

Resolutions Pertaining to Exclusively or In Part to Israel/Palestine in the 2008 UMC Book of Resolutions

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This is a comprehensive listing of The United Methodist Church resolutions specifically regarding the Israeli/Palestinian conflict and more general resolutions relevant to the situation, including UMC and Muslim and Jewish relations in general. In the Table of Contents resolutions presented by the number of the resolution. Following this is an index by categories and listed with the earliest resolutions (determined by initial adoption date) first.

In the *2008 Book of Resolutions*, a new number identification of given to all resolutions. The previous numbers of current resolutions are provided in the listing below.

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3126. The Church's Response to Ethnic and Religious Conflict

Would that you knew the things that make for peace.

—Jesus of Nazareth (Luke 19:42)

The tragic conflicts in such places as Bosnia, India, Indonesia, the Middle East, Nigeria, Rwanda, Northern Ireland, and Sri Lanka, as well as interethnic conflict in the United States, reveal the deep potential for hatred, fear, and religious belief to stir up violence in humankind. These conflicts pose a great challenge to the Christian church as the mediator of Jesus' gospel of love and reconciliation in the world, as well as to the wider religious community. The church's pain is only made greater by the fact that so many of these violent conflicts pit one religious group against another.

When his disciples James and John saw it, they said, "Lord, do you want us to command fire to come down from heaven and consume them [a Samaritan village]" But he turned and rebuked them. (Luke 9:54-55)

We confess that as Christians we too have responded to religious and ethnic differences out of fear, ignorance and even hatred. We have too quickly resorted to violence as a means of resolving conflicts.

The rising tide of violence in the world threatens to engulf communities, nations, and world civilizations. It is time for the church to become proactive in resolving conflict nonviolently and developing alternatives to violence. Specifically:

- we call upon the General Board of Global Ministries to continue discussions with Christian Peacemakers, Witness for Peace, International Solidarity Movement, and other nonviolent movements that provide a Christian presence in situations of international, interreligious, and interethnic conflict, to explore the possibility of including United Methodists on the teams that are sent to areas of conflict;
- we call upon the General Board of Global Ministries to incorporate the principles of nonviolent conflict resolution and interethnic and interreligious dialogue in the Shalom Zone Program;
- we call upon the General Board of Church and Society, together with the General Commission on Religion and Race and the General Commission on Christian Unity and Interreligious Concerns to hold a series of interreligious dialogues to develop new approaches to mutual understanding, respect, and cooperation, and to develop, for use in local church and community settings, guidelines on how to set up local dialogues and how to develop and implement alternatives to violence;
- we call upon our seminaries and United Methodist-related colleges and universities to offer courses on alternatives to violence and to sponsor local community initiatives to diffuse ethnic and religious conflict. We also call on our seminaries to encourage the study of the theological roots of violence and of Jesus' teachings on nonresistance and resisting evil; and
- we call upon the US government, working with the United Nations, to give leadership by redirecting funds from its foreign military exercise training programs to the UN High Commission for Human Rights and other international human rights organizations for the tasks of peacemaking, peacekeeping, reconstruction, and rehabilitation. This means reallocating funds from building weapons to building communities, from teaching to kill to

teaching to protect life. Modest beginnings in such an effort can be seen in community policing initiatives in many of our cities, in the peacekeeping force in Bosnia, and in the nonviolent transition to democracy in South Africa;

- we call upon the General Board of Discipleship, together with the General Board of Global Ministries, to address our growing multi-faith contexts in developing church school curriculum by utilizing resources from ecumenical and interfaith organizations;
- we call upon local churches to be engaged in “Creating Interfaith Community”—a Women’s Division-initiated mission study—throughout the coming quadrennium;
- we call upon annual conferences to organize high school and adult trips through United Methodist Seminars (a program offered by Women’s Division and the General Board of Church and Society) or United Methodist Volunteers in Mission to study Ethnic and Religious Conflicts and alternatives to violence.

- ADOPTED 1996; AMENDED AND READOPTED 2004; READOPTED 2008
- RESOLUTION #81, 2004 BOOK OF RESOLUTIONS; RESOLUTION #71, 2000 BOOK OF RESOLUTIONS
- See Social Principles, ¶ 162A and B.

3127. Holocaust Memorial Day (Yom HaShoah)

In recent years, Jewish communities have honored the custom of remembering the Holocaust (Shoah) on 27 Nisan of the Jewish calendar. This observance has become a powerful means of educating people about this heinous crime against humanity and sensitizing them to present and potential violence rooted in racial hatred.

WHEREAS, "In the twentieth century there is particular shame in the failure of most of the church to challenge the policies of governments that were responsible for the unspeakable atrocities of the Holocaust" ("Building New Bridges in Hope," Book of Resolutions); and

WHEREAS, the same document observes, "[t]he Christian Church has a profound obligation to correct historical and theological teachings that have led to false and pejorative perceptions of Judaism and contributed to persecution and hatred of Jews";

Therefore, be it resolved, that the General Conference calls The United Methodist Church to contrition and repentance of its complicity in "the long history of persecution of the Jewish people" and asks the General Commission on Christian Unity and Interreligious Concerns to give special programmatic emphasis to Holocaust awareness and to prepare resources for use in local churches, annual conferences, and their Conference Commissions on Christian Unity and Interreligious Concerns or equivalent structures to enable them to become more aware of the Holocaust and its impact, and

Be it further resolved, as a sign of our contrition and our solidarity with the Jewish community, the General Conference urges the observance of Yom HaShoah, Holocaust Memorial Day, each spring in United Methodist local churches and urges the General Commission on Christian Unity and Interreligious Concerns, in cooperation with other agencies of The United Methodist Church, in a time of increasing anti-Semitism, to work within the structure of our own Church to find ways to support the work against anti-Semitism in the world today and to prepare resources for local churches to use in observing Yom HaShoah.

We continue to pray for God's grace to speak in Jesus' name against bigotry, hatred, genocide, or other crimes against humanity whenever and wherever they are perpetrated.

- ADOPTED 2000; REVISED AND READOPTED 2008
- RESOLUTION #75, 2004 BOOK OF RESOLUTIONS; RESOLUTION #66, 2000 BOOK OF RESOLUTIONS
- SEE SOCIAL PRINCIPLES, ¶ 162.

3147. Building New Bridges in Hope

"God whom Christians have come to know in Jesus Christ, has created all human beings in the divine image and . . . God desires that all people live in love and righteousness. . . .

"While we are committed to the promotion of mutual respect and understanding among people of all living faiths, we as Christians recognize a special relationship between Christians and Jews because of our shared roots in biblical revelation."¹

A Quest for New Understanding

What is the relationship that God intends between Christianity and Judaism, between Christians and Jews In The United Methodist Church, a search for understanding and appropriate response to this important theological and relational question has been under way for some time. A significant step in the development of United Methodist understanding of and intention for Christian-Jewish relations was taken in 1972, when the General Conference adopted a position statement under the title Bridge in Hope. This denominational statement urged church members and congregations to undertake "serious new conversations" with Jews in order to promote "growth in mutual understanding."² As it has been studied and used, Bridge in Hope has served as a strong foundation for United Methodist-Jewish dialogue in many settings.

Since 1972, other Christian denominations, as well as ecumenical bodies in which The United Methodist Church participates, such as the World Council of Churches, have also made statements on Christian-Jewish relations. Those voices have contributed to our further knowledge, reflection, and understanding. At the same time, we have learned much from the many relationships and dialogues that have flourished between Jews and Christians locally, nationally, and internationally. Especially crucial for Christians in our quest for understanding has been the struggle to recognize the horror of the Holocaust as the catastrophic culmination of a long history of anti-Jewish attitudes and actions in which Christians, and sometimes the church itself, have been deeply implicated. Dialogues with Jewish partners have been central for Christians in our process of learning of the scope of the Holocaust atrocities, acknowledgment of complicity, and responsibility, repentance, and commitment to work against anti-Semitism in all its forms in the future.

We are aware, however, that the Christian-Jewish bridge of understanding has only begun to be constructed. The United Methodist Church is committed to continuing clarification and expansion of our knowledge of Judaism and to strengthening our relationships with Jewish people. We seek mutual exploration of the common ground underlying Christianity and Judaism as well as that which makes each faith unique. This statement is an expression of the principles of that commitment.

¹ "The Churches and the Jewish People, Towards a New Understanding," adopted at Sigtuna, Sweden, by the Consultation on the Church and the Jewish People, sponsored by the World Council of Churches, 1988.

² Bridge in Hope, Jewish-Christian Dialogue, adopted by the General Conference of The United Methodist Church, 1972.

Foundation for United Methodist Understandings of Christian-Jewish Relations

As expressed in its Constitution, The United Methodist Church has long been strongly committed to the unity of the church: "As part of the church universal, The United Methodist Church believes that the Lord of the church is calling Christians everywhere to strive toward unity. . . ."3 For many years, The United Methodist Church has devoted itself at all levels of church life to building partnerships with other Christian denominations in striving to reveal the reality of the one Body, the whole church of Jesus Christ. "We see the Holy Spirit at work in making the unity among us more visible."4

By its Book of Discipline, The United Methodist Church is also dedicated to "serious interfaith encounters and explorations between Christians and adherents of other living faiths in the world." We believe that "Scripture calls us to be both neighbors and witnesses to all peoples. . . . In these encounters, our aim is not to reduce doctrinal differences to some lowest common denominator of religious agreement, but to raise all such relationships to the highest possible level of human fellowship and understanding."5 In an interdependent world of increasing awareness of the vitality and challenges of religious pluralism, we are called to "labor together with the help of God toward the salvation, health, and peace of all people."6

As with all theological questions, United Methodists approach the issues of interfaith relationships, including Christian-Jewish dialogue, by seeking understanding of God's will in Scripture in the context of tradition, reason, and experience. In that spirit and with that intention, we affirm the following principles for continued study, discussion, and action within The United Methodist Church, with other Christians, and especially with Jews.

United Methodist Guiding Principles for Christian-Jewish Relations

In order to increase our understanding of and with peoples of other living faith traditions, of ourselves as followers of Jesus Christ, and of God and God's truth, The United Methodist Church encourages dialogue and experiences with those of other faiths. For important and unique reasons, including a treasury of shared Scripture and an ancient heritage that belong to us in common but which also contain our dividedness, we look particularly for such opportunities with Jews. United Methodist participation in Christian-Jewish dialogue and relationships is based on the following understandings:

1. There is one living God, in whom both Jews and Christians believe.

While the Jewish and Christian traditions understand and express their faith in the same God in significantly different ways, we believe with Paul that God, who was in Christ reconciling the world to God's own self (2 Corinthians 5:18-19), is none other than the God of Israel, maker of heaven and earth. Above all else, Christians and Jews are bonded in our joyful and faithful response to the one God, living our faith as each understands God's call.

