

SFA Wesley Foundation statement of how to live out the 2016 Book of Discipline's statement about homosexuality with integrity and Christian hospitality.

Question: I know that the United Methodist Church's official stance is that "the practice of homosexuality is incompatible with Christian teaching," but what does that mean for the LGBTQ+ community at the Wesley Foundation at SFA?

Answer: First, it's important that we begin by denouncing behavior that degrades or disparages individuals because of their gender identity or sexual orientation.

Second, other affirmations that surround and contextualize the quote above are important to know, so here is the full quote and official stance of the UMC: "We affirm that all persons are individuals of sacred worth, created in the image of God. All persons need the ministry of the Church in their struggles for human fulfillment, as well as the spiritual and emotional care of a fellowship that enables reconciling relationships with God, with others, and with self. The United Methodist Church does not condone the practice of homosexuality and considers this practice incompatible with Christian teaching. We affirm that God's grace is available to all. We will seek to live together in Christian community, welcoming, forgiving, and loving one another, as Christ has loved and accepted us. We implore families and churches not to reject or condemn lesbian and gay members and friends. We commit ourselves to be in ministry for and with all persons."

Although we cannot control the beliefs or behavior of everyone who participates in our ministry, the pastors will not stand idly by if they are aware of a Wesley student harassing an LGBTQ+ student. If you or a friend feels unwelcome (for any reason), we hope that you will let us know why so we can address the issue for you and future students. The pastors at Wesley teach the community to treat each other with respect and love regardless of gender identity or sexual orientation. It is not Christian behavior to denigrate, shame, or insult others who are seeking friends, support, and a closer relationship with God. We strive to be a community that is a safe place to ask questions, explore faith, and discover answers, regardless of a person's beliefs about LGBTQ+. At the Wesley Foundation, we invite all students to participate in all of our activities, including opportunities for student leadership.

If you have questions about sexual identity or orientation and would like to talk to a pastor about it, we are available. The pastors will not force a confrontation on this topic on anyone in the LGBTQ+ community because we believe those conversations are best held in the company of those who invite input.

Finally, our ultimate hope is that you find a place to grow closer to God in Christ. We simply ask that you test our love for you and your friends by giving us an opportunity to welcome you. Your personal experience is the most important answer to the question above.