ITEM 2026-53: LGBTQ+ INCLUSION TASKFORCE

Whereas, the 2020/2024 General Conference of The United Methodist Church removed Book of Discipline policies targeting the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer (LGBTQ+) community and mandating discrimination throughout the denomination; and

Whereas, dismantling discrimination and harm cannot be realized through legislation alone, but requires ongoing engagement in the context of relationship, including but not limited to: policy change, story-sharing and dialogue, education, support, leadership development, solidarity, advocacy, monitoring, accountability; and

Whereas, the Horizon Texas Annual Conference seeks to be proactive in building relationships, learning, and living into all that is now possible for ministry with and for LGBTQ+ persons; it is therefore

Resolved, That the Horizon Texas Annual Conference calls on our Bishop, Cabinet, and Nominations Committee to create a conference-level LGBTQ+ Inclusion Taskforce under the umbrella of Pursue and Embrace Diversity Team for the purpose of:

1. Actively supporting the LGBTQ+ laity, clergy, and candidates for licensed/ordained ministry in the Horizon Texas Annual Conference with community-building, faith and leadership development, solidarity, and advocacy.
2. Centering and amplifying the voices and experiences of the LGBTQ+ community, especially those who have been marginalized by church and society, most notably, transgender and Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) persons.
3. Monitoring Annual Conference committees and policies, as well as the status and needs of candidates and clergy under appointment to ensure justice and equity on the basis of sexual orientation, gender identity, and expression, and to report findings to the Annual Conference.
4. Curating, creating, and sharing resources to equip local churches for:
    a. relationship building and continuing education
    b. meaningful ministry with and for LGBTQ+ church and community members
5. Collaborating with ministry-specific areas, particularly children's ministry, youth ministry, camping ministry and campus ministry in the desire to safely and most effectively be in ministry with and for LGBTQ+ people of all ages.

Resolved, That the LGBTQ+ Inclusion Taskforce of 6-9 persons will be established within 3 months of annual conference adjournment, hold its first meeting in 2026, and include:

1. LGBTQ+ persons that make up at least ⅓ of the total membership
2. Intentional diversity of age
    a. At least 2 members under the age of 25
    b. ⅓ membership under 35
    c. ⅓ membership 36 to 55
    d. ⅓ membership 56 and up
3. Intentional diversity throughout all genders
4. Intentional diversity throughout all races and ethnicities
5. Lay and clergy representatives from each district.
6. Members with established leadership in the area of LGBTQ+ justice and inclusion

Resolved, That the LGBTQ+ Inclusion Taskforce will be fully included in all future annual conference processes related to ensuring an appropriate budget, representation on other committees, reporting to the annual conference, and ongoing membership based on the above criteria.

Submitted by Rev. Rachel Griffin-Allison

Supporting Information

What Biblical text(s) informed you in the development of this petition?

This resolution is grounded in a broad witness of Scripture that affirms God's expansive love, justice, and inclusion. Key texts include:

- Genesis 1:27 – All people are created in the image of God.
- Micah 6:8 – The call to do justice, love kindness, and walk humbly with God.
- Isaiah 58 – God's vision of true worship as liberation and repair.
- Acts 10:34–35 – "God shows no partiality," affirming radical inclusion.
- Galatians 3:28 – Unity in Christ beyond divisions.
- Luke 4:18–19 – Jesus' mission to proclaim good news to the marginalized.

These texts collectively shape a theological vision of belonging, dignity, and justice that informs this resolution.

How does this petition help further the mission of our Annual Conference to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world? How does it align with the HTC vision and the five strategic priorities?

This item advances the mission of the Horizon Texas Annual Conference to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world by strengthening the capacity of the Church to fully include, support, and equip LGBTQ+ clergy and leaders. When all called leaders are resourced to serve with authenticity and integrity, the Church is better positioned to embody the love of Christ and engage in transformative ministry in the world.

This work aligns closely with the five strategic priorities of the Horizon Texas Conference:

- **Multiplying Followers of Jesus**: By creating resources that support inclusive ministry, this effort helps cultivate communities where more people can encounter the love of Christ and respond to the call of discipleship. When LGBTQ+ individuals and allies experience belonging, the Church becomes a more credible and compelling witness.
- **Championing Children and Youth**: LGBTQ+ youth are among the most vulnerable populations in both church and society. Equipping clergy with tools for care, advocacy, and inclusion directly contributes to creating safer, more life-giving environments for young people to grow in faith.
- **Pursue and Embrace Diversity**: This item directly embodies the commitment to embrace diversity by affirming the full humanity and calling of LGBTQ+ persons. It strengthens the Church's ability to reflect the breadth of God's beloved community.
- **Maximize Care and Healing**: LGBTQ+ clergy and congregants have often experienced harm within the Church. Providing resources that foster pastoral care, resilience, and support contributes to healing and wholeness within the body of Christ.

- **Telling Our Story**: This work helps the Church more clearly and faithfully tell its story as a community shaped by grace, inclusion, and justice. It equips leaders to articulate a vision of the Church that is hopeful, authentic, and rooted in the gospel.

In all these ways, this item supports a Church that is not only growing in number, but deepening in faithfulness—participating more fully in God's work of transformation in the world.

Provide pertinent references set forth in the 2020/2024 Book of Discipline *or the* 2020/2024 Book of Resolutions *that relate to this petition.*

Relevant references include:
- Book of Discipline ¶121 – The mission of the Church
- ¶122 – The process for carrying out our mission
- ¶140 – The Wesleyan understanding of social holiness
- ¶162 – Social Principles (Human Sexuality, Human Dignity)
- ¶2702 – Petitions and resolutions process

Book of Resolutions:
- "Human Sexuality" (2016/2020)
- "Equal Rights Regardless of Sexual Orientation"
- "Welcoming the Stranger"
- "Resolution on Diversity and Inclusion"

These provide context for ongoing denominational conversations around inclusion and justice.

How does this item differ from the stated stances set forth in the 2020/2024 Book of Discipline *or the* 2020/2024 Book of Resolutions*?*

This resolution builds upon, but also moves beyond, existing denominational language by:
- Centering lived experience of LGBTQ+ persons more explicitly
- Emphasizing full participation in leadership and ministry
- Moving from "welcome" toward full inclusion and equity
- Naming justice and belonging as essential, not optional

While the Discipline acknowledges human dignity, this resolution calls for more concrete, contextual action within the Horizon Texas Conference..

If applied, what action would be required of the Horizon Texas Annual Conference?

If adopted, the Horizon Texas Annual Conference commits to:
- Supporting the work of the LGBTQ+ Inclusion Team
- Developing resources and training for congregations and leaders
- Encouraging inclusive ministry practices across the conference
- Providing pastoral and community support structures

Financial implications:
- Modest funding may be required for resource development, training events, and communications

- Potential budget allocation for inclusion initiatives and leadership development

These investments are aligned with the conference's mission and represent a commitment to sustainable, justice-centered ministry.