2. Jesus was a devout Jew, as were many of his first followers.

3 The Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church, 1992, Constitution, Division One, Article 5; page 22.

4 The Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church, 1992, Doctrinal Standards, Our Theological Task; page 84.

5 Ibid.

6 Ibid.

We know that understanding our Christian faith begins by recognizing and appreciating this seminal fact. Neither the ministry of Jesus and his apostles nor the worship and thought of the early church can be understood apart from the Jewish tradition, culture, and worship of the first century. Further, we believe that God's revelation in Jesus Christ is unintelligible apart from the story of what God did in the life of the people of Israel.

Because Christianity is firmly rooted in biblical Judaism, we understand that knowledge of these roots is essential to our faith. As expressed in a statement from the Consultation on the Church and Jewish People of the World Council of Churches: "We give thanks to God for the spiritual treasure we share with the Jewish people: faith in the living God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; knowledge of the name of God and of the commandments; the prophetic proclamation of judgment and grace; the Hebrew Scriptures; and the hope of the coming Kingdom. In all these, we find common roots in biblical revelation and see spiritual ties that bind us to the Jewish people."⁷

3. Judaism and Christianity are living and dynamic religious movements that have continued to evolve since the time of Jesus, often in interaction with each other and with God's continual self-disclosure in the world.

Christians often have little understanding of the history of Judaism as it has developed since the lifetime of Jesus. As a World Council of Churches publication points out: "Bible-reading and worshipping Christians often believe that they 'know Judaism' since they have the Old Testament, the records of Jesus' debates with Jewish teachers and the early Christian reflections on the Judaism of their times. . . . This attitude is often reinforced by lack of knowledge about the history of Jewish life and thought through the 1,900 years since the parting of the ways of Judaism and Christianity."⁸

As Christians, it is important for us to recognize that Judaism went on to develop vital new traditions of its own after the time of Jesus, including the Rabbinic Judaism that is still vibrant today in shaping Jewish religious life. This evolving tradition has given the Jewish people profound spiritual resources for creative life through the centuries. We increase our understanding when we learn about the rich variety of contemporary Jewish faith practice, theological interpretation, and worship, and discover directly through dialogue how Jews understand their own history, tradition, and faithful living.

4. Christians and Jews are bound to God through biblical covenants that are eternally valid. As Christians, we stand firm in our belief that Jesus was sent by God as the Christ to redeem all people, and that in Christ the biblical covenant has been made radically new. While church tradition has taught that Judaism has been superseded by Christianity as the "new Israel," we do not believe that earlier covenantal relationships have been invalidated or that God has abandoned Jewish partners in covenant.

We believe that just as God is steadfastly faithful to the biblical covenant in Jesus Christ, likewise God is steadfastly faithful to the biblical covenant with the Jewish people. The covenant God

⁷ "The Churches and the Jewish People. . . ."

⁸ "Ecumenical Considerations on Jewish-Christian Dialogue, 1993," World Council of Churches, paragraph 1.6.

established with the Jewish people through Abraham, Moses, and others continues because it is an eternal covenant. Paul proclaims that the gift and call of God to the Jews is irrevocable (Romans 11:29). Thus, we believe that the Jewish people continue in covenantal relationship with God.

Both Jews and Christians are bound to God in covenant, with no covenantal relationship invalidated by any other. Though Christians and Jews have different understandings of the covenant of faith, we are mysteriously bound to one another through our covenantal relationships with the one God and Creator of us all.

5. As Christians, we are clearly called to witness to the gospel of Jesus Christ in every age and place. At the same time, we believe that God has continued, and continues today, to work through Judaism and the Jewish people.

Essential to the Christian faith is the call to proclaim the good news of Jesus Christ to all people. Through the announcement of the gospel in word and work comes the opportunity for others to glimpse the glory of God, which we have found through Jesus Christ. Yet we also understand that the issues of the evangelization of persons of other faiths, and of Jews in particular, are often sensitive and difficult. These issues call for continuing serious and respectful reflection and dialogue among Christians and with Jews.

While we as Christians respond faithfully to the call to proclaim the gospel in all places, we can never presume to know the full extent of God's work in the world, and we recognize the reality of God's activity outside the Christian church. It is central to our faith that salvation is accomplished not by human beings, but by God. We know that judgment as to the ultimate salvation of persons from any faith community, including Christianity and Judaism, belongs to God alone.

It is our belief that Jews and Christians are coworkers and companion pilgrims who have made the God of Israel known throughout the world. Through common service and action, we jointly proclaim the God we know. Together through study and prayer, we can learn how the God we believe to be the same God speaks and calls us continually into closer relationship with one another, as well as with God.

6. As Christians, we are called into dialogue with our Jewish neighbors.

Christians and Jews hold a great deal of Scripture, history, and culture in common. And yet, we also share 2,000 painful years of anti-Semitism and the persecution of Jews by Christians. These two apparently discordant facts move Christians to seek common experiences with Jews, and especially to invite them into dialogue to explore the meaning of our kinship and our differences. Our intention is to learn about the faith of one another and to build bridges of understanding.

While for Christians, dialogue will always include testimony to God's saving acts in Jesus Christ, it will include in equal measure listening to and respecting the understanding of Jews as they strive to live in obedience and faithfulness to God and as they understand the conditions of their faith. Productive interfaith dialogue requires focused, sustained conversation based on willingness to recognize and probe genuine differences while also seeking that which is held in common. We are called to openness so that we may learn how God is speaking through our dialogue partners. As stated in the World Council of Churches' "Guidelines on Dialogue": "One of the functions of dialogue is to allow participants to describe and witness to their faith on their own terms. . . . Participants seek to hear each other in order to better understand each other's faith, hopes,

insights, and concerns.”⁹ Fruitful and respectful dialogue is centered in a mutual spirit of humility, trust, openness to new understanding, and commitment to reconciliation and the healing of the painful wounds of our history.

7. As followers of Jesus Christ, we deeply repent of the complicity of the church and the participation of many Christians in the long history of persecution of the Jewish people. The Christian church has a profound obligation to correct historical and theological teachings that have led to false and pejorative perceptions of Judaism and contributed to persecution and hatred of Jews. It is our responsibility as Christians to oppose anti-Semitism whenever and wherever it occurs.

We recognize with profound sorrow that repeatedly and often in the last 2,000 years, the worship, preaching, and teaching of the Christian church has allowed and sometimes even incited and directed persecution against Jews.

The church today carries grave responsibility to counter the evil done by Christians to Jews in the Crusades, the Inquisition, and the pogroms of Eastern Europe and elsewhere, carried out in the name of Jesus Christ. In the twentieth century there is the particular shame in the failure of most of the church to challenge the policies of governments that were responsible for the unspeakable atrocities of the Holocaust.

Historically and today, both the selective use and the misuse of Scripture have fostered negative attitudes toward and actions against Jews. Use of New Testament passages that blame “the Jews” for the crucifixion of Jesus have throughout history been the basis of many acts of discrimination against Jews, frequently involving physical violence. There is no doubt that traditional and often officially sanctioned and promulgated Christian teachings, including the uncritical use of anti-Jewish New Testament writings, have caused untold misery and form the basis of modern anti-Semitism.

Misinterpretations and misunderstanding of historical and contemporary Judaism continue, including the mistaken belief that Judaism is a religion solely of law and judgment while Christianity is a religion of love and grace. The characterizations of God in the Hebrew Bible (called the Old Testament by Christians) are rich and diverse; strong images of a caring, compassionate, and loving deity are dominant for Jews as well as for Christians. Further, there are parallels between New Testament Christian understandings of the “spirit of the law” and contemporaneous theological developments in first-century Jewish theology.

The church has an obligation to correct erroneous and harmful past teachings and to ensure that the use of Scripture, as well as the preparation, selection, and use of liturgical and educational resources, does not perpetuate misleading interpretations and misunderstanding of Judaism. It is also essential for Christians to oppose forcefully anti-Jewish acts and rhetoric that persist in the present time in many places. We must be zealous in challenging overt and subtle anti-Semitic stereotypes and bigoted attitudes that ultimately made the Holocaust possible, and which stubbornly and insidiously continue today. These lingering patterns are a call to Christians for ever-

⁹ “Guidelines on Dialogue,” adopted at London Colney, England, by the Consultation on the Church and the Jewish People of the Unit on Dialogue and People of Living Faiths and Ideologies, World Council of Churches, 1981, paragraph 3.4.

new educational efforts and continued vigilance, so that we, remembering and honoring the cries of the tortured and the dead, can claim with Jews around the world to be faithful to the post-Holocaust cry of "Never Again."

8. As Christians, we share a call with Jews to work for justice, compassion, and peace in the world in anticipation of the fulfillment of God's reign.

Together, Jews and Christians honor the commandment to love God with all our heart, soul, and might. It is our task to join in common opposition to those forces—nation, race, power, money—that clamor for ultimate allegiance. Together, we honor the commandment to love neighbor as self. It is our task to work in common for those things that are part of God's work of reconciliation. Together, we affirm the sacredness of all persons and the obligation of stewardship for all God has created.

Jews still await the messianic reign of God foretold by the prophets. Christians proclaim the good news that in Jesus Christ, "the kingdom of God is at hand"; yet we, as Christians, also wait in hope for the consummation of God's redemptive work. Together, Jews and Christians long for and anticipate the fulfillment of God's reign. Together, we are "partners in waiting." In our waiting, we are called to witness and to work for God's reign together.

9. As United Methodist Christians, we are deeply affected by the anguish and suffering that continue for many people who live in the Middle East region that includes modern Israel. We commit ourselves through prayer and advocacy to bring about justice and peace for those of every faith.

Within The United Methodist Church, we struggle with our understanding of the complexity and the painfulness of the controversies in which Christians, Jews, and Muslims are involved in the Middle East. The issues include disputed political questions of sovereignty and control, and concerns over human rights and justice. We recognize the theological significance of the Holy Land as central to the worship, historical traditions, hope, and identity of the Jewish people. We are mindful of this land's historic and contemporary importance for Christians and Muslims. We are committed to the security, safety, and well-being of Jews and Palestinians in the Middle East, to respect for the legitimacy of the state of Israel, to justice and sovereignty for the Palestinian people, and to peace for all who live in the region.

As we join with others of many religious communities in wrestling with these issues and searching for solutions, we seek to work together with other Christians, Jews, and Muslims to honor the religious significance of this land and to bring about healthy, sustainable life, justice, and peace for all.

New Bridges to Christian-Jewish Understanding

The above statements of principle and affirmation offer a foundation for theological reflection within The United Methodist Church and with other Christians on our understanding of our relationships with the Jewish people. They are meant to be the basis of study, discussion, and action as we strive for greater discernment within the church.

