



Our 2017 Legislative Priorities



**Iowa Annual Conference of
The United Methodist Church**
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Here are four 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.

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.

Greenhouse gas reduction: To reduce the risk of the most severe impacts of climate change, greenhouse gas emissions must be substantially reduced. In addition, adaptation is necessary to address unavoidable consequences for human health and safety, food security, water availability, and national security, among others.

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.

(Information from June 28, 2016, the leaders of 31 major American scientific organizations jointly stated in a letter to Congress and the United Methodist Social Principles, paragraph 160, I. The Natural World, 2012 Book of Resolutions #1026G.)



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.

We believe persons have a right to obtain care appropriate to their condition. We support policies that promote access to care.

(Information from The United Methodist Book of Resolutions 2012, #3302, 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 2016, there was an 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 VIOLENCE

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 “Our Call to End Gun Violence” The United Methodist Church supports the following measures:

- 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 and 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 weapons designed to fire multiple rounds each time the trigger is pulled;
- 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.

Advocating for the children of the world is a priority of The United Methodist Church. 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; Private Guns, Public Health by David Hemenway)



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