

Resolution Approved by the 2018 Annual Conference Session June 5, 2018

WHEREAS, the official Book of Discipline of our United Methodist Church teaches that “sexual relations are affirmed only within the covenant of monogamous, heterosexual marriage” (§161G), requires our clergy to pledge to abstain from any sexual relations outside of marriage between one man and one woman (§304.2-3), and forbids our congregations from hosting “ceremonies that celebrate homosexual unions” (§341.6); and

WHEREAS, these official United Methodist standards have already been extensively debated throughout our denomination and at every General Conference for many years, and every General Conference has consistently rejected attempts to make these standards more permissive; and

WHEREAS, these standards are consistent with our understanding of the teachings of the Old and New Testaments, 2,000 years of consistent historical Christian teaching, and the global, ecumenical consensus of most Christian churches around the world today; and

WHEREAS, we can hold firmly to these biblical standards while at the same time remaining compassionate and loving toward our friends, relatives, and fellow church members who may self-identify as being part of the LGBTQ community; and

WHEREAS, there has recently been significant tension within our denomination related to some United Methodists personally disagreeing with the standards above, and United Methodist clergy in some regions publicly breaking these rules; and

WHEREAS, those set apart for ordained ministry within our church should be men and women of integrity who can be trusted to keep their word; and

WHEREAS, when United Methodist ministers choose to openly betray their vows to live according to our church’s standards, it harms the church, compromises our witness, and erodes trust between United Methodists; and

WHEREAS, the specially called 2019 General Conference will address some of these tensions, and may consider a number of relevant proposals, including strengthening accountability to these standards in our Discipline or alternatively removing these standards; and

WHEREAS, when other large denominations have changed their similar standards related to marriage and ordination, this has led to negative consequences such as large membership losses and, in some cases, the ugly spectacle of former fellow church members fighting each other in secular courts in costly, drawn-out battles related to ownership of church property; and

WHEREAS, it can be valuable for the delegates of our global, connectional church to also hear the concerns of our annual conference;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the South Georgia Annual Conference hereby expresses our hope that the 2019 General Conference will affirm the present standards of our Discipline, with added accountability for punitive actions if the present standards of our Discipline are not adhered to and found to be blatantly violated within or outside the conference in which the violation occurs. This would restore integrity to our covenant, as the “way forward” that would be the most faithful to Scripture and our Wesleyan tradition, the most effective for our mission, and the most helpful for maintaining unity among the greatest number of current United Methodists as possible; and

WHEREAS, the 2019 General Conference will affirm the present standards of our Discipline with added accountability for punitive actions if the present standards of our Discipline are not adhered to and found to be blatantly violated within or outside the conference in which the violation occurs. This would restore integrity; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that we direct the Secretary of our Annual Conference, within the next 60 days, to transmit a copy of the full text of this resolution along with the vote to the head of the General Conference delegation for every other annual conference, along with a request for this resolution to be shared with the other members of their respective delegations.