



**Methodists In New Directions**

*a Reconciling ministry in the New York Annual Conference*

# **Resolutions for the 2010 New York Annual Conference**

## **Ministry to the marginalized: welcoming LGBT people into NYAC**

Whereas, Jesus lifted up the poor, welcomed women into his ministry, healed lepers, overturned the tables in the temple and was executed as a threat to religious and governmental authorities; he invited the outcast and the marginalized into God's kingdom and his ministry challenged the social norms of his day; and his call for us to follow him compels us to do the same; and

Whereas, the church therefore has a special obligation to welcome and defend those on the margins of our own society and to work for equality and justice for them; these include the poor, immigrants, people of color, people of non-Christian faiths, people with disabilities and lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people; and we have a particular obligation to fight for those singled out by our own denomination for discrimination, lesbian and gay people; and

Whereas, the UMC continues to lose members every year and a part of that decline can be traced to its prejudicial policies and pronouncements on homosexuality, which are offensive particularly to young people and which many rightly perceive as hypocritical from an organization that professes to follow Jesus; and

Whereas, LGBT people face significant hostility, discrimination, threats and violence in our society; there are over 1,000 documented hate crimes against LGBT people every year; 29 LGBT people were murdered because of their sexual orientation or gender expression in 2008 (the last year for which statistics are

available); anti-gay bullying in our schools is epidemic, 91% of LGBT middle-school students report harassment because of their sexual orientation, 39% have been assaulted and 63% have heard school staff make homophobic remarks; 25-40% of homeless youth are LGBT; and the suicide rate among LGBT teens is two to three times the rate of suicide among other youth; and

Whereas, the UMC's and other Christian churches' own anti-gay positions and policies excuse and condone bias against LGBT people and the church must bear responsibility for contributing to the violence against LGBT people; and

Whereas, Christians become complicit in the physical and spiritual violence suffered by LGBT people when they do not speak out against their church's prejudice against LGBT people; and

Whereas, the vast majority of LGBT people think that Christianity is a homophobic religion and do not feel welcome in Christian churches; and

Whereas, no amount of advertising inviting people to "rethink church" will change the perception of Methodism as homophobic if it is not accompanied by an explicit repudiation of the UMC's prejudice and discrimination; and

Whereas, the New York Annual Conference has stood in firm, consistent and persistent opposition to the UMC's prejudice

and discrimination against gay and lesbian people for over three decades; therefore be it

Resolved, that the New York Annual Conference advertise in New York and Connecticut LGBT publications and express in these advertisements its heartfelt regret for the harm inflicted on LGBT people through the UMC's homophobia and discrimination, and further share in these advertisements that NYAC has long been

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Rev. Tom Kim  
Rev. E. Sue Klein

opposed to UMC policy on homosexuality and welcome and invite LGBT people to worship in NYAC churches; and be it further

Resolved, that these advertisements be paid for through voluntary contributions made by Annual Conference members and congregations, to be received by Methodists in New Directions (MIND).

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Rev. Sara Lamar-Sterling  
Rev. Hector Laporta  
Jorge Lockward  
Nehemiah Luckett  
Rev. Evelyn McDonald  
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Marilyn VanTine  
Laura C. Veatch  
Rev. James Veatch  
Rev. Javier Viera  
Rev. Dennis Winkleblack

## Ministering to all in covenantal relationships

Whereas, the New York Annual Conference has affirmed many times its commitment to inclusive ministry and its opposition to the UMC's policies that exclude God's lesbian and gay children from participation in the full life of the church; and

Whereas, clergy are called to minister equally to all their congregants and the UMC Book of Discipline's rule that "ceremonies that celebrate homosexual unions shall not be conducted by our ministers and shall not be conducted in our churches" (§341.6) makes it impossible to carry out this charge within the confines of Discipline obedience; and