Further, we hope that the statements of guiding principle will be important as bases of cooperative efforts, and especially for dialogue between United Methodists (sometimes in the company of other

Christians) and Jewish communities, as we mutually explore the meaning of our kinship and our differences.

Using the foregoing foundation and principles, The United Methodist Church encourages dialogue with Jews at all levels of the church, including and especially local congregations. It is also hoped that there will be many other concrete expressions of Jewish-Christian relationships, such as participating in special occasions of interfaith observance, and joint acts of common service and programs of social transformation. These offer great opportunity to Christians and Jews to build relationships and together work for justice and peace (shalom) in our communities and in the world, serving humanity as God intends.

We dare to believe that such conversations and acts will build new bridges in hope between Christians and Jews, and that they will be among the signs and first fruits of our sibling relationship under our parent God. Together, we await and strive for the fulfillment of God's reign.

- ADOPTED 1996; READOPTED 2004
- RESOLUTION #88, 2004 BOOK OF RESOLUTIONS; RESOLUTION #78, 2000 BOOK OF RESOLUTIONS
- See Social Principles, ¶ 162B

3148. Strengthening Bridges

In 1996 The United Methodist Church took a giant step forward in relations with the Jewish community by enacting Resolution 88, *Building New Bridges in Hope*, using as its foundation the 1972 resolution, *Bridge in Hope*. The General Conference of 2000 enacted Resolution 75, furthering United Methodist-Jewish relations in calling all United Methodist churches around the world to observe Yom HaShoah, the day of remembrance of those who died in the Holocaust of World War II.

Building New Bridges in Hope left to another time and further conversation the question of “. . . evangelization of persons of other faiths, and of Jews in particular” by saying, “These issues call for continuing, serious and respectful reflection and dialogue among Christians, and with Jews.” The United Methodist Church holds that the time for action on this issue is now, and because of the long history of Christian hostility toward Jews, the initiative clearly lies with the Church. That our lack of clarity on this point is a break in the bridge between United Methodism and the Jewish community is certain. In the 1997 joint commentary on *Building New Bridges in Hope*, Jewish scholar Leon Klenicki said,

The question considered by this principle is very crucial in the relationship of Christians and Jews. It reminds us of the word ‘evangelism’ which brings great uneasiness to Jewish hearts. Through the centuries, evangelism has been a way by which Christians tried to convert and persecute Jews in the Western world. As Jews, we need to understand the exact meaning of evangelism.

We cannot know fully the way in which God’s Spirit will work, nor can we know in whom the Spirit will be made manifest. We have always proclaimed that God spoke through the prophets of Israel and Judah and that Jesus spoke and acted in the tradition of those prophets. “God’s grace is active everywhere, at all times, carrying out this purpose as revealed in the Bible. It is expressed in God’s covenant with Abraham and Sarah, in the Exodus of Israel from Egypt, and in the ministry of the prophets.” (Book of Discipline ¶ 121)

In a significant way, the path toward Jewish-Christian reconciliation has been paved by the Catholic Church, and we United Methodists can be grateful for that work. (See *Nostra Aetate*, Sect. 4). In his reflection on this landmark declaration from Vatican II, Walter Cardinal Kasper, President of the Pontifical Commission for Religious Relations with the Jews, announced that, “. . . Because we have all this in common and because as Christians we know that God’s covenant with Israel by God’s faithfulness is not broken (Rom. 11:29 c.f. 3:4), mission as understood as conversion from idolatry to the living and true God (1 Thes. 1:9) does not apply and cannot be applied to the Jews.” Therefore, he concluded, “there is no organized Catholic missionary activity toward Jews.”

With our Catholic sisters and brothers we believe that God has not abandoned God’s covenant with the Jews. We are indebted to our Jewish forebearer through whom the Scriptures of the Old Testament have come to us and through whom the one true God has been revealed in the world. Therefore, we reject any and all forms of evangelism which are coercive in their nature, violent in their means, or anti-Semitic in their intent.

As United Methodist Christians our mission is to make disciples of Jesus Christ. This mission invites us to bear witness to Christ's light. In this context, The United Methodist Church neither makes the Jews a unique focus of our witness-bearing, nor excludes Jews from our longing that all persons may of their own volition believe in Jesus Christ our Savior and Lord. We affirm our responsibility to offer the gospel of Jesus Christ to all in witness that is winsome and respectful of the culture and religious convictions of others. Even as we offer our own faith, we remain open to learn from and be enriched by those who have faith experiences different from our own.

- ADOPTED 2008
- See Social Principles, ¶ 162.

4022. United Methodist Church Use of Fair Trade Coffee and Other Fair Trade Products

WHEREAS, coffee is one of the world's most heavily traded commodities; it originates from either large plantations that are traditionally run and owned by wealthy landowners or small operations that are primarily owned by impoverished farmers. These small farmers frequently live in isolated communities relying on middlemen to buy their coffee invariably at the lowest price possible. The way the system is set up, the farmers' inability to get a just return for their labor is essentially guaranteed and they are condemned to a life of extreme poverty; and,

WHEREAS, tea and cocoa are also major commodities grown on large plantations that often exploit farm laborers and impoverish small farmers; and,

WHEREAS, biblical justice brings all into the economic community, with a share in productive power as seen in the provision of land to every family unit (Numbers 26; Leviticus 25); and,

WHEREAS, our Social Principles state that "we support measures that would reduce the concentration of wealth in the hands of the few," that "we advocate for the rights of people to possess property and to earn a living by tilling the soil"; and that "we call upon our churches to do all in their power to speak prophetically to the matters of food supply and the people who grow the food for the world" (§ 163); and,

WHEREAS, the United Methodist Committee on Relief (UMCOR) partnered in April 2002 with Equal Exchange to launch a denomination-wide coffee program and through the partnership, any United Methodist church or individual buying coffee through Equal Exchange's Interfaith Program can now order coffee through UMCOR (at the Equal Exchange Web site), and who, for every case of coffee ordered, receives approximately 5 percent of purchase price from Equal Exchange to be used in UMCOR's small farmer economic development programs; and,

WHEREAS, the annual conferences of New England, East Ohio, and Nebraska have resolutions and programs to foster purchase of fair trade coffee by their member churches to support impoverished family farmers in the developing world provide for their families; and

WHEREAS, many of our agencies and congregations, their administrations and their committee organizations serve coffee at meetings, programs, and fund-raising events; and,

WHEREAS, purchasing domestic coffee brands at the least expensive price makes us unintentional participants in an exploitative system that has trapped thousands of developing world farmers, their families and children in an inescapable cycle of poverty; and,

WHEREAS, economic justice can be fostered by consumers exercising their economic power to avoid purchasing products in conditions where workers are being exploited; and,

WHEREAS, the International Standards of Fair Trade focus on ensuring that small farmers are compensated with a fair and true living wage, working with democratically run farming cooperatives that are owned and governed by and for the farmers themselves, buying directly from the co-ops so that the benefits and profits from the trade actually reach the farmers and their

communities, providing vital advance credit to farmers and encouraging sustainable farming practices; and,

WHEREAS, fair trade tea, cocoa, olive oil, and other produce are now more widely available from small farmer cooperatives around the world; and,

WHEREAS, the purchase of fair trade olive oil and other olive products from Palestinian farmers provides crucial income to small farmers; and,

WHEREAS, the General Board of Global Ministries has long partnered with and supported the Palestinian and Israeli women's cooperative, Sindyanna; and,

WHEREAS, the General Conference of The United Methodist Church seeks to address the underlying systemic justice issues throughout the world and to provide opportunities for supporting systems based on the values of justice, cooperation, sustainability, and the common good, we therefore create a partnership with a key US Fair Trade organization, Equal Exchange, and join over 5,000 places of worship and faith-based organizations who support small coffee, tea, and cocoa farmers in developing nations;

Therefore, be it resolved, that in seeking an authentic Christian response to the plight of developing world small individual coffee farmers, their families, and their communities, the General Conference of The United Methodist Church urges all agencies of the church, local congregations and their affiliated organizations that use coffee, tea, cocoa, and/or olive oil to purchase coffee, tea, cocoa, olive oil, and other fair trade products for corporate and personal use through the fair trade partner, Equal Exchange, or through another fair trade organization.

- ADOPTED 2004; REVISED AND READOPTED 2008
- RESOLUTION #199, 2004 BOOK OF RESOLUTIONS
- See Social Principles, ¶ 163D.

6028. Global Migration and the Quest for Justice

"Ways must be found to share more equitably the resources of the world."

—Social Principles, ¶ 163E, The United Methodist Church

The United Methodist Church has frequently addressed general and specific topics related to migration. The Social Principles affirm:

1. "We commit ourselves as a Church to the achievement of a world community that is a fellowship of persons who honestly love one another. We pledge ourselves to seek the meaning of the gospel in all issues that divide people and threaten the growth of world community" (¶ 165).
2. "In order to provide basic needs such as food, clothing, shelter, education, health care, and other necessities, ways must be found to share more equitably the resources of the world" (¶ 163E).
3. "We advocate for the rights of all migrants and applaud their efforts toward responsibility self-organization and self-determination"(¶ 163F, 2004 Book of Resolutions).

Human migration is as old as human history. Individuals, families, tribes, and nations have been on the move since the days of Abraham and Sarah and before. Throughout the centuries, political and economic factors, including wars; health and environmental challenges; and racism, xenophobia, and religious discrimination have at times uprooted people and at others lured them to new venues across continents and oceans as well as national and ethnic boundaries.

Today, migration is at once a critical international issue and a necessary option for millions of human beings. Some people seek to move; others have no alternatives. Contemporary migration involves the linked realities of abundance and poverty and racial/ethnic/religious identities and exclusion. The current global economic system reflects an expectation that many people will live in poverty, or have their nations torn by conflict, so that others may live in abundance. That many people will resist poverty and war through migration is an ancient and modern fact of human existence. As a consequence, elaborate national and international systems of containment and classification based on national origin have been developed over the past quarter-century with regard to migrants.

Global migration as a factor in the quest for justice is of major concern to The United Methodist Church as a denomination that is global in its vision, mission, and ministries.

I. Contemporary Migrants

Four categories of contemporary migrants can be delineated:

- Refugees—persons outside of their country of origin who are unable or unwilling to return for fear of persecution based on race, religion, ethnicity, political affiliation or opinion; official "refugees" are so recognized by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, which is charged by the international community to oversee service to, and protection of, refugees.
- Asylum seekers—a type of refugee, persons who have left their homeland to petition for refuge in the country to which they have fled; asylum seekers must be so recognized by the countries whose protection they seek.

In 2007, recognized refugees and asylum seekers totaled 13.9 million.

