

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 project 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 1,000 signers on A Covenant of Conscience,

the cornerstone of the initiative: 208 clergy members, 865 lay people from 93 congregations, and six entire congregations as of December 2012. And the covenant community continues to grow.

Learn more about We do! and see the current list of signers on the MIND website at www.mindny.org.

"The derogatory rules and restrictions in the Book of Discipline are immoral and unjust and no longer deserve our loyalty and obedience. The time has come to join in an act of Biblical obedience. It's time for us to act in defiance of laws that are doing harm to our GLBT sisters and brothers. The time for talking is over. It is action time."

—Bishop Melvin Talbert, 5/4/12

"I have sung in my church choir for 12 years and three of my children were confirmed here. I have been a confirmation mentor, SPRC chairperson, a member of UMW, the worship committee and the nominating committee. I give the children's sermon once a month. I am gay. To think that the General Conference can reach its long, intolerant, ungrateful arm into my life like this is abhorrent and unacceptable. Add my name to the list of lay signers of the Covenant of Conscience."

—Lisa Patterson Lay, UMC of Port Washington

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: sbs50@yahoo.com.

 **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, 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.