Whereas, in 1999, the New York Annual Conference passed a petition that stated "we earnestly urge members of this annual conference to exercise restraint in the filing of complaints against clergy who are called to inclusive ministries under ¶65.C and ¶2624.1.e, subjecting them to consequent trials and penalties; and further, that if charges should nonetheless be brought and trials eventuate, and should convictions occur and penalties be found unavoidable, we counsel that such trial courts under our jurisdiction, in faithfulness to the covenant which unites us, to employ fairness, spiritual discernment, juridical flexibility, and due respect for this conference's evangelical commitment to inclusive ministry in devising penalties commensurate both with our ministry and with the adjudged violation(s) of the Discipline; and further, that the penalties such a trial court may determine ought to reflect this conference's belief that the current state of law in the United Methodist Church inhibits appropriate pastoral freedom in grace to respond fully and completely to God's call to inclusive ministries" (petition #99-408); and

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Whereas, in the 11 years since the passage of that resolution, significant strides have been made towards marriage equality in civil society; and specifically, same-sex marriage is now legal in Connecticut; and further, in New York, legal same-sex marriages from other states are afforded full recognition, with all rights and benefits attendant to such marriages extended to all people married in other states; and

Whereas, it is right and appropriate for this conference to provide guidance to clergy who are seeking to minister with integrity to members of their congregation who can have their relationships recognized beyond church walls but not within them; therefore be it

Resolved, that the New York Annual Conference reaffirm its 1999 resolution and this conference's longstanding commitment to inclusive ministry that it exemplifies; and be it further

Resolved, that the conference urge clergy to minister equally to all members of their churches and to consider the conference's call to inclusive ministries in deciding how to honor their congregants' covenantal commitments; and be it further

Resolved, that the conference strengthen its lived efforts to foster inclusive ministries by recommending, in the unfortunate case that there be charges brought that result in trials and convictions of clergy who have blessed gay or lesbian relationships, that the penalty for such actions be one day of paid leave.

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## Commendation of Admiral Mike Mullen for his witness for tolerance, inclusion, and integrity

Whereas, on February 2, 2010, in a historic moment, Admiral Mike Mullen, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, told the Senate Armed Services Committee that he believes gays and lesbians should be free to serve their country openly in the United States Armed Forces, as he argued forcefully for an end to the discriminatory “don’t ask, don’t tell” policy; and

Whereas, Admiral Mullen in support of this declaration further testified:

“Mr. Chairman, speaking for myself and myself only, it is my personal belief that allowing gays and lesbians to serve openly would be the right thing to do.”

“No matter how I look at the issue, I cannot escape being troubled by the fact that we have in place a policy which forces young men and women to lie about who they are in order to defend their fellow citizens.”

“I have served with homosexuals since 1968....Everybody in the military has, and we understand that.”

“For me, personally, it comes down to integrity — theirs as individuals and ours as an institution.”

“I also believe that the great young men and women of our military can and would accommodate such a change. I never underestimate their ability to adapt.”

“This is about leadership, and I take that very, very seriously.”

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“...[P]utting individuals in a position that every single day they wonder whether today’s going to be the day, and devaluing them in that regard just is inconsistent with us as an institution”; and

Whereas, following his testimony before the Senate Armed Services Committee, Admiral Mullen tweeted, “[ I ] stand by what I said: Allowing homosexuals to serve openly is the right thing to do. Comes down to integrity”; and

Whereas, the New York Annual Conference has stood in firm, consistent and persistent support of full and unqualified equality for gay and lesbian people in society and in the church; and

Whereas, there are distinct parallels between the “don’t ask, don’t tell” policy in effect in the armed forces and the official stance of the United Methodist Church with regard to gay and lesbian persons; and

Whereas, Admiral Mullen’s declarations that “it comes down to integrity” and “this is about leadership” apply equally to the United Methodist Church; therefore be it

Resolved, that the New York Annual Conference commends Admiral Mullen for his strong declaration of support for equality for gay and lesbian people in the armed forces; and be it further

Resolved, that this commendation be sent in writing to Admiral Mullen; and be it further

Resolved, that a copy of this commendation be sent to the United Methodist Council of Bishops along with a copy of this resolution.

# The Christian imperative to respond to hate crimes

Whereas, the example of Jesus's ministry compels us to welcome and defend the poor, the marginalized and the oppressed; and we therefore have an obligation to work for a society and a world in which all people are welcome and safe; and

Whereas, hate crimes in the United States are on the rise; FBI statistics report 7,783 hate crime incidents for 2008, with 51.3% of them racially motivated, 19.5% motivated by religious bias, 16.7% by sexual-orientation bias, 11.5% by bias based on ethnicity or national origin, and 1% motivated by disability bias; and

Whereas, a 2008 resolution passed at the UMC General Conference notes, "the United Methodist Church must be proactive in resisting hate and teaching all members how to live in our diverse social world without passively accepting the rise of hate and bigotry. When church members do nothing about hate language or horrifying atrocities, we participate in the social support of hate" (Book of Resolutions 3421); and

Whereas, racially motivated hate crimes are the product of a long history and present reality in the U.S. of systemic racism and white privilege that too often continues to be the norm in U.S. society, including the UMC's leadership structures, clergy formation, and polity; the UMC's official positions abhorring racism have yet to adequately bear fruit in the concrete actions of local congregations and the daily lives of individual United Methodists; and

Whereas, hate crimes targeting people because of their ethnicity or national origin are frequently the violent expression of anti-immigrant racism and economic scapegoating; and these crimes have recently increased as a result of anti-immigrant laws and public indifference, creating marginalized, exploited, and disenfranchised segments of our communities who are more vulnerable to crime, domestic violence, workplace discrimination and exploitation of all kinds, such as slave-like labor practices, because they cannot access the protection of the courts or the police for fear of deportation; and as people following in the Way of Jesus we are called by our holy scriptures to welcome the stranger and the outcast, to remember that our fathers and mothers were once "wandering Arameans," to treat all people as our neighbors; and

Whereas, in the case of gay men and lesbians, the UMC's official prejudice and discrimination excuse and condone anti-gay bias, up

to and including violence; its official position that "homosexuality is incompatible with Christian teaching" in a nation in which the vast majority of people identify as Christians has contributed to a hostile and dangerous environment for LGBT people; and hate crimes against LGBT people have risen faster than all others; and

Whereas, the church ought to be in the forefront of efforts to combat hate violence, holding up the sacred worth of all people and bringing together different communities afflicted by the same type of violence to affirm their common humanity and our common obligation to speak and act; and

Whereas, the UMC has specifically resolved that the church "with assistance from the appropriate boards, agencies, and local churches continue to educate children and youth on the sins of hate and bigotry; seminary students and clergy on the trends of hate in the world and how the church can faithfully prevent and respond to acts of hate; and all persons in the United Methodist Church about the sins of hatred and bigotry that have been committed in our United Methodist Church against our members and against those with whom we seek to minister"; and it has resolved that members of the UMC "promote diversity dialogue and programs in all churches, annual conferences, central conferences, general agencies, campus ministry units, and any other place where The United Methodist Church has a witness" (2008 Book of Resolutions 3421); therefore be it

Resolved, that the New York Annual Conference commit itself to an active ministry opposing bigotry, hatred and violence in all its forms; and be it further

Resolved, that our clergy preach and teach about the sins of hate and bigotry and the Christian imperative to respond; and that they lift up the common humanity of victims of hate crimes, whether targeted for their race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, religion, sex, economic status, immigration status, disability, or any other characteristic; and be it further

Resolved, that our churches seek out coalitions with local groups working to educate the public, fight bigotry and document bias and hate crimes and support them in their work; and join or initiate organized efforts to respond to individual incidents of hate violence.

*Submitted and endorsed by the Conference Board of Church and Society, Commission on the Status and Role of Women, the Conference Immigration Task Force, Methodists in New Directions and the Methodist Federation for Social Action.*

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