

Resolution: “A Call to End the Ban Against Gays and Lesbians in the Military”

[Adopted by the nineteenth General Synod in St. Louis, MO in 1993]

Summary:

The President of the United States has announced his intention to lift the ban against gays and lesbians in the military by Executive Order in July 1993. Since the United Church of Christ has a history of supporting civil rights for African-Americans, Hispanics, Native Americans, Pacific and Asian Americans, women and people with disabilities, we call on the Nineteenth General Synod and its member churches to advocate for ending the ban against gays and lesbians in the military.

Background:

The United Church of Christ has long advocated the civil rights of gays and lesbians, ordained openly gay and lesbian persons as ministers and encouraged local churches to adopt non-discrimination policies and Covenants of Openness and Affirmation welcoming people of gay, lesbian, and bisexual orientation. The voice of the United Church of Christ and its member churches again needs to be heard in support of the rights of gays and lesbians to serve in the Armed Forces.

Theological Rationale:

All human beings are created in the image of God. Our sexuality is a gift from God. We should be judged not by our sexual orientation but by the responsible expression of our sexuality in the context of community and our covenantal relationships.

Text:

WHEREAS, the military, as one of the nation’s largest employers, has successfully pioneered the enforcement of civil rights guaranteed by the Constitution, most notably with respect to racial integration;

WHEREAS, gays and lesbians have served with distinction and have, for generations, constituted a significant, but hidden, part of the Armed Forces;

WHEREAS, the ban against gays and lesbians in the military has been used to rationalize and tolerate harassment, assault and even murder of gays and lesbians;

WHEREAS, “the Tailhook incident” and other incidents of sexual harassment and assault demonstrate the need to enact and enforce policies governing sexual conduct for all military personnel; and

WHEREAS, the United Church of Christ has affirmed the full participation of gays and lesbians in church and society, including a Pronouncement on Civil Liberties Without Discrimination Related to Affectional or Sexual Preference issued by the Tenth General Synod in 1975;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Nineteenth General Synod of the United Church of Christ directs its leaders:

1. to strongly urge the lifting of the ban against gays and lesbians in the military to the President, the Congress, the Senate and House Armed Forces Committees and the Joint Chiefs of Staff of the Armed Forces and to communicate our denomination’s position through the media and to other religious bodies;
2. to urge the full, swift, impartial and independent investigation of all cases of sexual harassment or hate crimes involving military personnel, regardless of the sexual orientation of either the perpetrator or the victim;
3. to support the development of just and uniform standards of sexual conduct for all military personnel; and
4. to assist congregations of the United Church of Christ in educating themselves and engaging in advocacy for the civil rights of gays and lesbians.