- Internally displaced persons—those who are displaced within their own country because of military, economic, and social upheaval, and natural disasters such as famine, earthquake and flood; they are generally not protected by the international community, but must depend for protection and assistance primarily on their country of residence, which may be implicit in the cause of displacement. In 2007, such persons numbered 24.5 million.
- Economic migrants—people who move from one country to another to find work.

Most frequently they seek to flee from poverty to economic opportunity, and often permanently relocate so they may feed their families. Some are allowed into more affluent nations as immigrants; some enter without documentation and may be welcomed in times of labor shortages and deported in times of economic downturn or public disapproval. Such migrants are among the most vulnerable in any society; many are women and children who become the objects of abuse and brutality. One subcategory in this classification consists of migrant workers, people who move from place to place, often with the agricultural cycle, to find employment. Some return on a periodic or eventually permanent basis to their homelands; others make domestic and other ties in places of employment and wish to remain. The number of current economic migrants is difficult to calculate. Some estimates run as high as 100 million globally, with large numbers in the affluent regions of North America and Europe.

II. A Context of Migration

Virtually all groups of today's migrants and refugees are battered by the divide between the rich and the poor, a divide rooted in nineteenth and twentieth century colonialism and directly caused by rapid corporate globalization in agriculture, industry, and commerce. Currently, slightly more than 10 percent of the world's population consumes 85 percent of the world's wealth while the rest make do with just 15 percent of that wealth. For example, agricultural subsidization in Europe and the United States results in the dumping of commodities in the poor countries of the global South, resulting in the disruption of family farming and unemployment. Trade policies and arms deals further enrich the rich and undercut economies in the global South without providing new contexts for prosperity or hope. These realities, along with armed conflict, environmental spoilage, and natural disasters force people to find new homes within their own countries or across national borders. Every region of the world is affected in some way by the global economic divide.

Yet, while money and products easily flow across borders, the movement of people is increasingly restricted, leading to concentrations of the poor along borders and, often, to the building of literal and figurative walls of exclusion, notably around the rich nations of the northern hemisphere and the affluent enclaves in Asia, Latin America, Africa, the Middle East, and the Pacific. While the legal and physical walls seek to exclude flows of undocumented migrants, in fact, there is growing demand in wealthier nations for cheap labor. Millions of migrants do enter—through formal guest worker programs or through informal business networks that actively seek undocumented workers while maintaining them in an exploitative noncitizen underclass. Many of those who are shut out or who migrate without legal status are at the bottom of racial, ethnic and caste hierarchies. They are often poor women and children. On either side of the divide, families are relegated to intense human suffering, inadequate nutrition and health service, lack of educational opportunities, and the reverberating, debilitating experience of oppression. Ironically, and horribly, with regard to economic migrants, the rich say, "Come in, do our dirty work at low wages, and then go away." Significant percentages of the work force are migrants in affluent countries, with the figure

exceeding more than 50 percent in parts of the Middle East. Such “guest workers” enjoy limited civil and human rights.

The global South is particularly concerned with the migration of people from rural to urban areas and with the loss of young generations to other countries, the departures dictated either by economic need or wooing by affluent societies seeking to fill jobs with cheap labor. Such émigrés often do not want to leave; they may feel pressured by promises of education, jobs, and economic security for themselves and their families. They become entrapped in unjust global systems that drain the resources of poor, Southern countries for the benefit of the affluent societies of the global North.

III. Biblical Perspectives: Justice and Shared Resources

Attitudes toward and treatment of migrants are usually conditioned today, even within the church, by nation-state considerations expressed in the language of “us” and “them”—or “we” the homefolks and “they” the intruder/alien. A beneficent attitude sometimes prevails: “We” will allow X number of ‘them’ to come among ‘us’ provided they acknowledge our generosity and become like us; so long, of course, as they do not threaten our comfort.”

There are more biblically and theologically sound perspectives. In the biblical understanding, it is not about us and them, but about one people of God, called to seek justice and share equitably, at the very core of our spiritual and physical survival.

The prophet Isaiah put the matter in context and posed the daunting question: “You serve your own interest on your fast day, and oppress all your workers. . . . Such fasting as you do today will not make your voice heard on high. . . . Is not this the fast that I choose: to loose the bonds of injustice, to undo the thongs of the yoke, to let the oppressed go free, and to break every yoke Is it not to share your bread with the hungry, and bring the homeless poor into your house” (Isaiah 58:3-7). Not only does God’s understanding of faithfulness entail the achievement of justice, but for the comfortable, the promise of healing and salvation depends on that action. It was only when the people turned from false religiosity to operative justice that they would receive the promise of spiritual wholeness. “Then, . . . the Lord will guide you continually, and satisfy your needs in parched places, . . . you shall be like a watered garden . . . whose waters never fail” (Isaiah 58:10-11).

The Hebrew Scriptures contains many references to “strangers” and “sojourners” among the people of Israel and to provisions for treatment that reflect a tribal framework that had stipulated rules for hospitality and also limits on the outsiders. However, the Books of the Law, and to an even greater extent in the prophetic literature, concern for the stranger focuses on justice and the sharing of resources that flow from the bounty of God. Ezekiel anticipated a time when foreigners would share with the ancient Jewish nation all the blessings of the land, which was understood to belong to God alone (Leviticus 25:23). In a real sense, the ancient scriptures understand both the people of Israel and sojourners to be aliens since the people of Israel had been sojourners in Egypt. God’s providence for Israel extends to others (Psalm 146:9; Malachi 2:5), and everything, and everyone, belongs to God (Psalm 24:1-2)

The breadth of God’s love permeates the New Testament; that love incorporates faith community and goes beyond it. This is clearly emphasized in a short passage in 1 Thessalonians (3:12), where Paul prays that God will provide the grace for Christians to “abound in love for one another, and for all (people).”

Christians do not approach the issue of migration from the perspective of tribe or nation, but from within a faith community of love and welcome, a community that teaches and expects hospitality to the poor, the homeless, and the oppressed. The Christian community not only welcomes and embraces migrants but can be led by them toward clearer understandings of justice and hospitality. Furthermore, many migrants in many parts of the world today are themselves members of the Christian community, brothers and sisters of the same baptism, gathered around the same sacramental table. And people beyond the Christian community deserve no less hospitality than Christians extend to themselves.

United Methodists should harbor no doubt about their responsibility to all those who live here on the earth, especially the poor, the homeless, and the mistreated. John Wesley's concern for the poor and outcast was constant and extended far beyond acts of charity. He worked for just systems in which persons could with dignity stand on their own feet. Wesley advocated just relationships within the social order. When some have great abundance while others are homeless and hungry, the biblical task is not merely to help those in need, but to seek justice—to shift resources and opportunity so that all are at the table, all are fed, all experience the abundance of God's love both physically and spiritually.

IV. Critical Issues Relating to Migration Today

United Methodists and all Christians face numerous critical situations, causes, and effects relating to migration today, especially in regard to war and economic systems and policies that perpetuate poverty. As a global, denomination, The United Methodist Church experiences the dilemmas of nations that both "send" and "receive" migrants. Citizens and undocumented immigrants are within the church's membership, as are employers and migrant workers, police and detainees, and affluent and poor families. The United Methodist family is a microcosm of migrant issues, a church that through God's grace seeks to respond to the needs of the most physically vulnerable and also address the spiritual needs of the privileged.

The following are among the critical issues demanding attention:

1. The volume of refugees, asylum seekers, and persons displaced within their own countries is growing, as are the numbers of economic migrants with and without documentation.
2. Wealthy nations, especially those with decreasing populations, are increasingly dependent upon migrants to maintain their current economies. They seek both highly skilled professionals and low-wage workers for jobs in construction, health care, agriculture, meat packing, and domestic service. The "receiving" nations or areas on a world scale include Australia, Canada, Europe, Japan, New Zealand, the United States, and some countries of the Middle East (such as Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, Lebanon). Regional migration, often in the form of contract labor, is common in Brazil, Hong Kong, Lebanon, South Africa, South Korea, and other nations.
3. The critical loss of skilled workers and potential leaders in "sending" countries undermines the future economic and social advancement of those societies. Doctors from poorer nations can often earn more in the US as a nurse than as a physician in their country of origin. The "brain drain," often deliberately encouraged by rich countries for their own benefit, affects teachers, engineers, medical personnel, researchers, and technicians.
4. Old wars and territorial occupations have left a critical migration crisis and new wars add to the problem. This can be illustrated in the Middle East, where many Palestinians remain as refugees more than a half century since they lost their homes in Israel. In recent years, millions of Iraqis have fled their country, adding to the displaced population of the greater Middle East.

5. The passage of stricter enforcement of anti-immigrant legislation and the building of exclusionary walls, often in response to increased migration, intensifies cultural tensions, marked by racial, class, and religious “backlash.” Restrictive policies also intensify migrant resistance based on fear of arrest and deportation, substandard wages, physical and mental abuse, and even death for crossing a border. Migrants fall prey to trafficking for economic or sexual purposes and sometimes become virtual slaves in their new place of residence.

6. The increasing percentage of migrant women, who now make up half of the international migrant population and as much as 70 to 80 percent in some countries. Many of these women are domestic workers, who may raise other peoples’ children while being separated from their own. Some women and girls who are migrant are subjected to physical and sexual abuse and fear reprisals if they complain.

7. Migration today divides families across generations. Filipino contract workers in Saudi Arabia may serve in those countries for their entire careers, and then watch their children step into their roles as they retire. Families are also divided by deportation of undocumented parents, while children hold citizenship.

8. Remittances (sending “home” the paycheck) have become major sources of financing for poor countries; revenues that threaten to undercut aid assistance from rich nations. The monies migrants send home is massive, an estimated \$230 billion in 2005. Some nations, including the Philippines and El Salvador, depend on remittances to support the financial system. In an effort to escape responsibility for the sharing of resources, some officials in the global North tout remittances as replacements for development aid. This attitude violates the spirit of the Millennium Development Goals and other United Nations accords. Through international instruments, northern nations have set the goal of providing 0.7 percent of their gross national product in development aid to poor nations, as well as to cancel some debt and alter trade policies in ways that benefit poor nations.

V. Response of the Church

The United Methodist Church commits itself to:

1. provide real help for refugees, asylees, and migrants;
2. engage in strong, coordinated advocacy on migration issues and on behalf of actions that overcome poverty, war and other causes leading to the displacement and marginalization of people; and
3. organize through institutional channels and prepare educational resources for the achievement of these objectives.

Assistance includes:

1. relief to refugees and displaced persons around the world, including the resettlement, when possible, of refugees through congregations and through economic development programs for both those who permanently resettle and those who may return to homelands, this work to be coordinated by the United Methodist Committee on Relief in collaboration with all other levels and organizations of the church;
2. congregational and annual conference programs that humanely respond to migrants within their borders—defending their human rights, advancing just immigration policies by national governments, and tending to their spiritual, material, and legal needs as required, with the General Boards of Global Ministries and Church and Society, in collaboration with other general agencies, responsible for resource materials to help in equipping conferences and congregations for these ministries;

3. education of church members and communities on the causes and realities of migration, including international treaty commitments, the issues of economic and environmental justice, and the obstacles to a just, peaceable world created by anti-immigrant racism and xenophobia;
4. building bridges between diverse races, ethnicities, religions, and cultures, opposing violence against and abuse of migrants;
5. work with civic and legal organizations to help communities to alleviate social conditions caused by harsh immigration laws and heavy-handed national security measures; and
6. recognizing the right of sanctuary in any United Methodist local church for migrants subject to detention or deportation by government security forces.

Advocacy includes promotion of:

1. just and equitable trade and development policies that support human rights and counteract the root causes of migration such as war and militarization, environmental spoilage, and corporate greed;
2. engagement with other Christian and religious organizations in North-South dialogues, study of international economic policies, and joint action;
3. protection for uprooted women and children from all forms of violence and abuse, including full legal protection of children in situations of armed conflict;
4. unification of families divided by borders and legal status wherever this occurs;
5. denunciation of xenophobic and racist reactions against newcomers;
6. defense of civil liberties regardless of the legal status of persons;
7. abolishment of governmental anti-terrorism policies and practices that criminalize or profile refugees and immigrants as threats to national security; and
8. adoption by all nations of the United Nations International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrants Workers and their Families, and mobilize to promote compliance with the terms of the convention.

Institutional organization includes:

- continuation of a United Methodist Task Force on Immigration to lead the church in a prophetic response to refugee and migrant issues by interpreting official policy in light of current realities, coordinating vision, analysis, education and action. Said task force will be convened by two bishops designated by the Council of Bishops, organized and staffed by the General Boards of Church and Society and Global Ministries, and composed of representatives from all appropriate general agencies (General Commission on Religion and Race, General Board of Discipleship, General Council on Finance and Administration, and others), as well as persons from jurisdictions, central conferences, annual conferences, partner churches, denominational ethnic/racial caucuses, and ethnic and language ministry plans as situations dictate. General agencies will each bear the cost of their participation in the task force and those agencies may underwrite the costs of nonagency participation as needs require and resources permit.

ADOPTED 2008

See Social Principles, ¶ 165A and D.

6031. Holy Land Tours

For many years, some Palestinian Christians have expressed deep dismay that too many United Methodists and other Christian groups traveling to Israel/Palestine, also called the Holy Land, have missed an extraordinary opportunity for ecumenical fellowship and sharing with other followers of the Prince of Peace. Our Christian sisters and brothers indigenous to the area continue to wonder why they are so often ignored by Christian pilgrims to the region. Why, they ask, do travelers tend to honor the inanimate stones that testify to Jesus' life and ministry while ignoring the "living stones," the indigenous Christians who represent an unbroken line of discipleship to Jesus in the land that he called home.

Travelers to this land have the opportunity to be ambassadors of unity and concern to the rapidly dwindling churches and Christians in a troubled land. They also have an opportunity to share in the vocation of peacemaking and to learn from the spiritual traditions of the churches indigenous to the Middle East. Further, they have a special opportunity to discover firsthand the realities of a region of deep meaning and vital importance to Christians, as well as to Jews and Muslims.

We recognize the tragic history that Christians share with Jews, and the complex relationships between particular nations and the state of Israel. We encourage dialogue between Christians, Jewish, and Muslim religious leaders.

Therefore, The United Methodist Church:

1. strongly affirms the resolution of the 1984 General Conference, offering "encouragement of all leaders of and participants in 'Holy Land tours' to contact indigenous Christian leaders in the Middle East, and to hear the concerns of both the Israelis and Palestinians who live there, as well as visit the biblical and historical sites" ("The Arab-Israeli Conflict," The Book of Resolutions, 1984; page 280);
2. asks the bishops, clergy, members, agencies, and congregations of The United Methodist Church, as they plan visits to the Holy Land, to devote significant program time to contact with indigenous Christian leaders and to hearing the concerns of Palestinians and Israelis on the current crisis of Palestinian self-determination;
3. urges all United Methodists planning, organizing, and/or participating in a trip to the Holy Land to apply the guidelines outlined in the General Conference resolution "Responsible Travel" to their trip—especially 1) to "ask travel agents/agencies whether local people [i.e., Palestinians] are involved in the development of the 'tour packages'; 2) "Practice 'low impact' travel and tourism, which do minimal damage to local culture," and 3) "Monitor ethical, responsible travel practices of conferences, boards, and agencies of The United Methodist Church" regarding Holy Land trips;
4. recommends that United Methodists planning individual or group tours to Israel/Palestine consult with the United Methodist liaison in Jerusalem to seek opportunities to worship with indigenous Christian congregations, to include at least one overnight stay in Bethlehem, and to visit United Methodist-supported mission sites;
5. supports the purchase of local Palestinian-made fair trade products and crafts in keeping with the guidelines in the General Conference resolution on "Responsible Travel"
6. asks the General Board of Global Ministries and the General Board of Church and Society to prepare specific recommendations regarding preparation, participation in, and follow-up education and advocacy actions for United Methodists traveling in the Middle East and other sensitive regions of the world;

7. recommends that United Methodist-sponsored tours use the denomination's seminar program in predeparture seminars for the travelers;

8. urges that travelers use, as advance study materials, positions adopted by General Conference and by general church agencies relating to the Middle East, as well as resources from the 2007-2008 Mission Study on Israel/Palestine;

9. urges seminaries and United Methodist-related colleges to apply the guidelines in this resolution to any school-sponsored trips, internships, and/or semesters of study in Palestine/Israel;

10. extends sincere appreciation to those United Methodists who have facilitated the implementation of the above recommendations in tours they have sponsored or participated in since the adoption of this resolution;

11. expresses deep concern that many tours sponsored or arranged by United Methodist bishops, pastors, and laity do not schedule opportunity for all participants to enter into partnership with the indigenous Christians for the recommended program time and, therefore, fail to "Walk With the Living Stones" in their strides toward Palestinian self-determination, their rich spiritual heritage, and their faithful contemporary witness;

12. expresses deep concern that evidence continues to accumulate that Christianity is dying in the land of Jesus through economic, social, and political pressures, which have greatly diminished the numbers and percentage of Christians in the Holy Land. United Methodist bishops and other organizers of Holy Land tours have a special responsibility to adhere to these recommendations to strengthen the witness of the remaining Palestinian disciples of the Living Lord;

13. affirms the presence of The United Methodist Church in Jerusalem through our liaison office and through our ongoing partnership with Palestinian and Israeli organization working for reconciliation and to establish equal rights for all under international law;

14. encourages tour leaders to consult with the General Board of Global Ministries and the United Methodist liaison office in Jerusalem in order to facilitate adherence to these recommendations;

15. instructs annual conferences and general agencies to monitor and report to the General Conference regarding the implementation of this resolution;

16. urges close cooperation with the Middle East Council of Churches and other indigenous Christian groups to facilitate informed, alternative travel opportunities to the region; and

17. commends the General Board of Global Ministries for initiating visits to the Bible lands that explore issues of justice and peace among all participants in the region, with special emphasis upon the concerns of our Palestinian Christian colleagues.

- ADOPTED 1992
- AMENDED AND READOPTED 1996
- AMENDED AND READOPTED 2000
- AMENDED AND READOPTED 2008
- RESOLUTION #292, 2004 BOOK OF RESOLUTIONS
- RESOLUTION #271, 2000 BOOK OF RESOLUTIONS

See Social Principles, ¶ 165A, B, and D.

6061. Our Muslim Neighbors

Christians are called to initiate and promote better relationships between Christians and Muslims on the basis of informed understanding, critical appreciation, and balanced perspective of one another's basic beliefs.

The Historical Context

United Methodists, seeking to be faithful neighbors and witnesses to other members of the human family, recognize with respect peoples of the religion of Islam.

Christians and Muslims acknowledge common roots, along with Jews, in the faith of Abraham, Sarah, and Hagar. As members of one of the monotheistic world religions, Muslims worship and serve the one God with disciplined devotion. Both Christians and Muslims believe that God is ever-inclined toward humankind in justice and mercy. Based on this common ground, we celebrate where Christians and Muslims are working together to make God's justice a reality for all people. The two faiths sometimes understand differently the particular ways in which God deals with human beings, but they agree that the proper human response to the Almighty is a life of humble obedience, including repentance, faith, and good works. Muslims believe that the Qur'an sets forth the principles for righteous conduct and a harmonious life in society. The following verses from the Qur'an show that these principles are similar to the ones found in the Christian Scriptures:

- believers, be steadfast witnesses for God with justice. Do not let the hatred of a people make you act unjustly. Be just, for justice is next to piety (5:8).
- Worship only God; be good to parents and kindred, to orphans and the poor; speak kindly to others (92:83).
- Do not mix truth with falsehood, nor knowingly conceal the truth (2:42).
- believers, fulfill your obligations (5:1).
- Hold to forgiveness and enjoin good; turn aside from the foolish (7:199).
- It may be that God will bring about friendship between you and those whom you hold to be your enemies (60:7).

The Need for Understanding

United Methodists live together with Muslims in many countries of the world and in a variety of social environments. Indeed, in the United States of America, Muslims comprise one of the most rapidly growing religious communities. In places around the world, Muslims may constitute the majority of the population, and in other places, Christians may be the majority. As believers of the two religions build their lives in the same general area, they are often affected by patterns of religious antagonism inherited from the past history of disputes and misunderstanding between the two.

Also, Muslims and Christians experience varying degrees of political and social discrimination, depending on the particular circumstances of each country. In certain areas of tension believers in the two faiths are caught up in struggles for economic, political, and human rights.

We believe that sustained and ever-renewed initiatives of open discussion and sharing of concerns in interfaith settings contribute to the achievement of social justice.

By this statement, we express solidarity with those of either religion who suffer oppression or discrimination.

By this statement, we make a step toward more hospitable and cooperative relationships and encourage dialogical relations.

Basic United Methodist Documents

A. Called to Be Neighbors

A clear biblical basis for discussion in interfaith settings is set forth in Guidelines for Interreligious Relationships:

In conversation with a lawyer (Luke 10:25), Jesus reminded him that his neighbor, the one to whom he should show love and compassion, included a stranger, a Samaritan. Today, Christ's call to neighborliness (Luke 10:27) includes the "stranger" of other faiths. It is not just that historical events have forced us together. The Christian faith itself impels us to love our neighbors of other faiths and to seek to live in contact and mutually beneficial relationship, in community with them.

