



Our 2018 Legislative Priorities



**Iowa Annual Conference of
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Here are five 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.

Join the Legislative Network for email Action Alerts on the issues listed in this brochure:
www.iaumc.org/advocacy

ENVIRONMENT

We support care of the earth which will preserve the environment for the benefit of all.

Climate change and Human activities: Observations around the world make it clear that climate change is occurring, and rigorous scientific research concludes that the greenhouse gases emitted by human activities are the primary driver. There is strong evidence that ongoing climate change is having negative impacts on the economy, natural resources, and human health.

Impact of Climate Change: For the United States, climate change impacts include greater threats of extreme weather events, sea level rise, and increased risk of regional water scarcity, heat waves, wildfires, and the disturbance of biological systems. The severity of climate change impacts is increasing and is expected to increase substantially in the coming decades.

Renewable Energy : Cleaner alternatives to traditional energy sources are available. Harnessing solar and wind power can produce energy more in line with our principles of justice sustainability.

Right to Abundant and Clean Water: Water is a gift from God. We advocate measures that will address polluted runoff that is threatening to public health; protection of waters for future generations; wetlands preservation to clean water and sustain wildlife; and the public's right to know that their water is safe.

Recycling/Bottle Bill: Misuse and over consumption of natural and non-renewable resources jeopardizes the natural heritage that God has entrusted to all generations. We encourage programs which will recycle solid materials of all sorts and we urge United Methodists to participate actively in community recycling programs. We are concerned that eliminating the current bottle bill would decrease that encouragement to recycle.

(Information from June 28, 2016, the leaders of 31 major American scientific organizations . . . jointly stated in a letter to Congress and Th 2016 United Methodist Book of Resolutions, #1035

(page 81) Climate Change and the Church's Response, #1001. (page 43) Energy Policy Statement. #1029. (page 62-65) Protection of Water. United Methodist Social Principles, paragraph 160, I. The Natural World, 2016 Book of Resolutions page 39.)

HUMAN RIGHTS

We affirm all persons as equally valuable in the sight of God and as such, we must work toward a world in which each person's value is respected and nurtured.

Equal Protection of the Law: No person should face discrimination or violence because of their race, color, national origin, ethnicity, age, gender, disability, status, economic condition, sexual orientation, gender identity, or religious affiliation.

Humanizing the Criminal Justice System: A justice system that reflects God's desire for the world is one that is healing restorative. Those who commit crimes must be held accountable through making amends and they must be given the opportunity to return to their full place in society and community, including the reinstatement of their voting rights.

Immigrant Rights: We affirm the right of all persons to equal opportunities for employment, access to housing, health care, education, and freedom from social discrimination. We oppose immigration policies that separate family members from each other.

Death Penalty: All life is sacred. . . including that of the person who takes another's life. The death penalty denies the power of Christ to redeem, restore, and transform all human life. It also does not allow for correcting the mistake of convicting a person wrongly for another's death. We oppose the death penalty.

(Information from The 2016 United Methodist Book of Resolutions, Paragraph 162 H) The rights of Immigrants; #3427, Eradicating Sexual and Gender Based Violence; Paragraph 164 F) The Death Penalty; Paragraph 162 III The Social Community; #5031 Humanizing Criminal Justice, (page 490)

MENTAL HEALTH

We support all people including adults, youth, and children, when they suffer either the long or short term effects of mental illness. We honor life and seek to prevent suicide at any stage of life.

The Adequate Funding for Mental Health Care: We support adequate public funding to enable mental health care systems to provide appropriate therapy. Citing economic reasons as the cause for failure to provide medications to a person who needs them is unacceptable.

Suicide prevention: We believe that suicide is not the way a human life should end. Often suicide is the result of untreated depression, or untreated pain and suffering. Some suicides are brought about by post-traumatic stress disorder (mental wounds) which are triggered by the experience of specific traumatic events such as combat, domestic violence, child abuse or rape.

The church and the community at large, have an obligation to see that all persons have access to needed pastoral and medical care and therapy in those circumstances that lead to loss of self-worth, suicidal despair, and/or the desire to seek physician assisted suicide. We accept the prohibition of persons with serious mental illness from purchasing guns.

Adequate number of mental health care workers: Children and adults alike are likely to suffer more harm to themselves or others if they are not able to get help from qualified mental health workers when it is needed. Iowa has a significant mental health workforce shortage, ranking 46th in the nation.

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Reduction in the stigma that follows persons with a mental illness diagnosis: We support workshops and public awareness campaigns to combat stigmas. We recognize the fact that persons with mental illness are more often the victims of violence, rather than the perpetrators.

(Information from The United Methodist Book of Resolutions 2012, #3302, #6128, and Social Principles Paragraphs 161 and 162)

POVERTY

We support legislation that will equip the poor to achieve self-sufficiency.

Minimum Wage/Living Wage: Since 1908 the church has advocated for a living wage in every industry. We support efforts to raise the minimum wage to a living wage and index it to inflation. A living wage provides for food, shelter, clothing, education and health care.

Welfare reform: We advocate for welfare policies that work together to enable recipients and their families to leave poverty and achieve self-sufficiency. Such policies must not punish welfare recipients for making progress, so must set sliding scales of eligibility so that welfare recipients can retain a substantial portion of wage earnings and assets before losing cash assistance, housing subsidies, health coverage, child care, food assistance or other benefits.

...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)

Tax reform: We support measures to revise tax structures so they are more progressive, and eliminate deductions that now benefit the wealthy at the expense of other persons.

Gambling: Gambling is a menace to society, deadly to the best interests of moral, social, economic, and spiritual life, destructive of good government. It is undesirable to resort to gambling—including lotteries, casinos, raffles, internet gambling, and other games of chance—for any purpose.

In 2017, there was another attempt to add two new smoke-free casinos to the twenty-one existing.

The National Research Council found that “many families of pathological gamblers suffer from a variety of financial hardships” and “children of compulsive gamblers are more likely to engage in delinquent behaviors such as smoking, drinking, and using drugs” as well as an increased risk of becoming pathological gamblers.

(Information from The United Methodist Book of Resolutions and Social Principles, paragraph 163, IV. The Economic Community)

GUN SAFETY

The UMC is in favor of legislation that prevents children, the seriously mentally ill, criminals, and terrorists from having access to handguns and automatic weapons.

In the 2016 General Conference Resolution 3428 “Our Call to End Gun Violence” The United Methodist Church congregations are called to advocate at the local and national level for laws that prevent or reduce gun violence. Some of those measures include:

- Universal background checks on all gun purchases;
- Ensuring all guns are sold through licensed gun retailers;
- Prohibiting all individuals under restraining order due to threat of violence from purchasing a gun;
- Prohibiting persons with serious mental illness, who pose a danger to themselves or their communities, from purchasing a gun;
- Establishing a minimum age of 21 years for a gun purchase or possession.
- Banning large-capacity ammunition magazines and automatic weapons.
- Promoting new technologies to aid law-enforcement agencies to trace crime guns and promote public safety.

Children and Guns: Giving access to guns to children needs to be blocked. Having guns in a home increases the risk of children’s injuries.

Studies demonstrate that the prevalence of firearms directly increases the risk of youth homicide, suicide, and unintentional death. American children younger than 15 are nine times more likely to die by a gun accident than those in the rest of the developed world.

(Information from 2016 UM Book of Resolutions #3428 “Our Call to End Gun Violence”; Private Guns, Public Health by David Hemenway)