

Christian denominations and Evolution -

While some Christian denominations believe the narrative of the Bible and the theory of evolution are not compatible, many others find the two beliefs can align.

Joel Martin examined the issue in the "Evolution: Education Outreach" journal and said, contrary to what many think, a majority of Christians find evolution compatible with their beliefs.

Martin said this majority is partly due to a large Catholic base but also the many “mainstream” Protestant denominations. The following seven denominations are the ones with the most liberal stance of evolution:

Roman Catholic

As Martin pointed out in his study, Catholics make up a large portion of the Christian population worldwide as well as a significant denomination in the United States. The Roman Catholic governing body has found compatibility between some evolutionary perspectives and their religious ideology.

However, the Catholic Church laid out strict constraints as to what is reconcilable with its beliefs. **Catholic Answers** [said](#) that when it comes to human evolution, “It allows for the possibility that man’s body developed from previous biological forms, under God’s guidance, but it insists on the special creation of his soul” and “in no circumstances permits belief in atheistic evolution.”

United Methodist

The United Methodist Church, unlike the Roman Catholics, are not as nuanced about their acceptance of evolution.

Simply, **their website** [says](#), “We find that science’s descriptions of cosmological, geological, and biological evolution are not in conflict with theology.”

Evangelical Lutheran Church of America

This Christian denomination is facing internal conflict regarding the basis of their beliefs, including evolution. The [group ELCA Today operates](#) a website with a stated mission “to provide you with information, documents, articles, ... all dealing with the increasingly troubling non-Scriptural teachings ... of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.”

ELCA Today criticized the 1,500 ELCA leaders that signed “The Clergy Letter – from American Christian Clergy: An Open Letter Concerning Religion and Science,” in which it stated that the Bible is not to be read literally like a science textbook. The letter said that while many biblical stories such as Adam and Eve and Noah and the ark are important stories that demonstrate the relationship between God and society, religious truth is different from scientific truth.

Furthermore, one faction of the denomination – the Missouri Synod of the Lutheran Church – takes a completely conservative view of evolution.

Presbyterian Church

The stance of the Presbyterian Church U.S. has remained the same since its [1969 General Assembly statement](#). It stated that the “true relation between the evolutionary theory and the Bible is that of non-contradiction” and the Church “should carefully refrain from either affirming or denying the theory of evolution.”

Episcopal Church

The Episcopal Church offered a statement over the [Episcopal News Service](#) in 2006 regarding its stance on evolution. The Bishop-elect at the time advocated for teaching evolution in schools since creationism does not have such strong supporting data as evolutionism.

Bishop-elect Katharine Jefferts Schori said, “I believe in the creeds. They say God created the world, but they don’t say how.”

Pentecostalism and Homosexuality

Most churches that are within the [Pentecostal Movement](#) view homosexual behavior as a sin. The second largest Pentecostal Church in the USA, the [Assemblies of God](#), makes its view clear on homosexuality in a position paper stating: "It should be noted at the outset that there is absolutely no affirmation of homosexual behavior found anywhere in Scripture. Rather, the consistent sexual ideal is chastity for those outside a monogamous heterosexual marriage and fidelity for those inside such a marriage. There is also abundant evidence that homosexual behavior, along with illicit heterosexual behavior, is immoral and comes under the judgment of God." ^[92]

Whereas the inerrant, inspired Word of God emphatically declares, in Romans chapter I, homosexuality to be vile, unclean, unnatural, unseemly, and an abomination in the sight of God, and Whereas the [United Pentecostal Church International](#) is a fundamental Bible-believing organism entrusted with a divine destiny to provide

spiritual direction to a wayward world, Let us therefore resolve that the United Pentecostal Church International go on public record as absolutely opposed to homosexuality and condemn it as a moral decadence and sin.^[93]

The [Church of God \(Cleveland, Tennessee\)](#) similarly condemns homosexuality.^[94] These churches therefore oppose same-sex unions, gay pastors, and would tend to forbid congregants who persist in homosexual practices. Politically, there are likely to support politicians with the same viewpoints. Assemblies of God churches insist that those who engage in homosexual activity should cease such behavior, as with any sin.^[95] The [Church of God In Christ](#) has taken similar positions which condemn homosexuality and same sex marriage.

