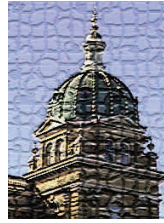




Our 2016 Legislative Priorities



Iowa Annual Conference of The United Methodist Church

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Here are six priority issues for the Iowa Annual Conference of The United Methodist Church.

These issues will be supported by the Legislative Advocacy Team at the Iowa Legislature.

INCLUSIVE COMMUNITY

All people of all races and nations are God's children in one family. "With respect to race, the aim of The United Methodist Church is nothing less than an inclusive church in an inclusive society. The United Methodist Church . . . calls upon all its people to perform those faithful deeds of love and justice in both church and community that will bring this aim into reality." (1976 General Conference Statement on the United Methodist Church and Race.)

We support legislation that will protect the civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights of all people in the United States. We affirm that all persons—whatever their racial or ethnic identity, whatever their gender or national origin, whatever their physical state or condition—are full-fledged members of the human community with every one of the rights and privileges of being part of the human family.

We support legislation that will uphold the civil and human rights of all migrants in the United States and will provide an opportunity to attain legal status for all undocumented migrants currently living in the U.S., as well as those arriving in the future.

We call upon the U.S. government to immediately cease all arrests, detainment and deportation of undocumented immigrants, including children, solely based upon their immigration status, until just and humane immigration reform is passed.

We affirm the right of all persons to equal opportunities for employment, access to housing, health care, education and freedom from social discrimination. Information from The United Methodist Book of Resolutions 2012, #3281, #3371, #3373 and the Social Principles, paragraph 162 H) Rights of Immigrants

CRIMINAL JUSTICE/RESTORATIVE JUSTICE

We urge the creation of a genuinely new system for the care and restoration of victims, offenders, criminal justice officials, and the community as a whole.

The United States leads the world in incarceration rates, approximately 700 persons per 100,000. The United States represents about 4.6% of the global population, yet 22% of the global jailed population.

The faith community must make a clear witness that the criminal-justice system must adhere to principles of community safety, innocent until proven guilty, rehabilitation and restorative justice. More resources and wisdom must be directed to assisting those who have been incarcerated to reenter society as productive citizens, without undue financial and legal burdens which stigmatize them and create stumbling blocks to success.

We support the consideration of victim-offender mediation, family group conferencing, and various other restorative justice practices as an alternative to the criminal courts. Restorative justice focuses on the victim, and the offender, and the community in the desire to bring healing and wholeness to all.

We support the elimination of all status offenses from the juvenile codes and from the processes for determining juvenile delinquency. We urge that all offenses by children and youth be handled with extreme reluctance to incarcerate the offender. We especially oppose solitary confinement of children and youths in official detention. We urge greater use of supportive and restorative services for parents and children in their home settings; foster care; neighborhood group homes, and the like.

Information from The United Methodist Church Book of Resolutions, 2012, Resolutions 5031, 5033, 5034, and the Social Principles, Paragraph 164 H.

SOCIAL JUSTICE

We affirm all persons as equally valuable in the sight of God. We support the basic rights of all persons regardless of country of origin, to equal access to housing, education, communication, employment, medical care, legal redress for grievance, 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. We define racial discrimination as the disparate treatment and lack of full access to resources and opportunities in the church and in society based on race or ethnicity.

Human trafficking is a modern form of slavery. Human trafficking is when any persons knowingly recruits, entices, solicits, isolate, harbors, transports, provides, obtains, or maintains another person knowing that the person will be subjected to involuntary servitude, including sexual servitude. In the United States, 18-20,000 people are trafficked each year.

We affirm the right of women to live free from violence and abuse and urge governments to enact policies that protect women against all forms of violence and discrimination in any sector of society.

Children have the rights to food, shelter, clothing, quality early childhood education, health care, and emotional well-being. Children must be protected from economic, physical, emotional, and sexual exploitation and abuse.

Information from the Social Principles Paragraph 162, (A), (C), (F), and (H), and The UM Book of Resolution 2012, #3162, #6023.

...What does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?" (Micah 6:6-8, RSV)

ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE

We support and encourage social policies that serve to reduce and control the creation of industrial byproducts and waste; facilitate the safe processing and disposal of toxic and nuclear waste and move toward the elimination of both; encourage reduction of municipal waste; provide for appropriate recycling and disposal of municipal waste; and assist the cleanup of polluted air, water and soil.

We support measures designed to maintain and restore natural ecosystems.

We urge all municipalities and other governmental organizations to develop processes for determining sustainability of water resources and to determine the environmental, economic, and social consequences of privatization of water resources prior to the licensing and approval thereof.

We support policies that develop alternatives to chemicals used for growing, processing and preserving food, and we strongly urge adequate research into their effects upon God's creation prior to utilization.

We support strenuous efforts to conserve energy and increase energy efficiency. We support national energy programs that will not increase the financial burden on the poor, the elderly, and those with fixed incomes.

Information from The United Methodist Book of Resolutions 2012, Resolutions 1001, 1002, 1023, 1024, 1026, and the Social Principles ,Paragraph 160.

POVERTY AND ECONOMIC JUSTICE

Since 1908, the church has advocated for a living wage in every industry and continues to support the rights of workers to share fully in the prosperity of society. We support efforts to raise the minimum wage to a living wage and index it to inflation.

We support funding for welfare, at a minimum indexed to the rate of inflation. We advocate for policies that insure that poverty reduction is a central goal. Welfare policies must work together to enable recipients and their families to leave poverty and achieve self-sufficiency.

We support measures that would reduce the concentration of wealth in the hands of the few. We support efforts to revise tax structures and to eliminate governmental support programs that now benefit the wealthy at the expense of other persons.

We advocate that states should provide means by which employment programs can be evaluated at the local level for effectiveness and fairness and allow welfare recipients to retain a substantial portion of wage earnings and assets before losing cash, housing, health, child care, food assistance or other benefits.

We oppose the growing legalization and promotion of gambling. We deplore the establishment of lotteries. We oppose the increasing development of the casino enterprise. We support the repeal of all laws that give gambling an acceptable place in our society.

Information from The United Methodist Book of Resolutions 2012, Resolutions 4041, 4056, 4091, and 4135.

MENTAL HEALTH

No person deserves to be stigmatized because of mental illness. Those with mental illness are no more violent than other persons are. Rather, they are much more likely to be victims of violence or preyed on by others.

Persons with mental illness and their families have a right to be treated with respect on the basis of common humanity and accurate information. They also have a right and responsibility to obtain care appropriate to their condition.

We support policies that promote compassion, and advocate for access to care and eradicate stigma. We support adequate public funding to enable mental-health-care systems to provide appropriate therapy. We support improved training for judges, police and other community officials in dealing with persons with mental illness and their families. We seek to promote more effective interaction among different systems involved in the care of persons with mental illness, including courts, police, employment, housing, welfare, religious and family systems.

We oppose the use of jails and prisons for incarceration of persons who have serious, persistent mental illnesses for whom treatment in a secure hospital setting is far more appropriate. Citing economic reasons as the cause for failure to provide medications to a person who needs them is unacceptable.

Information from The United Methodist Book of Resolutions 2012, #3302, Social Principles Para.162.

Learn to do good; seek justice, correct oppression; bring justice to the fatherless, plead the widow's cause.

-Isaiah 1:17

