

## Statement of the SFA Wesley Foundation Board of Directors on Human Sexuality

(passed unanimously on July 16, 2024)

**Question:** I know that changes were made in the United Methodist Church in 2024 regarding human sexuality, but what are they and what do they mean for the LGBTQIA+ community at the SFA Wesley Foundation?

**Answer:** There were changes in many areas, but the one that seems to have the largest impact was the removal of the following sentence from the *Book of Discipline*, the document that determines our law, structure and theology: “*The United Methodist Church does not condone the practice of homosexuality and considers this practice incompatible with Christian teaching.*” All other similar language was removed elsewhere. This was replaced, in part, by the following statement: “*We affirm human sexuality as a sacred gift and acknowledge that sexual intimacy contributes to fostering the emotional, spiritual, and physical well-being of individuals and to nurturing healthy sexual relationships that are grounded in love, care and respect.*”

Regarding human sexuality in general, we lament the omission in the 2024 *Book of Discipline* to explicitly affirm that sexual relations are affirmed only within the covenant of marriage. This affirmation has been included in every *Book of Discipline* of the United Methodist Church since its formation, and our board affirms this historic understanding of sexual intimacy in marriage. For over two decades, our leadership has agreed to a covenant of accountability that includes this expectation for the sake of the gospel. We expect our pastors to continue to teach and personally commit to this value.

Regarding homosexuality specifically, the UMC neither condones nor condemns it. Instead, the new wording allows churches and pastors to make their own decisions about whether to allow same-sex marriages on their property or to officiate at same-sex weddings.

As for this ministry, we reaffirm our statement that was passed unanimously in 2020: “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 LGBTQIA+. At the Wesley Foundation, we invite all students to participate in all of our activities, including opportunities for student leadership.”

Both of our pastors have indicated that they are not able to officiate at same-sex weddings with integrity, and we support their freedom to choose this. We also believe in their desire to reach out to all students. For almost three decades under their leadership, Wesley has been a place of love, acceptance, and community for all students on the SFA campus, and we support their philosophy of ministry that has led so many students closer to Christ. We believe your experience here will show you that God loves you, our pastors love you, and your fellow students love you. We invite you to hold us accountable to this claim by joining us in ministry to the SFA campus.