There are, however, a growing number of LGBT affirming Pentecostal churches, both denominations and independent churches. These include the Anointed Affirming Independent Ministries, The Anthem Church was birthed out of the Pentecostal Movement, and merged into an Inter Denominational Fellowship with members from the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, Catholic Church, Episcopalian, APCI/GAAAP and the LDS Church, [Affirming Pentecostal Church International](#), the Covenant Network,^[96] the [Global Alliance of Affirming Apostolic Pentecostals](#) (GAAAP),^[97] and the Fellowship of Reconciling Pentecostals International (RPI).^[98] Those Pentecostal churches that are gay affirming base their position on research done into scripture in the original languages, where they believe they find no condemnation of homosexuality.^{[99][100]}

Metropolitan Community Church

The [Metropolitan Community Church](#) is an international [fellowship](#) of [Christian congregations](#). It is considered by many to be a full [mainline denomination](#) or communion. There are currently 300 congregations in 22 countries, and the Fellowship has a specific outreach to [lesbian](#), [gay](#), [bisexual](#) and [transgender](#) communities. Acceptance of homosexuality is an important part of its theology and the church has performed same sex marriage ceremonies since 1968.^[88]

The Metropolitan Community Church was instrumental in the first legal challenges to the heterosexual legal definition of marriage in [Ontario](#) (see [Same-sex marriage in Ontario](#)). Two couples used an old legal procedure called reading the [banns](#) to marry without a licence. When same-sex marriage was legalized in Ontario, their marriages were recognized

Roman Catholic Church

Main article: [Homosexuality and Roman Catholicism](#)

Homosexuality is considered in the Roman Catholic Church teaching under two distinct aspects. Homosexuality as an orientation is not considered sinful, though is referred to, in highly technical language, as an "objective disorder" as it is seen as "ordered toward an intrinsic moral evil". The Church recognizes that homosexuality is an innate condition in most cases, not a choice, and therefore cannot be considered a sin.

Homosexual sexual activity, however, is seen as a "moral disorder" and "homosexual acts" as "contrary to the natural law". The same acts would be considered equally 'contrary to the natural law' if performed by heterosexual couples. "They close the sexual act to the gift of life. They do not proceed from a genuine effective and sexual complementary." It should be noted that the term 'disorder' is used several times throughout [The Catechism of the Catholic Church](#) to reference sin in general—e.g. venial sin, sin within marriage, the disorder of divorce, etc. All sin creates a dis-ordering of the direction and proper ordering of nature.

The Roman Catholic Church believes that marriage is only between one man and one woman, and opposes same-sex marriage at both the religious and civil levels. The Church also holds that same-sex unions are an unfavorable environment for children and that the legalization of such unions damages society.

Baptists

Main article: [Homosexuality and Baptist churches](#)

The [Southern Baptist Convention](#), the largest of the Baptist denominations and the single largest Protestant group in the U.S., believes that the Bible says practicing homosexuality is a sin, stating clearly that its members "affirm God's plan for marriage and sexual intimacy – one man, and one woman, for life. Homosexuality is not a 'valid alternative lifestyle.' It is not, however, an unforgivable sin. The same redemption available to all sinners is available to homosexuals. They, too, may become new creations in Christ."^[21] [Independent Fundamental Baptist](#) churches (in general) also view homosexuality as sinful or unnatural.

The [American Baptist Churches USA](#) (ABCUSA) officially regards homosexual conduct "as incompatible with Biblical teaching";^[22] however, there are a number of Baptist churches in the ABCUSA and the [Cooperative Baptist Fellowship](#) that have less literal views.^[23] The [Association of Welcoming and Affirming Baptists](#), a group of some 50 churches and organizations, is committed to the "full inclusion" of gay and lesbian persons in their churches.^[24]

The historically African-American denominations of the [National Baptist Convention](#) have issued no public statements on homosexuality; however, the [National Baptist Convention, USA, Inc.](#) does not allow its clergy to officiate at ceremonies for same-sex unions

Mennonite Churches

The [Mennonite](#) church has multiple [LGBT-affirming denominations](#). However, acceptance of LGBT Christians varies widely. No Mennonite Churches in North or South America have officially endorsed [same-sex marriage](#), but some have taken steps towards this practice. In the Netherlands, same-sex marriages can be both ordained and conducted by the Mennonite Church since 2001.^{[72][73]}

The [Church of the Brethren](#), [Mennonite Church USA](#), and [Mennonite Church Canada](#) denominations work with the [Supportive Communities Network](#) to support the small proportion of congregations that include openly gay members. This is coordinated through the [Brethren Mennonite Council on Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Interests](#) with over 70 participating congregations.^[74] In February 2014, the Mountain States Conference of the Mennonite Church USA approved the ministerial license and ordination of an openly lesbian pastor.^[75]

