

What does the Bible really say?

Biblical scholars are not in agreement interpreting the passages that have been used to oppose homosexuality. Are they about homosexuality or are they about exploitation and idolatry? Scripture doesn't speak about loving, committed homosexual relationships.

Jesus said nothing about homosexuality. Jesus encourages us to love our neighbor, be humble, avoid being judgmental, and to care for people who are hurting and marginalized by society.

What is the UMC's position?

The Book of Discipline, the book of policy for the UMC which is amended every four years at the General Conference, gives a mixed message about homosexuality. It says, "We recognize that sexuality is God's good gift to all persons" and that "homosexual persons no less than heterosexual persons are individuals of sacred worth." But the Discipline continues to say that the UMC does not "condone the practice of homosexuality" and prohibits a practicing homosexual person from ordained ministry.

In July 2012 the Western Jurisdiction of the UMC concluded that the current Book of Discipline is incompatible with the teachings of Jesus Christ and current understandings of gender orientation and sexual identity.

Next Steps

- Examine our personal biases.
- Explore your thoughts, feelings.
- Express your needs for more conversation with Nancy, Martin, Edward, Kevin, Daphne, Pastor Judy, the Staff Parish Relations Committee or the Church Council.
- Listen to all viewpoints with respect and caring.
- Pray and study.
- Visit the Reconciling Ministries Network web site for many additional resources, www.rmnetwork.org
- Continue the journey of our consideration of becoming a "Reconciling Congregation" – we may publicly use words like "Welcoming and Affirming" in order to be better understood in the greater community. We seek to create a consensus and a welcoming statement that explicitly includes people of all sexual orientations and gender identities.

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Becoming A More Welcoming Ministry



How can we support
full inclusion for persons
of all sexual orientations
and gender identities?

Ukiah United Methodist Church's mission statement:

Open Hearts to the journey of faith in today's challenging world
Open Minds to the transformation God seeks in the world through us
Open Doors to be a spiritual home of unconditional love

Love God, Live Compassion

What does it mean to be a "reconciling" congregation?

Within United Methodism a "reconciling congregation" welcomes all persons, specifically including GLBT persons through a public statement of affirmation. This is the only group of people denied full rights of participation in the UMC. A reconciling congregation lives the UMC motto of "Open Hearts, Open Minds, Open Doors."

Ukiah UMC already has a welcoming mission statement. Why should we consider becoming a reconciling congregation?

Persons who self-identify as GLBT have been and continue to feel excluded from fully belonging to Christian faith communities. Ukiah UMC wants them to know that we are all children of God and are all welcome here.

What does GLBT stand for?

This is the acronym for Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, and Transgender. Sometimes people add the letters Q for "questioning" or "queer" and I for "inquiring" or "intersex."

What is sexual orientation?

Sexual orientation is one component of a person's identity. It is the emotional, romantic or sexual attraction that one person feels toward another.

Do people choose their sexual orientation?

The leading American medical associations agree that neither heterosexual nor GLBT people choose their sexual orientation. Persons may change their sexual behavior but their sexual orientation cannot be changed.

What is gender identity?

Gender identity is a person's internal sense of being male or female—which may or may not align with his or her physical gender. Experts consider gender identity to exist on a spectrum rather than simply as being male or female. This includes transgender and transsexual persons.

How will this change our church?

- Through the discernment process, our congregation will become stronger by respectful dialog of different perspectives.
- Ukiah UMC will grow spiritually as we act on our belief that everyone is welcome.
- To be reconciling simply means we would clearly state what we already practice, the inclusion of this specific group along with others in our Christian faith. Adopting a welcoming statement to include GLBT persons expresses our wish to be inclusive of all. It is necessary because this group has been excluded from full participation in worshiping communities.

Resources:

- Literature tables in the Social Hall, Chapel, and Entryway on Pine St. will have more information
- Our web site, www.ukiahumc.org will soon have information with some helpful links to videos used by other United Methodist Churches that have become reconciling congregations
- We have several DVD videos on loan from other congregations
- Books in our church library are available for loan
- Conversations with the task force in our church and others listed above, along with many in our midst who are willing to share their own experience with their family members, friends, or their own lives