



Written by [Dave Bohon](#) on May 10, 2012

UMC Affirms That Homosexuality Is “Incompatible With Christian Teaching”

Following some intense debate and emotional appeals from homosexual factions within its numbers, the United Methodist Church (UMC) affirmed May 2 that homosexual activity is “incompatible with Christian teaching.” The decision, which came at the [UMC’s General Conference](#) in Tampa, Florida, is certain to prompt backlash from the homosexual activist community, which for years has been pushing the denomination to abandon its scriptural position on sexuality and officially allow the ordination of “gay” clergy and the “marriages” of same-sex partners.



[Religion News Service](#) (RNS) reported that debate at the conference over the issue of homosexuality “put the denomination’s wide diversity on display — as gays and lesbians pleaded for recognition of their ‘sacred worth’ and an African delegate, speaking through an interpreter, compared homosexuality to bestiality.”

While the UMC’s eight million American members make it the largest mainline denomination in the U.S., the organization is on the wane domestically while it is exploding in Africa and Asia, where members embrace a more conservative Christian faith. Nearly 40 percent of the delegates in attendance at the Tampa conference were from outside the U.S., a factor that helped the denomination hold the line on the issue of homosexuality.

RNS reported that homosexual activists within the denomination had attempted to gain some traction on their position by forwarding a pair of “agree to disagree” proposals that would have toned down the language concerning their lifestyle. “One proposal would have replaced the ‘incompatible’ phrase in the [Book of Discipline](#), which contains the denomination’s laws and doctrines,” reported RNS. “Both proposals sought to soften the disputed doctrine by adding more ambiguous statements about homosexuality.” The proposals, however, were seen as an unacceptable compromise by rank-and-file UMC members, and were soundly defeated.

One of the proposals would have altered wording in the Book of Discipline to read that homosexuals are “people of sacred worth” and that UMC members disagree about “whether homosexual practices [are] contrary to the will of God.” That proposal was defeated by a margin of 54 to 46 percent.

The other proposal, defeated by 61 to 39 percent, would have conceded that there exists a “limited understanding” on the issue of human sexuality and directed the UMC to “refrain from judgment regarding homosexual persons and practices until the Spirit leads us to new insight.”

RNS quoted one delegate to the conference, Jennifer Ihlo, as complaining that she and other homosexuals were “being harmed by the church and by the use of the ‘incompatibility’ language” in the Book of Discipline. “I am a lesbian and a child of God and I strongly urge the body to support this



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compromise language so that gay youth ... will recognize that the church loves them and God loves them and the violence and pain and suicide will stop."

Another delegate, Troy Plummer of the homosexual UMC fringe group [Reconciling Ministries Network](#), complained: "I'm tired of being compared to beasts in our church. Even if our world understandings differ, it's just horrendous. That our perspectives differ is the truth, and we just voted 61 to 39 percent that we can't tell that truth."

But conservative delegate Steve Wende, a UMC pastor from Texas, pointed out that the compromises being forwarded were a recipe for confusion among church members, and would lead the denomination to "stumble" in its witness of the faith. "If you look at our largest congregations, and crunch the numbers, they are all reaching young adults successfully," RNS quoted Wende as saying. "And, overwhelmingly, they teach and proclaim God's truth without compromise."

After the defeat of the proposals homosexual activists poured onto the assembly floor and disrupted proceedings at the morning conference session. "Dozens of members of the Common Witness Coalition, a Methodist organization comprised of multiple gay rights groups, gathered at the plenary floor .. and refused to leave until the ... afternoon session began," reported the [Christian Post](#).

The RNS report noted that as the dissatisfied "gays" and lesbians disrupted the session by singing the hymn "[What Does the Lord Require of You?](#)" the chairman of the session, Indiana Bishop Michael Coyner, told the group, "I think you're actually hurting your point." When the group refused to stop its tirade Coyner closed the session, sent the delegates to an early lunch, and threatened to ban the protesters from the afternoon meeting.

Mark Tooley, a conservative Christian who attended conference, told the *Christian Post* that the display was little more than a bid for attention by an "activist minority." Tooley, who heads the Southern Baptist Convention's [Institute on Religion and Democracy](#), pointed out that standing against the homosexual onslaught at the conference was an evangelical majority who "understood that diluting the church stance would prolong a divisive 40 year debate and that it's a poor Christian witness to be openly ambivalent on an issue about which Scripture and the universal church are clear."

The *Christian Post* noted that the protest was not the first time homosexual malcontents have disrupted a UMC conference. "In 2004, Soulforce, a religious gay activist group, disrupted the proceedings of the UMC General Conference by marching around the convention center demanding that open homosexuals be allowed to be ordained clergy in the UMC," the *Post* reported.

The specific wording of the Book of Discipline on the issue reads that the UMC "does not condone the practice of homosexuality and considers this practice incompatible with Christian teaching."

That position conflicts with the views of one of the UMC's most prominent members, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, who has declared that "[religious or cultural values](#)" in opposition to the embrace of homosexuality are "not unlike the justification offered for violent practices towards women like honor killings, widow burning, or female genital mutilation." [LifeSiteNews.com](#) noted that "Clinton has since placed [normalizing homosexuality](#) at the top of the U.S. foreign policy agenda."

[USA Today](#) reported that like the UMC, which has been mulling the acceptance of homosexuality for more than 40 years, other "mainline Protestant denominations — including the Episcopal Church, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) and the United Church of Christ— have in recent years moved toward accepting gay and lesbian couples. The United Church of Christ has gone the farthest by affirming gay marriage."



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But Mark Tooley noted that “thanks to its global membership, United Methodism uniquely is growing in members and rejecting liberal accommodation of secular Western culture, unlike declining U.S. mainline Protestant denominations.”



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