

# We do! Methodists Living Marriage Equality

*We do! Methodists Living Marriage Equality, a project sponsored by MIND and co-sponsored by MFSA, is an organized, conference-wide effort to make weddings available on an equal basis to all people in the New York Annual*

*Conference of the United Methodist Church through a network of individuals and congregations publicly pledged to offer weddings on a non-discriminatory basis. There are over 900 signers on A Covenant of Conscience, the cornerstone*

*of the initiative: 169 clergy members, 767 lay people from 77 congregations, and six entire congregations as of December 2011. And the covenant community continues to grow.*

## Join us!

Become a signer of the Covenant of Conscience today by filling out the form at the bottom of this page. See the back of this flyer for the text of the covenant.

Learn more about We do! and see the current list of signers on the MIND website at [www.mindny.org](http://www.mindny.org).

## Responses to We do!

**We do! was launched in October 2011. It garnered significant media attention and was picked up by the leading LGBT blogs across the country, reaching audiences of tens and hundreds of thousands each. Here are a few of the reactions:**

“You so often see stories about Christians trying to rob gays of their human and civil rights that it’s remarkable and refreshing to see a story like this one....Credit where credit is due.”

—*Alethian Worldview blog*

“It’s a wonderful thing to find even a small dry spot to stand on when a tsunami of hatred surrounds you. I commend the folks who created this document, and thank both them and the good souls who signed it.”

—*Dave, comment on Queerty blog*

“I am a married, straight mother of two, and do not go to church, mainly because I will not have my kids indoctrinated to discriminate against the LGBT community. I...

had lost hope that any church would ever express any level of commitment to marry all people, gay and straight, without bias or discrimination. And not only do you commit to that but to welcome and celebrate equally all couples and the families they choose to create. If you have a sister group out my way I’d LOVE to hear about it!!!”

—*Carin Bennett, email*

“I had chills down my back and tears in my eyes this morning as I read the covenant again and looked at all the names, especially seeing my parents’ names right above my own. Congratulations and thank you for all of your hard work!!!”

—*Lisa Darak-Druck on the MIND Facebook page*

“A group of 900 United Methodists in New York and Connecticut have announced they will put their parishioners and equality above church doctrine.”

—*Human Rights Campaign blog*

“I think upholding the rules of the church is important. I just think God’s love is more important.”

—*Rev. Karen Karpow in the Danbury News-Times*

“Thanks for your courage and support!”

—*Josh Miller on the MIND Facebook page*

“40 years and counting; is there light at the end of the tunnel?”

—*Richard Swanson on the MIND Facebook page*

“If this keeps up, I’m going to have to start going to church again.”

—*overheard at the Oct. 16 covenanting service*

## Join us in this ministry to LGBT communities!

Yes, please add my name to the Covenant of Conscience!

\_\_\_\_\_ clergy member \_\_\_\_\_ lay person

\_\_\_\_\_ I would like to start a process to get my congregation to sign the covenant

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Congregation \_\_\_\_\_ District \_\_\_\_\_

**Please return this form to:**

Rev. Sara Lamar-Sterling  
108 William Street  
New Haven, CT 06511

or email the information to Rev. Lamar-Sterling at: [revsara@sbcglobal.net](mailto:revsara@sbcglobal.net)

 **We do!**  
Methodists Living Marriage Equality

# A Covenant of Conscience

*In his “Letter from a Birmingham Jail,” Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. wrote “Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere. We are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly.” The nonviolent Civil Rights movement fought for justice and equality in civil and religious life in the United States with compassion and courage. Yet injustice continues to threaten us, in the United States and in the United Methodist Church. The recognition of the full humanity, sacred worth, and equal rights of gay and lesbian people is crucial to the civil rights struggle of our time. Gay, lesbian, and straight United Methodist laity and clergy are caught in an inescapable*

*network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny. The continuing denial of full access to all the rights and privileges of church membership in the United Methodist Church is causing deep spiritual harm to our gay and lesbian brothers and sisters and is a threat to us all.*

*In his sermons “The New Birth” and “The Catholic Spirit,” John Wesley taught that as long as we hold in common the essential elements of our faith, and as long as we unite in love — meaning that we love one another, that we commend each other to God in prayer, that we provoke each other to love and to good works, that we love each other not only in word but in deed and in truth — then our hearts are right and we should walk together hand*

*in hand. Wesley further taught that differences of opinion ought not to tear this union of hearts asunder. The forcible denial of rights and privileges to gay and lesbian persons through provisions in the Book of Discipline serves as shackles on pastoral care and ministry, and in their harshly punitive application these provisions of the Discipline are not only a grave injustice; they strike at our union in affection, challenge our ability to live amicably in disagreement, and violate the sacred command to love our neighbors as ourselves. We cannot tolerate the Church’s injustice and discrimination any longer and, out of our Christian faith and Wesleyan love, we feel bound to respond and together to make the following declaration:*

Pastoral care and the sacraments and rituals of the church are means of grace by which the lives of all Christians are blessed by God. Therefore we, as congregations and as individual laypersons and clergy, declare our commitment to offer such means of grace to all persons on an equal basis. We refuse to discriminate against any of God’s children and pledge to make marriage equality a lived reality within the New York Annual Conference, regardless of sexual orientation or gender expression.

Our conference’s record, in resolutions passed and petitions forwarded to the United Methodist Church’s General Conference, already makes clear our opposition to the UMC’s prejudice and discrimination against LGBT people. While the rite of Christian marriage officiated by our clergy

and celebrated in our church buildings is denied by UMC law to same-sex couples, we affirm the New York Annual Conference’s 2010 resolution urging “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.”

We seek to embody the beloved community of hope by openly and joyfully affirming the lives and loves of all United Methodists, regardless of sexual orientation or gender expression.

We seek to embody the beloved community of hope by openly and joyfully affirming the lives and loves of all United Methodists, regardless of sexual orientation or gender expression.

**We, United Methodist clergy,** in accordance with our ordination vows to “seek peace, justice, and freedom for all people,” commit to marrying all people, both gay and straight, who seek the blessing of the church, without bias or discrimination.

**We, United Methodist laity,** in accordance with our membership vows to “resist evil, injustice, and oppression in whatever forms they present themselves,” commit to supporting our clergy in faithfully ministering to all, including through any consequences of their living fully into that duty.

**We, United Methodist congregations,** refuse to discriminate in the sacraments and rituals provided to our members and pledge the full and equal use of our facilities as we welcome and celebrate equally all couples and the families they may choose to create.

**Further, each of us, clergy, laity, and congregations, pledge to one another our spiritual and material support in fulfilling this covenant of conscience.**