

## **Questions and Answers from the Social Principles**

As part on an ongoing effort to inform all of our beloved Conference members and friends of our denominational stance on equality, fairness and justice for all people, the following information, presented in Question and Answer format, is provided:

- 1) Q: Where does the United Methodist Church stand on equality for all of God's children?

A: Paragraph 161 A of the Social Principles of the Unite Methodist Church states:

“The Church seeks to fully embrace and nurture cultural formation and competency as a means to be fully one body, expressed in multiple ways. Each of us has multiple identities of equal value that intersect to form our complete self. We affirm that no identity or culture has more legitimacy than any other. We call the Church to challenge any hierarchy of cultures or identities. Through relationships within and among cultures we are called to and have the responsibility for learning from each other, showing mutual respect for our differences and similarities as we experience the diversity of perspectives and viewpoints.”

- 2) Q: Which specific human rights does the United Methodist Church support?

A: Paragraph 162 of our Social Principles states:

“We affirm all persons as equally valuable in the sight of God. We therefore work toward societies in which each person's value is recognized, maintained, and strengthened. We support the basic rights of all persons to equal access to housing, education, communication, employment, medical care, legal redress for grievances, and physical protection. We deplore acts of hate or violence against groups or persons based on race, color, national origin, ethnicity, age, gender, disability, status, economic condition, sexual orientation, gender identity, or religious affiliation. Our respect for the inherent dignity of all persons leads us to call for the recognition, protection, and implementation of the principles of The

Universal Declaration of Human Rights so that communities and individuals may claim and enjoy their universal, indivisible, and inalienable rights.”

And paragraph 162 A of our Social Principles states:

“We commend and encourage the self-awareness of all racial and ethnic groups and oppressed people that leads them to demand their just and equal rights as members of society. We assert the obligation of society and people within the society to implement compensatory programs that redress long-standing, systemic social deprivation of racial and ethnic persons. We further assert the right of historically underrepresented racial and ethnic persons to equal and equitable opportunities in employment and promotion; to education and training of the highest quality; to nondiscrimination in voting, access to public accommodations, and housing purchase or rental; to credit, financial loans, venture capital, and insurance policies; to positions of leadership and power in all elements of our life together; and to full participation in the Church and society.”

3) Q: How does the United Methodist church define racism?

A: Paragraph 162 A of our Social Principles states:

“We define racial discrimination as the disparate treatment and lack of full access and equity in resources, opportunities, and participation in the Church and in society based on race or ethnicity.”

4) Q: What is the position of the United Methodist Church on racism?

A: Paragraph 162 A of our Social Principles further states:

“Racism includes both personal and institutional racism. Personal racism is manifested through the individual expressions, attitudes, and/or behaviors that accept the assumptions of a racist value system and that maintain the benefits of this system. Institutional racism is the established social pattern that supports implicitly or explicitly the racist value system. **Racism, manifested as sin, plagues and hinders our relationship with Christ, inasmuch as it is antithetical to the gospel itself.** In many cultures white persons are granted unearned privileges and benefits that are denied to persons of color. We oppose the creation of a racial

hierarchy in any culture. **Racism breeds racial discrimination. Therefore, we recognize racism as sin and affirm the ultimate and temporal worth of all persons.** We rejoice in the gifts that particular ethnic histories and cultures bring to our total life. **We commit as the Church to move beyond symbolic expressions and representative models that do not challenge unjust systems of power and access.”**

5) Q: What is the United Methodist Church’s political responsibility regarding fairness and justice for all people?

A: Paragraph 164 B of our Social Principles states:

“The strength of a political system depends upon the full and willing participation of its citizens. The church should continually exert a strong ethical influence upon the state, supporting policies and programs deemed to be just and opposing policies and programs that are unjust.”

6) Q: What does the United Methodist Church affirm as the role of government and citizens regarding equality and justice for all people?

A: Paragraph 164 F of our Social Principles states:

“Governments and laws should be servants of God and of human beings. Citizens have a duty to abide by laws duly adopted by orderly and just process of government. But governments, no less than individuals, are subject to the judgment of God. Therefore, we recognize the right of individuals to dissent when acting under the constraint of conscience and, after having exhausted all legal recourse, to resist or disobey laws that they deem to be unjust or that are discriminately enforced. Even then, respect for law should be shown by refraining from violence and by being willing to accept the costs of disobedience. We do not encourage or condone any form of violent protest as a legitimate exercise of free speech or civil disobedience. We offer our prayers for those in rightful authority who serve the public, and we support their efforts to afford justice and equal opportunity for all people. We assert the duty of churches to support those who suffer because of their stands of conscience represented by nonviolent beliefs or acts. We urge governments to ensure civil rights, as defined by the International

Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, to persons in legal jeopardy because of those nonviolent acts.”

7) Q: How should our worship affirm our commitment to equality, fairness and justice for all people?

A: Paragraph 166 of our Social Principles is Our Social Creed:

“We believe in God, Creator of the world; and in Jesus Christ, the Redeemer of creation. We believe in the Holy Spirit, through whom we acknowledge God’s gifts, and we repent of our sin in misusing these gifts to idolatrous ends.

We affirm the natural world as God’s handiwork and dedicate ourselves to its preservation, enhancement, and faithful use by humankind.

We joyfully receive for ourselves and others the blessings of community, sexuality, marriage, and the family.

We commit ourselves to the rights of men, women, children, youth, young adults, the aging, and people with disabilities; to improvement of the quality of life; and to the rights and dignity of all persons.

We believe in the right and duty of persons to work for the glory of God and the good of themselves and others and in the protection of their welfare in so doing; in the rights to property as a trust from God, collective bargaining, and responsible consumption; and in the elimination of economic and social distress.

We dedicate ourselves to peace throughout the world, to the rule of justice and law among nations, and to individual freedom for all people of the world.

We believe in the present and final triumph of God’s Word in human affairs and gladly accept our commission to manifest the life of the gospel in the world.

Amen.”

Our Social Principles also includes A Companion Litany to Our Social Creed:

God in the Spirit revealed in Jesus Christ,  
calls us by grace

***to be renewed in the image of our Creator,  
that we may be one  
in divine love for the world.***

Today is the day  
God cares for the integrity of creation,  
wills the healing and wholeness of all life,  
weeps at the plunder of earth's goodness.

***And so shall we.***

Today is the day  
God embraces all hues of humanity,  
delights in diversity and difference,  
favors solidarity transforming strangers into friends.

***And so shall we.***

Today is the day  
God cries with the masses of starving people,  
despises growing disparity between rich and poor,  
demands justice for workers in the marketplace.

***And so shall we.***

Today is the day  
God deplores violence in our homes and streets,  
rebukes the world's warring madness,  
humbles the powerful and lifts up the lowly.

***And so shall we.***

Today is the day  
God calls for nations and peoples to live in peace,  
celebrates where justice and mercy embrace,  
exults when the wolf grazes with the lamb.

***And so shall we.***

***Today is the day  
God brings good news to the poor,  
proclaims release to the captives,  
gives sight to the blind, and  
sets the oppressed free.***

***And so shall we.***

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All information provided is taken from: The Social Principles of The Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church, The United Methodist Publishing House, 2016, Nashville, TN, pp. 105-145.