All are welcome.**
- It is significant that 93% of the body approved this change as a part of a consent calendar that had no debate in plenary session. This vote means that differing opinions within The United Methodist Church feel comfortable making this choice for the Church. This provides latitude around the world for space for individuals called to ministry. **All are welcome.**
- The United Methodist Church is made up of progressive, moderate, and traditionalist viewpoints, with many people not living in one space exclusively. **All are welcome.**
- United Methodists leaders and United Methodists realize this news brings great joy to persons and groups who have been greatly harmed by the Church for decades and with the passing of the Traditional Plan at the 2019 Special Session of General Conference. There is also a recognition that United Methodists who hold more traditionalist viewpoints of Scripture may be experiencing some uncertainty right now. **All are welcome.**
- This change will not make local churches or clergy go against their conscience or understanding of Scripture. **All are welcome.**

- This does not change the mission of the local church that is serving the needs of their communities. This change allows the Church to live more fully into its mission of welcoming all people. **All are welcome.**
- This is not the last piece of legislation related to human sexuality that the General Conference will consider this week. **All are welcome.**

If you take nothing else away from this day, please take this: In The United Methodist Church, all are welcome.



May 2, 2024

The postponed 2020 General Conference supported May 2 a revision of the Social Principles that, amongst several items, deletes the phrase “the practice of homosexuality... is incompatible with Christian teaching.” [Story from UM News...](#)

This came one day after a vote removing prohibitions on LGBTQ+ persons being eligible for ordained ministry in The United Methodist Church.

The General Conference body also granted sacramental authority to ordained deacons, giving those persons the ability to baptize and offer Eucharist in their ministry settings.

Following the afternoon plenary sessions, Bishop Sue said, “I celebrate a well-written and relevant new edition of the Social Principles for The United Methodist Church and full sacramental rights for deacons!”

Here are talking points from the VAUMC to assist you in your communications about General Conference related to the revised Social Principles:

- Delegates affirmed “marriage as a sacred, lifelong covenant that brings two people of faith (adult man and adult woman of consenting age or two adult persons of consenting age) into a union of one another and into a deeper relationship with God and the religious community.” The parenthetical represents additional language added by the General Conference to the original version offered by the General Board of Church and Society.

- The General Conference approved this revision with a 76% margin.
- The United Methodist Church is made up of progressive, moderate, and traditionalist viewpoints, with many people not living in one space exclusively.
- These revised Social Principles were presented by the United Methodist Board of Church and Society, the denomination's social witness agency, after an international, multiyear process authorized by the 2012 General Conference to develop a "more globally relevant, theologically founded and succinct" version. This effort was carried out with a writing team of 52 United Methodists from Africa, Europe, the Philippines and the U.S., who drafted the proposed revised Social Principles. That draft then received input from more than 4,000 United Methodists worldwide before the final submission.
- The Social Principles are a prayerful and thoughtful effort of the General Conference to speak to the issues in the contemporary world from a sound biblical and theological foundation.
- United Methodists across the globe and spectrum of belief have the opportunity now to live with these principles and study them deeply. Over the next four years, these principles can and will guide the social witness of United Methodists around the world.
- Social Principles are open to revision at every General Conference session.

Here are talking points from the VAUMC to assist you in your communications about General Conference related to the sacramental authority granted to ordained deacons:

- Deacons now do not need special dispensation from the Bishop to offer the sacraments of baptism and communion.
- This is a change from language from the 1996 General Conference in which sacramental authority was given to elders and not to deacons.

- This change acknowledges that ordination authorizes sacraments. It is elders who order the church around sacraments, and deacons bridge the church and the world through sacraments.
- Sacramental authority and responsibility strengthen the specific call of a deacon to bridge the church and the world.
- This will go into effect January 1, 2025.