

and reiterated the conference's stance that the *Discipline's* Incompatibility Clause "is in and of itself incompatible with Christian teaching."

Commitment to dialogue

- In 1987, the annual conference adopted a resolution proposing a revision to the *Discipline* to ensure that the UMC ban on church funds to "promote the practice of homosexuality" not be interpreted to preclude "discussion, debate or education about homosexuality."
- In 1995, the annual conference adopted a resolution urging the use of the study program "The Church Studies Homosexuality."
- In 2003, the annual conference submitted a petition to the 2004 General Conference to assure that "funding for dialogue" about issues concerning homosexuality not be blocked by the UMC restriction on funding for pro-gay caucuses.
- In 2005, the annual conference adopted a resolution calling for the formation of a new task force to plan and program a conference-wide study using the existing UMC study on homosexuality.
- During the 2009 annual conference session, regular conference business was suspended for a 90-minute period of dialogue on homosexuality, an effort jointly initiated and planned by MFSA, MIND and the Wesley Fellowship.
- In 2010, the annual conference passed a resolution

NYAC's belief in the welcoming, inclusive Gospel is clear in this record. Yet the promise of "affirming the full participation of lesbians and gay men" in the conference remains unfulfilled. Passing resolutions is not enough. In our fourth decade of our opposition to church doctrine

pledging to "refrain from disrespectful speech and attitude" regarding theological differences and LGBT people and committing congregations to work on "mission and service projects with local congregations whose views differ" from their own.

Ministry to LGBT communities

- In 2011, the annual conference passed a resolution that requires the conference to take out ads in LGBT publications that explain, "we do not share our denomination's belief that 'homosexuality is incompatible with Christian teaching' and we are deeply sorry for the harm that this belief has caused. We are working within the UMC to change its prejudiced policies."
- In 2012, the annual conference passed a resolution that "acknowledge[s] that clergy, lay persons and congregations encountering institutional discrimination...may feel bound by conscience to offer the ministries and sacraments of the church to all persons on an equal basis," and that "those who so act according to conscience do so in a way that is consistent with the long-standing principled declarations of this annual conference"; and further acknowledges that "leaders of the conference...are also bound to exercise their consciences and are bound by Jesus's commandment to stand with the marginalized and the oppressed in our midst when called upon to enforce unjust laws, policies and procedures."

and policy we are beginning to find ways to bring the words of inclusion off the page and into the lives of God's gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender children. We must strengthen and deepen these efforts if we are to be true to this sustained and repeated call to inclusive ministry.

NYAC's Stand for God's LGBT Children

For over three decades the New York Annual Conference (NYAC) of the United Methodist Church (UMC) has taken a stand calling for the inclusion of God's gay and lesbian children in the full life of the church. It has affirmed that "sexuality is God's good gift to all persons" and that the diversity of that gift should bar no one from answering the call to ministry, from recognition of her or his covenantal relationships, or from membership in the church community. It has gone on record in support of equal rights for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) people in civil society. In taking these

positions at annual conference meetings and in petitions from the conference to the UMC's General Conferences, NYAC has acted in opposition to the doctrinal prejudice and institutional discrimination enshrined in the UMC's *Book of Discipline*. The conference has intentionally embraced the name and mission of the "reconciling" movement, and it has rejected the national church's assertion that homosexuality is "incompatible with Christian teaching." NYAC has advocated for the right to discuss issues within the church related to homosexuality and has moved to encourage understanding and dialogue of such issues.

Support for ordained clergy and the ordination of clergy

- In 1978, the Conference Board of Ordained Ministry refused to recommend a leave of absence for Rev. Paul Abels, the first United Methodist pastor to come out.
- In 1984, the annual conference adopted a resolution, on the recommendation of the Conference Board of Ordained Ministry, affirming that "decisions regarding the suitability of candidates for ordination should remain with the annual conference"; this resolution stood in opposition to the position just passed by the 1984 General Conference, which barred "self-avowed practicing homosexuals" from candidacy, ordination and appointment.
- In 1991, the annual conference submitted a petition to the 1992 General Conference calling on the church to drop the language barring gays and lesbians from candidacy, ordination and appointment.

Support for marriage

- In 1999, the annual conference passed a resolution explicitly reflecting the conference's belief that the UMC policy barring the recognition or celebration of "homosexual unions" "inhibits appropriate pastoral freedom in grace to respond fully and completely to God's call to inclusive ministries" and urging conference members to accordingly exercise restraint in filing charges against clergy, and in the event of church trials, to devise penalties reflective of the conference's opposition to UMC policy.
- In 2000, the annual conference adopted a resolution in support of the "California 68," a group of clergy who had defied the church's marriage ban in an act of ecclesial disobedience.
- In 2003, the annual conference submitted a petition to the 2004 General Conference supporting worship services that celebrate lesbian and gay unions and calling for the removal of the ban on such services from the *Discipline*.



