

What is the issue with changing paragraph 304.3 of the Book of Discipline by removing the last two sentences?

The UMC recognizes that all people are children of God (1), worthy of love and respect and welcome in the Church and its fellowship and deserving of our love and understanding. The current Book of Discipline, under which the UMC operates, states that, "the practice of homosexuality is incompatible with Christian teaching" and UMC Judicial Counsel opinions concur (2). Accordingly, homosexuals are **not** excluded from our church membership, fellowship and love. The UMC's scriptural interpretation defines "marriage" as the union of one man and one woman, and sexual relations are affirmed only within the covenant of monogamous heterosexual marriage (3). Higher standards apply to Bishops and Clergy, who should not be practicing homosexuals nor presiding in the name of the church and its imprimatur over same sex marriages. Our belief is based on Scripture and Tradition. None of this would change in the GMC. This is the doctrine that we live under and have lived under as UMC for years.

The Book of Discipline (BOD) paragraph 304.3 states "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 candidates, ordained as ministers, or appointed to serve in The United Methodist Church." (2) For the past several General Conferences there have been efforts to remove the last two sentences of paragraph 304.3 from the BOD. While all of these attempts have failed, this effort is a symptom of what is splitting the UMC. The underlying issues are much deeper. At the heart of the dispute is the authority of Scripture.

Romans 1: 22-27 (2) and *I Corinthians 6: 9-11, 15-20* (4) support the current policies in the BOD of the UMC. While a case may be able to be made for changing the Church's stand on homosexuality based on society's current acceptance, Scripture supersedes Experience, Tradition and Reason. **Paragraph 103, Article V** of the Articles of Religion in the BOD states that "United Methodists share with other Christians the conviction that Scripture is the primary source and criterion for Christian doctrine."

While, currently, the BOD is in line with the traditional interpretation of Scripture, if paragraph 304.3 is changed the BOD will be in conflict with orthodox doctrine.

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References:

- (1) 2016 BOD ¶14 and ¶161.
- 2) The Book of Discipline of The United Methodists Church 2008 Paragraph 304.3
- 3) 2016 BOD paragraph 161© – "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 woman...."
- 4) *Romans 1: 22-27* ESV "Claiming to be wise they became fools and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and creeping things. Therefore, God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, to dishonoring of their bodies among themselves, because they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever, Amen. For this reason God gave them up to dishonorable passions. For their women exchanged natural relations for those contrary to nature, and the men likewise gave up natural relations with women and were consumed with passion for one another, men committing shameless acts with men and receiving in themselves the due penalty for their error."
- 3) *1 Corinthians 6: 9-11, 15-20* ESV "Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: neither the sexual immoral, nor idolaters, not adulterers,

nor men who practice homosexuality, nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.....Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body.”