B. The Social Community

In our United Methodist Social Principles, we affirm all persons as equally valuable in the sight of God and determine to work toward societies in which each person's value is recognized, maintained, and strengthened.

Religious persecution has been common in the history of civilization. We urge policies and practices that ensure the right of every religious group to exercise its faith free from legal, political, or economic restrictions. In particular, we condemn anti-Semitic, anti-Muslim, and anti-Christian attitudes and practices in both their overt and covert forms, being especially sensitive to their expression in media stereotyping.

C. Our Theological Task

In our United Methodist Doctrinal Standards, our relationship with adherents of other living faiths of the world is set in the context of our ecumenical commitment. We are encouraged to enter into serious interfaith encounters and explorations between Christians and adherents of other living faiths of the world. Scripture calls us to be both neighbors and witnesses to all people. Such encounters require us to reflect anew on our faith and to seek guidance for our witness among neighbors of other faiths.

When Christians enter into such dialogue, they come to it consciously as they seek to live as one people, under the living God who is the Creator of all humankind, the One "who is above all and through all and in all" (Ephesians 4:6).

This theological understanding compels us to a particular kind of dialogue, one in which we reflect critically upon our Christian tradition, gain accurate appreciation of the traditions of others, and engage with love and generosity of spirit as we seek "to raise all such relationships to the highest possible level of human fellowship and understanding."

Christian-Muslim Discussions

The long-standing commitment of The United Methodist Church to social justice, to theological inquiry, and to just and open relationships places a particular responsibility on its members to develop discussions between Christians and Muslims. Mutual respect requires the church to recognize and affirm that, although individuals may move from one religion to another, we do not enter into formal interfaith dialogue with the intent to convert the Muslim community to Christianity. Although the movement is still small, there is increasing evidence that groups of Christians and Muslims are coming together to witness to their faith and acknowledge the power of God in their lives, to identify problems that challenge all on the deepest theological and moral level, and to try to understand better the complex factors that determine the crucial decisions being made by governments around the world.

Through such interactions, Christians and Muslims are finding that working for better exchange of information and for ways to cooperate in solving mutual problems and concerns often leads to discovery and growth, adding to the depth and understanding of each tradition.

If we observe the unfolding of events in today's world and assess Islamic movement as only reactionary and threatening, we will hinder the advancement of justice and peace and neither gain from nor contribute to mutual understanding.

If we develop friendships with Muslims as members of the human community from whom and with whom we have much to learn, we will increase our respect for Islam as a way of life that calls its millions of followers to the highest moral ideals and satisfies their deepest spiritual aspirations. In the aftermath of September 11, 2001, The United Methodist Church has intentionally explored what it means to be in relationship with the Muslim community. The United Methodist Church stands in solidarity with Muslims in the struggles for economic, political and human rights.

Action Statement

Local congregations and United Methodist agencies are encouraged to develop ongoing relationships with Muslims and their respective organizations. They are urged to initiate conversations, programs, and dialogues leading to the understanding of both Islam and Christianity, and appreciation of their particular gifts, while discovering commonalities and differences; and seeking areas of mutual cooperation. They are also urged to exchange information and discuss ways to cooperate when they address common problems and concerns.

Recommendations

We request the Council of Bishops to support, participate in, and assist United Methodists in implementing this resolution.

We call upon the General Board of Global Ministries, and particularly its Women's Division, to promote a program of ongoing relationships with Muslim women, seeking areas of mutual concern about how to live ethically, morally, and responsibly in today's world and to join in common struggles for peace and justice.

We urge the General Board of Church and Society to work with Muslims in activities designed to achieve common political, social, economic, and ecological goals.

We urge that the General Board of Global Ministries and the General Board of Church and Society develop advocacy programs on behalf of religious freedom and minority rights, particularly regarding nations that are experiencing crisis in Christian-Muslim conflict in which religious minorities are harassed or persecuted. These advocacy programs should be directed toward, among others, the US Department of State, US Embassies, and the United Nations Human Rights Commission.

We recommend that the General Commission on Christian Unity and Interreligious Concerns, as it initiates and engages in dialogue with representatives of Islam, remain mindful of the evangelism imperatives of the gospel and the gospel mandate to seek justice for those who are oppressed.

We recommend that United Methodist Communications, through its Division of Public Media and News Service, monitor and call attention to discrimination against Muslims in both the religious and secular media.

We urge United Methodist members, local churches, and agencies to take the following specific actions:

1. Study Islam, using resources such as: Brochures, "Basic Facts about Islam," "Guidelines for Interfaith Dialogue," (GCCUIC, 2001) "Called to be Neighbors and Witnesses" (General Conference, 2000); Guidelines on Dialogue with People of Living Faiths and Ideologies, World Council of Churches (Geneva: 1990); God Is One: The Way of Islam, by R. Marston Speight (New York: Friendship Press, updated/revised 2001); The Holy Qur'an, New Revised Edition, trans. 'Abdullah Yusuf' Alli (Brentwood, MD: Amana Corp., 2001); National Council of Churches Interfaith Policy Statement 2000; Silent No More: Confronting America's False Images of Islam, by Paul Findley (Amana Publications, Beltsville Maryland, 2001); A New Religious America, by Diana Eck (Harper Collins, New York, 2001); Creating Interfaith Community, by Marston Speight (GBGM, Service Center, 2003); magazines such as Minaret (MultiMedia Vera International, 434 South Vermont, Los Angeles, CA 90020).

2. Initiate dialogue with Muslims, utilizing as our guide the resolution of the 2000 General Conference entitled "Called to Be Neighbors and Witnesses, Guidelines for Interreligious Relationships," and models of dialogue developed by the General Commission on Christian Unity and Interreligious Concerns. The dialogue will address theological and justice issues, related to the particular contexts in which those dialogues occur.

3. Develop awareness of the concerns of particular Muslim populations through implementation of other applicable General Conference Resolutions in the 2000 Book of Resolutions, such as "Prejudice Against Muslims and Arabs in the USA."

4. Promote understanding between Christians and Muslims in local communities through:

- arranging visits to local mosques;
- developing and participating in cultural exchanges with Muslims;
- inviting Muslims to social occasions;
- seeking Muslim participation in local interfaith councils and interfaith worship;
- sending messages of greeting and good will to Muslims upon the occasion of their religious festivals;
- encouraging authorities of schools, hospitals, prisons, factories, and places of business and government to respect particular features of Muslim life;

- upholding the dignity of individuals, families, and communities; and
 - seeking to remedy situations in which Muslims encounter misunderstanding, prejudice, stereotyping, or even hostility from the neighborhood or population when they desire to express their faith in everyday life.
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- ADOPTED 1992
 - AMENDED AND READOPTED 2004
 - RESOLUTION #315, 2004 BOOK OF RESOLUTIONS
 - RESOLUTION #299, 2000 BOOK OF RESOLUTIONS
 - See Social Principles, ¶ 165A, B, and C.

6073. Opposition to Israeli Settlements in Palestinian Land

We join with Palestinian Christians as well as our Jewish and Muslim brothers and sisters in feeling a deep sense of rootedness to the land that has special meaning for our three religious traditions. We celebrate the diversity of religious customs and traditions throughout the Middle East. Jerusalem is sacred to all the children of Abraham: Jews, Muslims, and Christians. We have a vision of a shared Jerusalem as a city of peace and reconciliation, where indigenous Palestinians and Israelis can live as neighbors and, along with visitors and tourists, have access to holy sites and exercise freedom of religious expression. The peaceful resolution of Jerusalem's status is crucial to the success of the whole process of making a just and lasting peace between Palestinians and Israelis.

We seek for all people in the region an end to military occupation, freedom from violence, and full respect for the human rights of all under international law.

WHEREAS, the prophet Isaiah cautioned against coveting the lands and homes of one's neighbors: "Ah, you who join house to house, who add field to field, until there is room for no one but you, and you are left to live alone in the midst of the land!" (Isaiah 5:8); and

WHEREAS, the continuing confiscation of Palestinian land for construction of settlements and the building of a separation wall violates basic understanding of human rights, subverts the peace process, destroys the hope of both Israelis and Palestinians who are working for and longing for peace, and fosters a sense of desperation that can only lead to further violence; and

WHEREAS, continued and often intensified closures, curfews, dehumanizing check points, home demolitions, uprooted trees, bulldozed fields, and confiscation of Palestinian land and water by the government of Israel have devastated economic infrastructure and development in the West Bank and Gaza, have caused a massive deterioration of the living standards of all Palestinians . . . and an increasing sense of hopelessness and frustration; and

WHEREAS, targeted assassinations, suicide bombings, and attacks against civilians by both Israelis and Palestinians heighten the fear and suffering of all; and

WHEREAS, people in the United States, through their taxes, provide several billion dollars in economic and military assistance to the State of Israel each year, which allows for the building of bypass roads and settlements that are illegal according to the Fourth Geneva Convention;

WHEREAS, the church continues to work with ecumenical and interfaith bodies to advocate for Palestinian self-determination and an end to Israeli occupation; to affirm Israel's right to exist within secure borders; to affirm the right of return for Palestinian refugees under international law; to call for region-wide disarmament; to urge Israelis and Palestinians to stop human rights violations and attacks on civilians, such as targeted assassinations and suicide bombings; and to urge the US government to initiate an arms embargo on the entire Middle East region;

Therefore, be it resolved, that The United Methodist Church opposes continued military occupation of the West Bank, Gaza, and East Jerusalem, the confiscation of Palestinian land and water resources, the destruction of Palestinian homes, the continued building of illegal Jewish

settlements, and any vision of a "Greater Israel" that includes the occupied territories and the whole of Jerusalem and its surroundings.

Be it further resolved, that we urge the US government to end all military aid to the region, and second to redistribute the large amount of aid now given to Israel and Egypt; to support economic development efforts of nongovernmental organizations throughout the region, including religious institutions, human rights groups, labor unions, and professional groups within Palestinian communities.

The United Methodist Church requests that the government of the United States, working in cooperation with the United Nations and other nations, urge the state of Israel to:

1. cease the confiscation of Palestinian lands and water for any reason;
2. cease the building of new, or expansion of existing, settlements and/or bypass roads in the occupied territories including East Jerusalem;
3. lift the closures and curfews on all Palestinian towns by completely withdrawing Israeli military forces to the Green Line (the 1948 ceasefire line between Israel and the West Bank);
4. dismantle that segment of the Wall of Separation constructed since May 2002 that is not being built on the Green Line but on Palestinian land that is separating Palestinian farmers from their fields.

We also urge the Palestinian Authority and all Palestinian religious leaders to continue to publicly condemn violence against Israeli civilians and to use nonviolent acts of disobedience to resist the occupation and the illegal settlements.

