

CARING FOR GOD'S CREATION

“And the Lord God took the man and placed him in the Garden of Eden to till it and keep it” (Genesis 2:15). Scripture also calls us to live justly and compassionately with our brothers and sisters, to work for justice and peace (Mark 16:15, John 3:17, Romans 8:18-21).

Problems/Opportunities Addressed

- The United Methodist Council of Bishops have called on the church to be a more public and effective witness in reducing our carbon footprint, in being agents of transformation toward a more sustainable and peaceful economy, and in helping us all to live with greater joy, integrity and responsibility.
- The Climate Change Task Force is off to a good start at coordinating efforts across boards and agencies. It deserves to continue and be better resourced.
- There are gaps in The United Methodist Social Principles and *Book of Resolutions* with respect to human rights, energy, and climate justice.

Actions Proposed

- Encourages continuation of the Creation Care/Climate Change Task Force established by the 2008 General Conference and expansion of membership to include representatives from all United Methodist boards, agencies and other appropriate United Methodist bodies.
- Encourages the task force to improve communications and planning for cross-board and agency efforts to reduce the Church's carbon footprint.
- Calls on the Task Force to produce a report for the 2016 General Conference on the extent to which specific boards and agencies have reduced their carbon footprint.
- Calls on the Task Force to develop and implement a more aggressive and effective educational and advocacy strategy related to Church purchasing and investing practices to promote the use of renewable energy, energy conservation and corporate responsibility with respect to energy use and climate change.
- Updates, clarifies and closes some gaps in the Social Principles and *Book of Resolutions* with respect to human rights, energy and climate justice concerns.



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CRIMINALIZATION OF COMMUNITIES OF COLOR IN THE UNITED STATES

“All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation; that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting the message of reconciliation to us” (2 Corinthians 5:18-19).

Problems Addressed

This resolution brings together the concerns of communities in the United States who have long been the target of biased policing and sentencing laws—particularly African Americans—and the new upsurge of mass incarceration of immigrants of color. It sees detention and deportation policies as part of a larger framework of mass incarceration and holds the potential for linking communities in a united effort.

Actions Proposed

The resolution outlines a series of policy recommendations for the U.S. government as well as action responses for The United Methodist Church’s Task Force on Immigration, agencies and local churches.

Policy recommendations include:

- Recognize international human rights law in criminal justice and immigration policy.
- Stop racial profiling, raids and wrongful imprisonment.
- End mandatory sentencing, especially for nonviolent offenses.
- Investigate and end abuses in public and private corporate prisons, detention centers and jails and stop expansion of detention centers and work to reduce the number of current facilities.
- Stop the militarization of poor communities of color by police and end militarization of borders.
- Enable people to work.
- Institute legalization programs for migrants that restore and protect civil and labor rights, keep families together and strengthen communities.

Proposed church actions include:

- Creation of resources and advocacy materials.
- Mobilize congregations to challenge private prisons and detention centers and call on states and the federal government to halt prison and detention center construction.
- Educate and advocate for the rights of women and their children who face specific vulnerabilities and challenges as a result of the criminal justice and immigration enforcement systems.
- Build alliances between citizen communities of color and new migrant communities, particularly around police racial profiling.
- Challenge police engagement in immigration enforcement.
- Local congregations provide ministries of compassion and solidarity with communities subjected to police sweeps, high incarceration rates, racial profiling, immigration raids, detention and deportation.



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SEEKING PEACE IN AFGHANISTAN

“Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, says the Lord of hosts” (Zechariah 4:6).

Problems Addressed

In Afghanistan, civilian casualties, violence against women and massive human rights violations have been escalating despite increase in U.S. and NATO foreign troops. The status of women in Afghanistan remains an issue of the biggest concern for women’s groups and civil rights advocates. Ten years after the U.S. and NATO invasion, the United Nations continues to characterize Afghanistan as “the most dangerous place in the world to be a woman.” The resolution outlines advocacy needed regarding Afghanistan that is consistent with our belief that “war is incompatible with the teachings and example of Christ.”

- There is no “military solution” in Afghanistan. Even with the surge of U.S. troops in Afghanistan, the security situation on the ground has been deteriorating with the military action expanding to Pakistan.
- The majority of the public in the United States and NATO countries, as well as most Afghans, oppose the war.
- The continuing militarization of Afghan society has prolonged a cycle of militarism, violence and suffering in the country, and it has taken significant resources away from diplomatic and development work.
- In contrast to the military expenditures in Afghanistan (more than \$100 billion a year), United Methodists have been supporting local community-led development efforts for more than 45 years. United Methodists have also recognized the significant role that Afghan women play in calling and working for peace.

Actions Proposed

1. Prompt and complete withdrawal of foreign troops and immediate unilateral cease-fire in Afghanistan.
2. The immediate end to drone bombing strikes in both Afghanistan and Pakistan with full and independent investigations of all bombings.
3. Promote Afghan-led peace talks that include women at all stages.
4. End the militarization of Afghanistan by stopping all arms shipments and by not using foreign aid to train, equip or fund the Afghan military, Afghan police forces or private security contractors.
5. Empower Afghan women by reallocating resources to health and education efforts.
6. Redirect the \$100+ billion of taxpayer’s dollars that the U.S. government spends annually on the war in Afghanistan into improving the economy and providing social services that benefit women, children and communities in the United States and around the world.
7. Shift and unlink military spending to support impartial, nonpolitical and strictly humanitarian efforts.
8. Challenge corruption by cutting off the sources of foreign funds that are channeled for corrupt Afghan officials and/or warlords.
9. Support peace education, provision of counseling and alternative service education to vulnerable youth to prevent them from becoming easy targets for military recruitment.
10. Support veterans, their families, and Afghan civilians suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) by raising awareness about PTSD’s destructive effects and advocating for full funding of related health care.
11. Stand with communities facing discrimination as a result of government measures that increase racial profiling and scapegoating.
12. Advocate for regional negotiations, diplomacy and cooperation that includes women’s leadership and participation in accordance with United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325.



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SPEAKING OUT FOR COMPASSION AND AGAINST HATE

“So justice is turned back, and righteousness stands at a distance; for truth stumbles in the public square, and uprightness cannot enter. Truth is lacking, and whoever turns from evil is despoiled. The Lord saw it, and it displeased him that there was no justice. God saw that there was no one, and was appalled that there was no one to intervene; so God’s own arm brought victory” (Isaiah 59:14-16).

So then, putting away falsehood, let us speak the truth to our neighbors, for we are members of one another” (Ephesians 4:25).

Problems Addressed

- A climate of hate and racism in the United States and in other parts of the world is rising from global economic crisis.
- Civil public discussion over policy has been replaced by vitriol and blaming “the other” when all are suffering under the crisis.
- The church must speak out boldly for justice.

Actions Proposed

- For the church at all levels to enter into a new dialogue convening conversations addressing current fears and realities in homes, churches, community meetings and the public square, creating sacred space for common prayer and community discussion that address issues of power and privilege without misusing their own.
- Board and agencies to use their resources to foster this dialogue and share models and strategies for finding common ground.



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