In contrast, some Mennonite pastors who performed same-sex unions have had their credentials revoked by their conference^[76] and some within the Mennonite Church USA have had their credentials reviewed without any disciplinary actions taken.^{[77][78]} A small number of Mennonite churches have been censured or disciplined for not expelling openly homosexual members.^[79]

The [Pink Menno Campaign](#) is a [parachurch organization](#) that advocates for the inclusion of LGBT Christians for membership, marriage and ordination in Mennonite churches.^[80] The [Welcome Committee](#) is an ad hoc group that issued an [open letter](#) to Mennonite churches defending inclusion of LGBT members and encourages conversation in churches about the issue.

United Methodist Church

The United Methodist Church (UMC) has a [General Conference](#) every four years to make decisions and when a decision is made, they add it to the *Book of Discipline*. From the 2016 Book of Discipline, the United Methodist Church Website cites multiple [decisions on homosexuality](#). On the basis of membership, all persons are eligible to "attend its worship services, participate in its programs, receive the sacraments, upon baptism be admitted as baptized members, and upon taking vows declaring the Christian faith, become professing members in any local church in the connection"^[83]. Regarding the ministry of the ordained: The practice of homosexuality is incompatible with Christian teaching. Thus self-identifying homosexuals are not "to be certified as candidates, ordained as ministers, or appointed to serve in The United Methodist Church"^[84]. Also, "ceremonies that celebrate homosexual unions are not to be conducted by our ministers nor in our churches"^[85]. On the basis of funds, the UMC does not want any of their ministries' funds used or allocated to LGBTQ+ groups or organizations. Although UMC does not want the funds to be used to condemn any such organizations either.

On July 15, 2016, Reverend Karen Oliveto became the first openly gay United Methodist Bishop after several annual conferences passed resolutions not to conform with any LGBT discriminatory church laws. UMC Bishops are elected for life. Oliveto is married to Robin Ridenour, who is a deaconess in UMC. ^[86]

History: Since 1972, the [United Methodist Church](#), as its official position on [homosexuality](#), has maintained the [Book of Discipline](#) and has declared "homosexual practice" to be "incompatible with Christian teaching." Following the 1972 incompatibility clause, other restrictions have been added at subsequent General Conferences. Currently the *Book of Discipline* prohibits the ordination of "practicing, [self-avowed homosexuals](#)," forbids clergy from blessing or presiding over same-sex unions, forbids the use of UMC facilities for same-sex union ceremonies and prohibits the use of Church funds for "gay caucuses", or other groups that "promote the acceptance of homosexuality."

Despite this language, members of the Church are not of one mind on this issue. Preceding the incompatibility clause, the *Book of Discipline* clearly states that "homosexual persons, no less than heterosexual persons, are individuals of sacred worth." Some believe that this "[sacred](#) worth" clause stands in contradiction to the following statement regarding the incompatibility of homosexual practice with Christian teaching. The *Book of Discipline* affirms that all persons, both heterosexual and homosexual, are included in the ministry of the church and can receive the gift of God's [grace](#). While the *Book of Discipline* supports the [civil rights](#) of homosexual persons, and rejects the abuse of homosexuals by families and churches, it also calls for laws defining [marriage](#) as a union between one man and one woman.

Failed efforts have been made to pass resolutions to "fully include gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender persons in the life of the Church"^[87] at General Conferences since the introduction of the incompatibility clause in 1972; delegates from annual conferences in the Northeast and on the West Coast typically vote to do so, but are outnumbered by those from Southeast and Africa.

Some of these issues have come before the Judicial Council. On 31 October 2005, the Council undertook two measures on this topic. Firstly, the Council upheld the revocation of [Irene Elizabeth Stroud](#)'s clergy status for disclosing she is openly [lesbian](#). The council also rendered a decision allowing a Virginia pastor to deny church membership to a gay man. The latter [decision](#) appeared to UMC LGBT proponents to contradict both the Constitution and membership policies of the United Methodist Church which stipulate that membership shall be open to all persons "without regard to race, color, national origin, status or economic condition." The Judicial Council had previously found that the word "status" applies to gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender persons (See Decision 1020). Decision 1032 created vigorous debate on the level of autonomy individual pastors and congregations have in interpreting and applying Church doctrine.
