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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Hamline is the First “Reconciling University” in Minnesota and Second in the Nation

St. Paul, Minn.-- On March 1, 2020, the Hamline University Board of Trustees unanimously passed a resolution officially welcoming people of all sexual orientations, gender identities, and gender expressions, formally affiliating the university with Reconciling Ministries Network (RMN). RMN is a nonprofit organization working for the inclusion of people of all sexual orientations and gender identities in both the policy and practices of United Methodist Church.

Hamline is the first university in Minnesota and the second in the United States to formally declare itself a reconciling university in affiliation with RMN. Union College in Barbourville, Kentucky was the first.

“I am proud to be associated with Hamline as a Reconciling University,” said Board Vice-Chair Brenda Edmondson Heim ’77. “It is especially satisfying to have watched this resolution move from a grassroots presentation from the student congress upward to the Board of Trustees committee presentation, all in the John Wesley tradition.”

First-year student Emily Hilderbrand drove the process of Hamline becoming a reconciling university.

In September 2019, Hilderbrand was hired by Chaplain Victorin-Vangerud to be the “Love Boldly” Student Coordinator for the Wesley Center. Love Boldly is Hamline’s campaign to advocate for LGBTQ+ equality within the United Methodist Church (UMC).

Throughout the fall semester, Hilderbrand worked to engage students, staff and faculty members in the adoption of the resolution before it was presented to the Board of Trustees.

“I wanted the process and the outcome of becoming a reconciling university to be representative of what the campus wanted and to be something that was community-shaped,” said Hilderbrand.

With Hilderbrand’s guidance, students met and drafted a welcoming statement in early November 2019. The welcoming statement was the first step required by RMN to becoming a reconciling university. On the advice of Hamline President Fayneese Miller, the text was changed to create a resolution, which was distributed and unanimously passed by the Faculty Council, the Hamline University Staff Association (HUSA) and the Hamline University Student

Congress (HUSC) throughout the month. From there, it went to President Miller's staff in December and with a few tweaks, the resolution was passed in January of 2020.

The next step was for Hilderbrand to present her resolution to the Academic and Student Affairs Committee (ASAC) of the Trustees, who needed to vote to bring the statement to the full Board at its next open meeting, which was set to happen in February.

"At the ASAC meeting on February 17, 2020, I poured my heart out, sharing the process we had gone through, and why the university cannot be silent on LGBTQ+ inclusion in the United Methodist Church," said Hilderbrand.

The ASAC voted unanimously to move it to the board of trustees, which passed the resolution, which reads as follows:

A Resolution Concerning Hamline as a Reconciling University

WHEREAS, Hamline University is a United Methodist Church-affiliated institution; and,

WHEREAS, in February of 2019, the global body of the United Methodist Church (henceforth referred to as "UMC") voted at a special session of General Conference to strengthen and reaffirm the 1972 decree that "homosexuality is incompatible with Christian teachings" and to effectively ban LGBTQ+ persons from being ordained and from being married within the UMC; and,

WHEREAS, Hamline University is a diverse learning community that includes people of various socio-economic statuses, nationalities, religious and spiritual identities, educational backgrounds, ability or disability statuses, marital statuses, cultural identities, racial and ethnic identities, immigration statuses, gender identities, sexual orientations, and gender expressions; and,

WHEREAS, a Reconciling University is a Methodist-affiliated institution that explicitly welcomes and celebrates people of all gender identities, sexual orientations, and gender expressions; and,

WHEREAS, Reconciling Universities are affiliated with Reconciling Ministries Networks (henceforth referred to as RMN), a Chicago-based non-profit fighting for LGBTQ+ equality in the UMC, and stands in solidarity with the several hundred organizations within the Methodist community that have become Reconciling in order to further the fight for LGBTQ+ equality; and,

WHEREAS, as a community of learners, Hamline University is in a uniquely powerful place to impact hearts and minds by sending this message of affirmation and resistance to the larger body of the UMC by becoming a Reconciling University; and,

WHEREAS, the Reconciling Movement is well-known within the Methodist community and being affiliated with RMN is one of the most effective forms of resistance and LGBTQ+ affirmation within the UMC; and,

WHEREAS, Hamline University integrates Wesleyan values into our foundation, and specifically references the Methodist principals of “Do all the good” and “Do no harm”; and, WHEREAS, to be a silent Methodist-related institution in this time is to be complicit in the harm that is being done by the UMC; and

WHEREAS, in order to become a Reconciling University, Hamline must pass a welcoming statement, that welcomes all people and explicitly states that all gender identities, sexual orientations, and gender expressions are welcomed and celebrated; and, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that in order to fulfill the requirements of becoming a Reconciling University,

Hamline University passes the following welcoming statement, which reads: Throughout its history, Hamline University has strived to create a diverse and inclusive learning community. As a school that invites all and is committed to continued learning and growth, Hamline University welcomes and celebrates people of all educational backgrounds, nationalities, religious and spiritual identities, socio-economic classes, mental and physical abilities and disabilities, marital statuses, cultural identities, racial and ethnic identities, immigration statuses, veteran status, gender expressions, sexual orientations, and gender identities.

All are welcomed at Hamline; and,

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that Hamline University will affiliate with RMN by becoming a Reconciling University in order to further the cause of LGBTQ+ equality.

“Hamline has always been open and welcoming to all and is a place where everyone is treated with respect and equality,” said Board of Trustees Chair Dale E. Peterson ’70. “The Board of Trustees is proud to have unanimously adopted the student-led resolution to reaffirm our long-standing policy and name Hamline as a reconciling university.”

Hilderbrand received a great deal of support during her quest.

“I specifically want to thank President Miller, Pastor Mariah Furness-Tollgaard of Hamline Church, Dean of Students Patti Klein, Chaplain Nancy Victorin-Vangerud, and fellow students Dieu Do, Emma Close, Izzy Alvaran, Emily Bagwell, and the attendees of the first Love Boldly meeting,” Hilderbrand said. “This is an accomplishment that we all share, and one that will make the world a better place.”

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