

AMEND Discipline paragraph 161G by deleting and substituting the following:

We recognize that sexuality is God's good gift to all persons. We believe persons may be fully human only when that gift is acknowledged and affirmed by themselves, the church, and society. We call all persons to the ~~disciplined, responsible fulfillment of themselves, others, and society in the stewardship of this gift~~ **faithful stewardship of this gift, thereby modeling a Christian sexual ethic of responsible, committed and loving conduct that will glorify God and benefit themselves, others and society as a whole.** We also recognize ~~our limited understanding of this complex gift and encourage the medical, theological, and social science disciplines to combine in a determined effort to understand human sexuality more completely~~ **that this gift is complex and that the social and medical sciences may sometimes serve to illuminate our Scriptural and theological understanding. Nonetheless, Scripture must remain our primary authority in a time when the culture is sexually confused and self-indulgent.** We call the Church to take the leadership role in ~~bringing together these disciplines to address this most complex issue. Further, within the context of our understanding of this gift of God, we recognize that God challenges us to find responsible, committed and loving forms of expression~~ **this effort.**

Although all persons are sexual beings, whether or not they are married, sexual relations are only clearly affirmed ~~in the marriage bond~~ **within the bonds of lifelong, monogamous, heterosexual marriage. This is God's created intent and perfect will, unequivocally supported by the consistent witness of Scripture and the teaching of Jesus, and uniquely reflecting the mystical union of Christ and his church. Any sexual behavior outside this boundary is sinful, and we therefore declare a chaste life to be an equally holy alternative for the unmarried.** Sex may become exploitative ...

We deplore all forms of the commercialization and exploitation of sex, with their consequent

cheapening and degradation of human personality **and we maintain that pornography is inherently sinful and harmful to self, others and society in general.** We call for strict ...

We recognize the continuing need for full, positive ...

~~Homosexual persons no less than heterosexual persons are individuals of sacred worth. All persons need the ministry and guidance 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.~~ **Persons who are same-sex attracted or who identify as lesbian, gay, or bisexual are individuals of sacred worth, in need of the ministry, guidance and fellowship of the church in their quest for human fulfillment and reconciling relationship with God, others and self.** ~~The United Methodist Church does not condone the practice of homosexuality and consider(sic) this practice incompatible with Christian teaching.~~ **Even so, The United Methodist Church considers the practice of homosexuality to be contrary to Christian teaching and discipleship, and therefore does not sanction its support, celebration or promotion within the denomination. Regardless of whatever biological or environmental causes of homosexuality may ultimately be discovered, Jesus Christ offers a redemptive and sanctifying alternative in which the power of sin is broken and the person is freed to overcome temptation, embrace sexual purity, and experience his or her Christian identity as a new creation in Jesus Christ.**

Persons who identify as transgender or transsexual are also individuals of sacred worth with the same need for the Church. Nonetheless, Scripture and Christian tradition recognize that both conditions deny the integrity of God's good creation by attempting to blur or mar the sacred image of maleness and femaleness that was established by God. Neither condition reflects God's best intentions for humankind.

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Amend Church Teaching on Human Sexuality
Discipline Paragraph 161G
Financial Implications: None

We affirm that God's grace is available to all, and we will seek to live together in Christian community. We implore families and churches not to reject or condemn **their same-sex attracted or** lesbian, ~~and~~ gay, **bisexual, transgender and transsexual** members and friends, **but to reach out to them with the transforming grace of Jesus Christ. For this reason,** we commit ourselves to be in ministry for and with all persons.

RATIONALE

As Western culture experiences increasing sexual confusion and excess, the denomination should continue to strengthen and clarify its teaching about human sexuality. Those who experience gender confusion and/or same-sex attraction are especially at risk and they need to hear the good news that Jesus offers a loving and hopeful alternative.

Date Submitted: October 23, 2007

Name of Submitter: Rev. Karen Booth

Position of Submitter: Ordained Elder in the Peninsula-Delaware Annual Conference,
on appointment to Extension Ministry and holding membership in Conley's Chapel United Methodist Church, Lewes, Delaware

Submitter Phone: 302-945-9650 (office)

302-841-7869 (cell)

Submitter email address: transcong@aol.com