

**Free Methodist Church USA
39th General Conference
RESOLUTION**



INSTRUCTIONS:

Complete requested information, adding additional pages as necessary. Save and e-mail completed form to your Annual Conference office.

INTRODUCED BY: Southern Michigan Conference General Conference Delegates

ANNUAL CONFERENCE NAME: Southern Michigan Conference

WRITTEN BY:

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General Conference Secretary - OFFICE USE ONLY

Resolution No. 305

Received Date: 12/19/2022

Resolution Committee Grade: _____

BOA Consideration: _____

GC Consideration: _____

RELATED TO PARAGRAPH 3221

Referred to Ministry Team Number:

SUBJECT OR TITLE:

Dignity & Worth of Persons: In Regards to Sexual Orientation

Final Vote: Yes No

Resolution on Dignity & Worth of Persons: Compassionate Care & Ministry in Regards to Sexual Orientation

WHEREAS, The Free Methodist Church is committed to the dignity and worth of all humans and articulates its view in the *BOD* ¶3221 Dignity and Worth of Persons and,

WHEREAS, one of the values of the FM Way is Love Driven Justice namely how, “love is the way we demonstrate God’s heart for justice by valuing the image of God in all men, women, and children acting with compassion toward the oppressed, resisting oppression, and stewarding creation, and

WHEREAS, there is a growing number of people who experience some degree of sexual orientation to the same-sex who also feel ostracized by the church they grew up in (86% were raised in a faith community from ages 0 to 18)¹, and

WHEREAS, these people are also created in the image of God, thus having dignity and worth, and are not explicitly mentioned in this section along with the other categories of people, namely the unborn, gender, race, ethnicity, color, socio-economic status, disability, or any other distinctions, and

WHEREAS, one can be an image-bearer of God, having dignity and worth, and also experience an orientation to the same-sex as an expression of sexual brokenness alongside those who do not, and

WHEREAS, all people experience sexual brokenness and at the same time we believe in the sanctifying grace of the spirit bringing freedom from the guilt and power of sin in the lives of disciples, yet

WHEREAS, there is a need to have greater nuance and understanding about sexual identity both for heterosexual persons and those who experience same-sex orientation so that we, the Church, can be a place that is safe and can defend the worth and value of all people, and

WHEREAS, this greater nuance and understanding will expand our gospel witness and engagement among people with same-sex orientation, and

WHEREAS, it is possible to be a safe place for people who are oriented to the same sex and still maintain a traditional sexual ethic whereby God’s design for marriage and sexual intimacy belong within the context of a covenanted “one flesh” relationship between one man and one woman, and

¹ Marin, Andrew P. *Us Versus Us: The Untold Story of Religion and the LGBT Community*. Nav Press, 2016.

WHEREAS, along with Christian marriage there is an equal and holy calling to a vocation of singleness and celibacy, and

WHEREAS, being faithful to Scripture means those who are oriented to the same-sex would choose a life in a mixed-orientation marriage with the opposite sex or celibacy in singleness, and

WHEREAS, the vocation of singleness and celibacy point us to the eschatological reality and state of our existence in the new creation and resurrection whereby people will neither marry nor be given in marriage, just as marriage points us to the eschatological reality of the marriage between Christ and the Church, and

WHEREAS, there are differences between an orientation and behaviors just like the differences between being tempted and acting out on sin, and

WHEREAS, over the last decade the SCOD has researched, reviewed the literature, and written articles and position papers nuancing these differences, as well as sexual identity development, the importance of singleness and celibacy in the church, loving from where we stand, etc., and yet,

WHEREAS, the *Book of Discipline* is our primary authoritative source for theology and praxis within the Church behind the Holy Scriptures used in membership and leadership development and not our position papers or SCOD articles,

Therefore BE IT RESOLVED,

The following additions **IN BOLD** be added to the *BOD* ¶3221 Dignity and Worth of Persons so that it will read:

We are committed to the dignity and worth of all humans, including the unborn, regardless of gender, race, ethnicity, color, socio-economic status, disability, **sexual orientation**, or any other distinctions (Acts 10:34-35) and will respect them as persons made in the image of God (Genesis 1:26-27) and redeemed by Christ's death and resurrection. The Old Testament law commands such respect (Deuteronomy 5:11-21). Jesus summarized this law as love for God and neighbor (Matthew 22:36-40). He ministered to all without distinction and His death on the cross was for all (John 3:16; Romans 5:8). We are therefore pledged to active concern whenever human beings are demeaned, abused, depersonalized, enslaved or subjected to demonic forces in the world, whether by individuals or institutions (Galatians 3:28; Mark 2:27; 1 Timothy 1:8-10). We are committed to give meaning and significance to every person by God's help. Remembering our tendency to be prejudicial, as Christians we must grow in awareness of the rights and needs of others.

D. With Regard to Sexual Orientation

We lament the fact that we have allowed fear and complexity to prevent us from engaging in conversation about sexuality and spirituality with people who experience an orientation to the same-sex (such as “lesbian” or “gay” or “bisexual”). Just as the Church in Acts came together to discuss the serious and complex reality of salvation coming to Gentiles (Acts 15), we too must engage and grapple with the nuances of sexuality and spirituality among our brothers and sisters who are same-sex oriented, have sincere faith in Jesus Christ, and are living in obedience to Him. God loves all people; they have dignity, worth, and value as image bearers. The Lord’s desire for all people to be reconciled to Him must be proclaimed unequivocally, including those who experience a same-sex orientation. While same-sex orientations have complex and differing origins and vary in degree from person to person, we acknowledge it is a result of sexual brokenness from the fallen and sinful world we inhabit. The implications to live a holy life unto the Lord are costly, yet we believe the grace of God is sufficient for those who are same-sex oriented as it is for those who are heterosexually oriented.

As we minister with individuals who are same-sex oriented, we do so with the following convictions:

- 1. We commit to seeing and honoring them as people with dignity and worth as fellow human beings created in the image of God.**
- 2. We recognize and confess we all have sexual brokenness and hold all sexual sin, not just same-sex behavioral sin, as falling short of God’s intentions for human sexuality.**
- 3. We lament and repent of the damage we have done to same-sex oriented individuals through ungodly speech, action, and ideology, while also idolizing sex and marriage as the goal of Christian discipleship. *(See previous resolution from SMC on Vocational Singleness and Celibacy)***
- 4. We reclaim the equal calling of singleness and celibacy, like Jesus and the Apostle Paul, with that of marriage between one man and one woman, seeking to foster communities which wholeheartedly support singles, married couples, and their children as a unified body of believers. *(See previous resolution from SMC on Vocational Singleness and Celibacy)***
- 5. We recognize the shared responsibility of the body of Christ to be a welcoming, forgiving, and loving community where hospitality, encouragement, transformation, and accountability are available to all. We do so by curiously listening to their stories so they may be known and loved by Jesus through us.**

Annual Conference Resolutions Committee Worksheet:

Mission: To love God, love people and make disciples.

Vision: To bring wholeness to the world through healthy biblical communities of holy people multiplying disciples, leaders, groups and churches.

1. Does the resolution have a direct relationship to the vision and mission of the Free Methodist Church?

Yes

2. How will the proposed change help us accomplish our vision and mission?

This resolution will show thoughtful theological reflection and praxis helping us engage people who experience same-sex orientation along with their friends/families. This will especially help us engage Millennials and Gen Z who are disproportionately missing from our churches. We cannot see a spirit fueled movement of leaders and churches without these younger generations and those with same-sex orientation who desire to live faithfully to Scripture.

3. The Resolutions Committee rates this resolution as:

(A) **Support - recommend adoption**

Other Comments: