

Paragraph 4, Article IV

Genesis 1:27— God created humanity in God’s own image, in the divine image God created them, male and female God created them.

1. Paragraph 4 is in accord with ¶16.1 – To define and fix the conditions, privileges, and duties of Church membership, which shall in every case be without reference to race, gender, or status.
2. Paragraph 4 is also in harmony with ¶16.14 – General Conference shall have full legislative power over matters distinctively connectional, and in the exercise of this power shall have authority as follows...To secure the rights and privileges of membership in all agencies, programs, and institutions in The United Methodist Church regardless of race, gender or status.
3. Even though the beginning of the sentence is “All persons,” we know that not “all persons” have been eligible for membership. We know this because we are told who is not eligible: women who are not the first wife in a polygamy culture, women who have been divorced, etc.
4. There is no comma after all persons so the words following after describe who the “all” are.
5. The list helps remind us of the history of who was not included and who has been discriminated against. This seeks to correct historical inequities.
6. In the 2016 *Book of Discipline*, the word gender is used 64 times. The word is usually used in reference to inclusivity: race, gender, age, economic status, etc.
7. Under ¶ 161.F, “The Nurturing Community, Women and Men” states, “We affirm with Scripture the common humanity of male and female, both having equal worth in the eyes of God. We reject the erroneous notion that one gender is superior to another...”