- In 2007, the annual conference submitted a petition to the 2008 General Conference calling for the recognition of the “sanctity of marriage” to be extended to “two adult persons” rather than “man and woman.”
- In 2009, the annual conference passed a resolution committing the conference to “advocate for and work towards” marriage equality in New York State law, and further specifying that the conference secretary would send a letter to the NYS Senate/ Assembly urging passage of a marriage equality bill and urging conference members to also send letters to the legislature.
- In 2010, the annual conference passed a resolution explicitly reaffirming the 1999 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”; and further “strengthen[ing] its lived efforts to foster inclusive ministries” by recommending a penalty of one day paid leave for clergy convicted of blessing a gay or lesbian relationship.

Support for membership

- In 2006, responding to the 2005 Judicial Council ruling allowing pastors to bar people from church membership because of their sexual orientation, the annual conference passed a resolution expressing anger and sorrow at the exclusionary judicial decision and affirming that NYAC will welcome into membership all who affirm the membership vows of the UMC.
- In 2007, the annual conference submitted a petition to the 2008 General Conference calling for the addition of language to the *Discipline* that states that “membership in the UMC shall not be denied by the pastor on the basis of race, gender, sexual orientation, ability, disability, national origin or economic status.”

Support for civil rights

- In 1986, the annual conference adopted a resolution “[going] on record as supporting state legislation that would prohibit discrimination on the basis of one’s sexual orientation.”
- In 1987, the conference again passed a resolution in support of civil rights for LGBT people.
- In 1991, the annual conference submitted a petition to the 1992 General Conference affirming the “human and civil rights of homosexual persons” and calling for the formation of a task force “to promote the human and civil rights of gay men and lesbians.”
- In 1993, the annual conference adopted a resolution calling for an end to the “gross discrimination” of the military against gay men and lesbians.
- In 1993, the annual conference also passed a resolution calling for the 1996 General Conference to be relocated from Colorado, which in 1992 passed a constitutional amendment enshrining prejudice against LGBT people, to Oregon, which in that same year defeated an anti-gay ballot initiative.
- In 2003, the annual conference submitted a petition to the 2004 General Conference calling for equal rights regardless of sexual orientation and for same-sex couples to have equal marriage rights.
- In 2007, the annual conference adopted a resolution supporting marriage rights for all couples and urging the New York and Connecticut legislatures to pass legislation establishing marriage as a contract between two adult persons.
- In 2007, the annual conference also submitted a petition to the 2008 General Conference calling for the addition of civil unions to the list of civil rights that the *Discipline* affirms for “homosexual persons.”

Affirmation of the inclusive Gospel

- In 1987, the annual conference adopted a resolution “declar[ing] itself a Reconciling Conference, affirming the full participation of lesbians and gay men in the life of this Annual Conference” and “urg[ing] each local church to consider becoming a Reconciling Congregation.”
- In 1991, the annual conference submitted a petition to the 1992 General Conference calling for the deletion of the phrase “we do not condone the practice of homosexuality and consider this practice incompatible with Christian teaching” from paragraph 71F of the *Discipline*.
- In 1996, the annual conference passed a resolution reaffirming NYAC’s “calling to be a Reconciling Conference”; celebrating Reconciling Congregations and urging others to join them; and celebrating the bishops who called at that year’s General Conference for an end to the UMC’s discrimination against gay and lesbian people.
- In 1997, the annual conference adopted a resolution again reaffirming its “commitment” to being a Reconciling Conference.
- In 1999, responding to a Judicial Council ruling prohibiting conferences from labeling themselves “reconciling,” the annual conference passed a resolution accepting the decision but “renew[ing] its commitment and support” for reconciling United Methodists, the Reconciling Congregations Program and ministry inclusive of all regardless of sexual orientation.
- In 1999, the annual conference also adopted a resolution recommending to the 2000 General Conference “the deletion from the *Discipline* of the condemnation of homosexuality as incompatible with Christianity, and affirm[ing] inclusion of homosexual persons in the full life of the church.”
- In 2000, the annual conference adopted

resolutions calling on the bishop to appoint a “Special Task Force on the Full Inclusion of LGBT Persons” and pledging to “continue in ministry with all persons in the hopes that there will be no punitive action taken against our LGBT members or churches and pastors in ministry with them.”

- In 2001, a report from the task force established in 2000 led to a resolution adopted by the annual conference calling for the formation of a permanent commission titled the “NYAC Commission for Nurture, Outreach, and Witness of Inclusive Communities,” organized under the Conference Council on Ministries.
- In 2005, the annual conference passed a resolution that notes that “the *Book of Discipline*’s assertion that ‘the practice of homosexuality is incompatible with Christian teaching’ is unfounded in Scripture, unsupported by the lessons of the Gospel and indeed, itself incompatible with Christian teaching” and recognizing that “individuals may be called to acts of conscience in response to God’s call to inclusive community.”
- In 2009, the annual conference adopted a petition that stated “the New York Annual Conference regards the limitations of the *Book of Discipline* as counter to the theological implications of the teachings of Jesus,” and declared the conference “shall be on record as advocating for the full inclusion of persons of all sexual orientations in the life of the church,” and further pledged that the conference “will support those who in good conscience cannot subscribe to the current proscriptions against persons of homosexual orientation.”
- In 2010, the annual conference passed a resolution that stated “the evidence gleaned by examination of this issue though Scripture, Tradition, Experience and Reason suggests that the *Book of Discipline* is in violation of Scripture”