We urge all United Methodists in the US to:

1. advocate with the US administration and Congress to implement the above steps;
2. encourage members of each congregation to study the Israeli-Palestinian conflict from all perspectives by inviting speakers to church events, reading books, using audiovisual resources in educational forums, and getting information from Web sites.
3. provide financial support to the Palestinian people through contributions to the General Board of Global Ministries;
4. support, and participate in, the work of international peace and human rights organizations to provide protection for Palestinians and Israelis seeking nonviolently to end the occupation; and
5. reach out to local synagogues, mosques, and Christian faith groups by engaging in interfaith and ecumenical dialogue on how to promote justice and peace in the Holy Land; and

That the General Board of Global Ministries, working together with the General Board of Church & Society and interfaith organizations, develop advocacy packets for use in local congregations to promote a just and lasting peace and human rights for all in the region.

- ADOPTED 2004
- READOPTED 2008
- RESOLUTION #312, 2004 BOOK OF RESOLUTIONS
- See Social Principle, ¶ 165.

6074. United Nations Resolutions on the Israel-Palestine Conflict

WHEREAS, negotiations between the State of Israel and the Palestinian National Authority still have not achieved a just and lasting peace for the Palestinian people; and

WHEREAS, the United Nations Security Council and General Assembly have passed numerous resolutions since UN Resolution 181, the Partition Plan, first adopted in November 1947, including Resolutions 242 and 338, that outline a framework for a just and lasting peace; and

WHEREAS, The UMC in the Social Principles recognizes and affirms the role of the United Nations in the just and lasting resolution of conflict, "Believing that international justice requires the participation of all peoples, we endorse the United Nations and its related bodies and the International Court of Justice as the best instruments now in existence to achieve a world of justice and law" (¶ 165D); and

WHEREAS, Security Council Resolution 242, unanimously adopted in 1967, declares "the inadmissibility of the acquisition of territory by war and the need to work for a just and lasting peace in which every State in the area can live in security"; and

WHEREAS, the security of every state depends on it having defined borders and not occupying the territory of its neighbors, and

WHEREAS, the 10th commandment in the Bible states, "You shall not covet your neighbor's house . . . or anything that belongs to your neighbor" (Exodus 20:17); and

WHEREAS, for more than 40 years the government of Israel has continued its military occupation of East Jerusalem, the West Bank, and Gaza and the seizing of more and more Palestinian land for illegal settlements in direct violation of UN resolutions as well as United Methodist General Conference resolutions; and

WHEREAS, the International Court of Justice, on July 9, 2004, issued an advisory opinion that declared that Israel's security barrier or wall built on occupied Palestinian territories violates international law; that it must be dismantled; and that compensation must be provided to Palestinians for loss of land and livelihood; and

WHEREAS, Israel's government has continued to build the wall on Palestinian land in ongoing violation of international law, which greatly increases Palestinian suffering as well as heightens the insecurity of both Palestinians and Israelis; and

WHEREAS, May 2008 marks 60 years since the establishment of the state of Israel as well as the dispossession of 750,000 to 900,000 Palestinians who are still seeking their full human rights; and

WHEREAS, ongoing military occupation and armed resistance heightens violence and insecurity for Palestinians and Israelis alike; and

WHEREAS, The United Methodist Church opposes all violence against civilians and considers "war is incompatible with the teachings and example of Christ" (Social Principles, ¶ 165C); and

WHEREAS, the United States' use of its veto more than 30 times in the UN Security Council to block actions by the international community to criticize and prevent the killing of Palestinian civilians has contributed to a climate of impunity and exacerbated the cycle of violence affecting both Palestinians and Israelis;

Therefore, be it resolved that The United Methodist Church calls upon Israel, the Palestinian National Authority, and all States to abide by and uphold UN resolutions, International Court of Justice rulings, and international law as the basis for just and lasting peace in Palestine/ Israel; and

Be it further resolved that The United Methodist Church calls upon the United States, as a permanent member of the UN Security Council, to accept the authority of Security Council resolutions to refrain from vetoing resolutions, and abide by Security Council Resolutions 242 and 338, as well as all other relevant UN resolutions and International Court of Justice rulings, that provide a framework for bringing this conflict to a just and permanent end.

- ADOPTED 2000
- REVISED AND READOPTED 2008
- RESOLUTION #323, 2004 BOOK OF RESOLUTIONS
- RESOLUTION #305, 2000 BOOK OF RESOLUTIONS

6075. Saying No to Violence in Middle East Conflict

WHEREAS, The United Methodist Church has affirmed its commitment to relationship and dialogue with people of other religious traditions ("Called to Be Neighbors and Witnesses—Guidelines for Interreligious Relationships," 2004 Book of Resolutions, page 252ff); and

WHEREAS, The United Methodist Church has affirmed its commitment to relationship and dialogue with Jewish people ("Building New Bridges in Hope," 2004 Book of Resolutions, page 243ff); and

WHEREAS, The United Methodist Church has affirmed its commitment to relationship and dialogue with Muslims ("Our Muslim Neighbors," 2004 Book of Resolutions, page 797ff); and

WHEREAS, The United Methodist Church has affirmed its support for the boundaries of the State of Israel internationally recognized prior to the 1967 war in the Middle East ("United Nations Resolutions on the Israel-Palestinian Conflict," 2004 Book of Resolutions, page 811ff); and

WHEREAS, The United Methodist Church has strongly stated its opposition to Israeli settlements in occupied territories ("Opposition to Israeli Settlements in Palestinian Land," 2004 Book of Resolutions, page 787ff);

Therefore, be it resolved, that The United Methodist Church continues to advocate for a peaceful settlement of the conflict between Israel and the Palestinians through negotiation and diplomacy rather than through methods of violence and coercion.

- ADOPTED 2008
- See Social Principles, ¶ 165A, B, and D.

6091. A Call for Peacemaking

God's earth is aching for peace. Domestic strife, interpersonal violence and abuse, civil conflict, ethnic and racial clashes, religious schism and interfaith rivalry, terrorist attacks, wars between nations, and threatened use of nuclear, chemical, and biological weapons—all of these prevent us from achieving God's shalom. In response we who are disciples of Jesus Christ are called to be peacemakers for the transformation of the world.

The biblical foundation for peacemaking is the Sermon on the Mount where Jesus taught, "Blessed are the peacemakers" (Matthew 5:9), "Don't react violently against the one who is evil" (Matthew 5:39, Scholars Version*), "Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you" (Matthew 5:44), and pray to forgive those who trespass against us (Matthew 6:12, 14-15). Paul echoed Jesus' teaching when he instructed Christians in Rome, "Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good" (Romans 12:14-21). He told the church in Corinth that through Christ we have a "ministry of reconciliation" (2 Corinthians 5:17-18).

*The Five Gospels: The Search for the Authentic Words of Jesus. New Translation and Commentary by Robert W. Funk, Roy W. Hoover, and the Jesus Seminar [also known as the Scholars Version]; Robert W. Funk, et al. (New York: Macmillan, 1993).

For The United Methodist Church peacemaking is an essential task for achieving success in other initiatives. Working with the poor to eliminate poverty, caring for children, and conducting global health initiatives can be most successful in stable and just societies free from armed conflict. To have sufficient resources for these tasks requires global peace and disarmament in order to redirect vast amounts of public funds now spent on armed forces and weaponry. Moreover, a strong concern for peace and justice is a necessary feature of vital congregations.

Therefore, the 2008 General Conference of The United Methodist Church calls upon:

- United Methodist children, youth, and adults as devoted disciples of Jesus Christ to become peacemakers wherever they are—at home, school, work, in the local community and the wider world—and to show the love, compassion, and concern for justice that Jesus taught and lived;
 - local congregations as an expression of Wesleyan social holiness to teach and practice peacemaking, to study underlying causes of conflict among social groups and nations, to seek positive remedies and become instruments of peace;
 - annual conferences to undergird congregations through training, encouragement, and active support for peacemaking activities and to be voices for peace, justice, and reconciliation within the conference area and beyond;
 - bishops to encompass peacemaking in teaching what it means to live the United Methodist way, engage in conflict resolution where appropriate, and offer a prophetic voice for peace and justice; and
 - boards and agencies to incorporate peacemaking into their regular programs and budgets.
- ADOPTED 2008
 - See Social Principles, ¶ 165C.

6098. In Defense of International Law and Cooperation: Cornerstone of Multilateralism

“Those who say, ‘I love God,’ and hate their brothers and sisters, are liars; for those who do not love a brother or sister whom they have seen, cannot love God whom they have not seen. The commandment we have from him is this: those who love God must love their brothers and sisters also” (1 John 4:20-21).

Justice and Law—Persons and groups must feel secure in their life and right to live within a society if order is to be achieved and maintained by law. We denounce as immoral an ordering of life that perpetuates injustice. Nations, too, must feel secure in the world if world community is to become a fact. We commend the efforts of all people in all countries who pursue world peace through law. We endorse international aid and cooperation on all matters of need and conflict . . . Bilateral or multilateral efforts outside of the United Nations should work in concert with, and not contrary to, its purposes. Social Principles, ¶ 165D.

At the beginning of the 21st century, the world is faced with an unprecedented global environmental crisis and a devastated global economy increasingly unequal and exploitative, the pandemic of HIV/AIDS, the spread of weapons of mass destruction, terrorist actions which recognize no borders and gross violations of human rights and humanitarian law. No country can develop solutions to these grave concerns alone. Unfortunately, the United States maintains global military dominance and the right of a preemptive military attack against any country it regards as a current or even a potential future threat.

The USA:

1. devotes more than \$1 billion a day to military spending and has the largest number of military bases around the world. The USA has abrogated the Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) Treaty and squanders billions in chasing the illusion of national missile defense. It has refused to ratify the Treaty to Ban Landmines;
2. has the largest nuclear arsenal and has undermined the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty and the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty while expressing support for testing new nuclear weapons and refusing to rule out a nuclear first strike against non nuclear nations;
3. treated human rights as an obstacle to rather than an essential component of civic security at home and abroad. Suspended US support for the UN’s family planning programs and balked at supporting the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Walked out on the World Summit against Racism, Racial Discrimination and Xenophobia.
4. withdrew from global efforts to curb global warming thru the Kyoto Protocol on reducing carbon emissions.
5. rejected UN Security Council resolutions supported by previous administrations that provide a framework for conflict resolution containing strict security guarantees for both Israel and the Palestinians.

Therefore, The United Methodist Church urges United Methodists to take seriously the question, “How does God’s love abide in anyone who has the world’s goods and sees a brother or sister in

need and yet refuses to help” and agree that for the followers of Christ there is but one answer, “. . . let us love, not in word or speech, but in truth and action” (1 John 3:17 and 18).

