**Petition: Human Sexuality - Elimination of References to Homosexuality and Marriage - ¶ 161.G**

G) Human Sexuality—We affirm that sexuality is God’s good gift to all persons. We call everyone to responsible stewardship of this sacred gift.

Although all persons are sexual beings whether or not they are married, sexual relations are affirmed only with the covenant of monogamous, heterosexual marriage.

We deplore all forms of the commercialization, abuse, and exploitation of sex. We call for strict global enforcement of laws prohibiting the sexual exploitation of children and for adequate protection, guidance, and counseling for abused children. All persons, regardless of age, gender, marital status, or sexual orientation, are entitled to have their human and civil rights ensured and to be protected against violence. The Church should support the family in providing age-appropriate education regarding sexuality to children, youth, and adults.

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. We affirm that God’s grace is available to all. We will seek to live together in Christian community, welcoming, forgiving, and loving one another, as Christ has loved and accepted us. We implore families and churches not to reject or condemn lesbian and gay members and friends. We commit ourselves to be in ministry for and with all persons.

**Rationale:**

United Methodists worldwide have a diversity of beliefs with regard to issues surrounding homosexuality and marriage. By removing reference to them, we can respect that not all United Methodists are like-minded on these subjects and that existing language can conflict with established laws in countries where United Methodists worship.

In 1972, language proposed to affirm homosexuals as persons of sacred worth was amended with language stating that the practice of homosexuality is incompatible with Christian Teaching. United Methodists have been arguing over these issues to the point where there is great danger that the church will fracture.

Setting apart the practice of homosexuality as incompatible with Christian teaching, is inconsistent with the teachings of Jesus Christ (e.g. – John 8:7 "Let anyone among you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her." NRSV). We are broken individuals; we need not focus on the brokenness of others.

In Colossians 1:17-20 we read, "He [Jesus] himself is before all things, and in him all things hold together. He is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that he might come to have first place in everything. For in him all the fullness of God was
pleased to dwell, and through him God was pleased to reconcile to himself all things, whether on
earth or in heaven, by making peace through the blood of his cross." (NRSV)

This petition is seeking Jesus’ peace through the blood of his cross. In Matthew 7:4, Jesus states,
"Or how can you say to your neighbor, 'Let me take the speck out of your eye,' while the log is in
your own eye?" United Methodists everywhere need to stop pointing fingers at those who
disagree with them and instead point to the peace we receive through the blood of the cross.

By removing the language surrounding homosexuality and marriage, United Methodists world-
wide will be able to serve their members with respect to the laws of their countries, and all
ministers will be free to act in accordance with their conscience and standards of ethical and
Christian beliefs.

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