

An Amendment to “The Constitution”
Found in *The Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church*

Paragraph 4, Article 4

All Annual and Central Conferences will vote in 2017 and 2018 on changes approved at General Conference 2016 to Paragraph 4, Article 4 of “The Constitution” contained in *The Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church*. No amendments will be allowed. The proposed amendment reads as follows:

In the United Methodist Church, no conference or other organizational unit of the Church shall be structured so as to exclude any member or constituent body of the Church because of race, color, national origin, **ability** or economic condition, nor shall any member be denied access to an equal place in the life, worship, and governance of the Church because of race, color, **gender**, national origin, **ability**, **age**, **marital status**, or economic condition.

What do these changes mean?

ABILITY

- Adds *ability* to the list of categories constitutionally protected from exclusion in the Church; the Church cannot discriminate based on a person’s physical or mental circumstances.
- Adding this word to “The Constitution” means that a person may not be denied membership privileges based on their abilities or limitations (abilities are God-given gifts vs. skills which are learned behaviors).

GENDER

- Adds *gender* to the list of categories constitutionally protected from exclusion in the Church; the Church cannot discriminate against a person because they are male or female.
- Throughout *The Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church*, *gender* is used when addressing fair treatment of both men and women; this language is consistent with *The Discipline*.

AGE

- Adds *age* to the list of categories constitutionally protected from exclusion in the Church; the Church cannot discriminate based on a person’s age, particularly the very young and the very old.
- Reminds us that the Church is a multi-generational community; all ages are important.

MARITAL STATUS

- Defines *status* as “*marital status*”, adding it to the list of categories constitutionally protected from exclusion in the Church; the Church cannot discriminate against a person because they are single, married, divorced or widowed.
- These words prevent unfair treatment of a person based on their marital status.

For questions, please email para4@gcsrw.org to contact the General Commission on the Status and Role of Women, United Methodist Women, the General Commission on Discipleship, or the DisAbility Ministries Committee of The United Methodist Church