While this resolution addresses primarily the United States because : of its position of power in the world, we call on United Methodist churches in all countries of the world to work in their own countries and together to advocate for their countries to work in defense of international law and cooperation, through multilateral efforts to be witnesses of God’s love for all humanity by promoting the eradication of poverty, sustainable development, justice, human rights, and peace around the world.

We therefore recommend:

1. that The United Methodist Church, including its agencies and institutions of higher education, find ways to implement the resolutions from The Book of Resolutions of The United Methodist Church: that
 - a. encourage local churches and members to take actions that make for peace and to act in concert with other peoples and groups of goodwill toward the achievement of a peaceful world and
 - b. remind United Methodists that “The indivisibility of human rights underscores the understanding that freedom is hollow without food, that justice without jobs is like a clanging cymbal, and liberty is a sham when people do not have land to inhabit and farm.” [From Resolution #6025, “Globalization and Its Impact on Human Dignity and Human Rights”]
2. that United Methodists urge the governments of their countries:
 - a. to commit themselves to the fundamental principle of international justice-that no country is above international law;
 - b. to increase its commitment to multilateralism including the UN security system, while urging UN action against threats to peace;
 - c. to renew efforts to mobilize a global consensus and global action against all forms of terrorism at home and around the world;
 - d. to strengthen multilateral, verifiable arms control regimes that aim to curb weapons of mass destruction and their delivery systems, while at the same time promoting nuclear disarmament and international demilitarization. Extend treaties to ban cluster bombs, carbon filament bombs, depleted uranium and herbicides;
 - e. to exercise leadership for protection of the environment through the ratification of the Kyoto Protocol and other international environmental agreements while protecting existing multilateral environmental agreements from challenges by free trade agreements;
 - f. to increase the Global Fund to fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria as well as other efforts to respond to the AIDS Pandemic;
 - g. to ratify and enforce the new International Criminal Court which judges individuals and groups of individuals who commit crimes against humanity; and
 - h. to expand the international human rights regime by ratifying such key international human rights treaties such as the Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights; the International Labor Organizations core labor rights conventions; the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women and the Convention on the Rights of the Child.
3. that the General Board of Global Ministries and the General Board of Church and Society, in consultation with each other, develop resources on the concerns described above, including a theological perspective and strategies for advocacy by United Methodists.

4. that United Methodist Churches, in all countries who belong to the G8, work in their own countries and together to advocate for their countries to work in defense of international law and cooperation, through multilateral efforts to be witnesses of God's love for all humanity by promoting the eradication of poverty, sustainable development, justice, human rights and peace around the world.

- ADOPTED 2004; REVISED AND READOPTED 2008
- RESOLUTION #340, 2004 BOOK OF RESOLUTIONS
- See Social Principles, ¶ 165.

Current Resolutions Referred to in Current Resolutions

The Book of Resolutions 2008 - Social Principles - III. The Social Community - Ecumenical and Interreligious Issues

3142. Called to Be Neighbors and Witnesses: Guidelines for Interreligious Relationships

Nations of the world are growing increasingly interdependent politically and economically. The various world religious communities are also encountering each other in new ways. Religions of Asia and Africa are showing new life and power within their homelands and are spreading to other continents, creating new multireligious societies, especially in western nations. New sects, cults, and ideologies are emerging and ancient traditions are receiving renewed attention. To an unprecedented degree, the wonders of the information age bring the world's rich religious diversity into our homes and communities.

The emergence of religiously diverse societies and the new dynamics in old religious communities have prompted many faith communities to reconsider how they relate to one another and to prevailing secular ideologies. This represents a great opportunity for learning and an enhanced understanding of our common concerns. Yet, there is also danger that religious tensions will lead to oppression of religious minorities and curtailment of religious freedom with real potential for armed conflict. At a time when worldwide problems of human suffering due to poverty, wars, and political oppression are so vast and pervasive that no one faith group can solve them, tensions between religious groups often prevent the level of cooperation needed to respond more adequately. As ancient religions demonstrate new life and power to speak to the deepest human concerns, Christians are pressed toward a deeper understanding of other faith traditions and a reexamination of their our claims to a global mission to all people.

What are the implications of this religiously diverse situation for Christian theology and ministry? What does it mean to be a faithful follower of and witness to Jesus Christ? What does it mean to affirm the Lordship of Jesus Christ in a religiously pluralistic world? Can we, of different faith traditions, live together as neighbors, or will diverse religious loyalties result in mutual antagonism and destruction? What are the resources United Methodist Christians bring for building constructive relationships between persons of different religions?

The United Methodist Church provides this statement as guidance to its members and congregations in facing these questions in their and our relations with persons who hold other faith perspectives.

Called to Be Neighbors

For some Christians, it may seem strange even to refer to "persons who hold other faith perspectives." Some are accustomed to calling them "non-Christians" or "nonbelievers." These attitudes may have developed out of confidence in the ultimate truth of our own faith perspective or from limited experience of and insensitivity to other traditions, to the truth they may contain, and to the profound meaning and purpose they give to the lives of people. How, then, are we to relate to those who seem different from us religiously?

Scripture gives us many images of neighborliness which extends across conventional boundaries. In the Old Testament (Genesis 12), we find God challenging Abram and Sarai to go live among strangers. In the New Testament, Jesus breaks convention by speaking with the Samaritan woman at the well (John 4:6-30) and shows how she can be reached through dialogue. Speaking with a lawyer (Luke 10:25), Jesus reminds him that his neighbor, the one to whom he should show love and compassion, and from whom he may receive grace, may be a stranger. Today, our Lord's call to neighborliness (Luke 10:27) includes the "strangers" of other faith traditions who live in our towns and cities. It is not just that historical events have forced us together. Christianity itself impels us to love our neighbors and to seek to live in contact and mutually beneficial relationships, in community, with them.

What does it mean to be a neighbor? It means to meet other persons, to know them, to relate to them, to respect them, and to learn about their ways which may be quite different from our own. It means to create a sense of community in our neighborhoods, towns and cities and to make them places in which the unique customs of each group can be expressed and their values protected. It means to create social structures in which there is justice for all and that everyone can participate in shaping their life together "in community." Each race or group of people is not only allowed to be who they are, but their way of life is also valued and given full expression.

Christians distinguish several meanings of "community." One definition expresses their relationships as members of one another in the body of Christ, the church, a people called together by Christ, a "communion of saints" who work toward the reign of God. A broader definition points to the relationship that is shared with others in the wider human community, where Christians are concerned for peace, justice, and reconciliation for all people. Other faiths also have their understanding of "community." The vision of a "worldwide community of communities" commends itself to many Christians as a way of being together with persons of different religious convictions in a pluralistic world.

Ultimately, this is to shift the question from, "To which church do we belong?" to "Have we participated in promoting the work of the Holy Spirit?" That suggests that we United Methodist Christians, not just individually, but corporately, are called to be neighbors with other faith communities (such as Buddhist, Jewish, Muslim, Hindu, and Native American), and to work with them to create a human community, a set of relationships between people at once interdependent and free, in which there is love, mutual respect, and justice.

Called to Be Witnesses

Within this religiously diverse community, Christians, trusting in Jesus Christ for their salvation, are called to witness to him as Lord to all people (Acts 1:8). We witness to our Lord through words which tell of his grace, through deeds of service and social change that demonstrate his love, and through our life together in the Christian community, exhibiting God's power to heal, reconcile, and unite.

When Jesus issued his famous missionary mandate, "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations" (Matthew 28:20), the Greek word is *proeuthentes*. This literally means "to depart, to leave, to cross boundaries." Thus, a witness to Jesus Christ is one who can bridge boundaries, be they geographic, sociological, racial, or cultural. The gospels tell story after story of Jesus crossing boundaries and reaching to outsiders, drawing them into his circle. As disciples of Jesus, our outreach draws upon the gospel call to be even more than neighbors. We are to proclaim and

witness to the God who has bound humanity together in care for one another, regardless of the differences between us.

As relationships with persons of other faith communities deepen, Christians discover how often our witness has been unneighborly, how much we have talked and how little we have listened, and how our insensitive and unappreciative approaches have alienated sincere truth seekers and persons who already have strong faith commitments. We become aware that we frequently communicate attitudes of superiority regarding our own faith, thereby perpetuating walls and hostilities between us as human beings. These can only restrict Christian witness.

As United Methodist Christians reflect anew on our faith and seek guidance in our witness to and encounter with our new neighbors, we rediscover that God who has acted in Jesus Christ for the salvation of the whole world, is also Creator of all humankind, the “one God and Father of all, who is Lord of all, works through all, and is in all” (Eph. 4:6 TEV). Here Christians confront a profound mystery—the awareness of God who is related to all creation and at work in the whole of it, and the experience of God who has acted redemptively for the whole creation in Jesus Christ. Christians witness to God in Jesus Christ in the confidence that here all people can find salvation and in the trust that because of what we know of God in Jesus, God deals graciously and lovingly with all people everywhere.

Dialogue: A Way to Be Neighbors

“Dialogue” is the word that has come to signify an approach to persons of other faith communities that takes seriously both the call to witness and the command to love and be neighbors. To be engaged in dialogue is to see witnessing and neighborliness as interrelated activities. Rather than a one-sided address, dialogue combines witnessing with listening. It is the intentional engagement with persons who hold other faith perspectives for purposes of mutual understanding, cooperation, and transformation.

“Dialogue” may be as informal as a conversation in the marketplace or as formal as the leader of one religious group explaining to others its belief or worship life. Dialogue is more than an individual or academic enterprise. It also involves groups or communities of people holding different convictions who reach out to one another. This community orientation gives a practical bent to interreligious dialogue.

In dialogue, one individual or group may seek relationship with another in order to expose misunderstandings and stereotypes and to break down barriers that separate and create hostility and conflict. Ethnic or religious communities may approach each other in dialogue in order to resolve particular problems or to foster cooperation in dealing with a local, national, or even global situation of human suffering. At its deepest level, dialogue is both learning about and sharing our faith through its stories and images. Each partner learns from the rich store of wisdom of the other, and each expresses his or her own deepest conviction in the faith that it has truth worth sharing with the other.

Through dialogue with persons of other faith communities, new insights are received regarding God’s activity in the world today, the divine purpose for humankind as a whole, and the place of the Christian community within these purposes. It is also a common experience for Christians to feel the need to express their own faith with greater clarity. We trust in the Holy Spirit to make known new and different insights through such encounters.

Even though Jews, Christians and Muslims share the same covenant, in many of our cities and towns we continue to live as strangers to each other. A positive foundation from which to connect with persons in other faith communities is recognition of some of the gifts they bring to the human community. For instance, through Judaism, Christians can connect to the covenantal faithfulness of God; Islam illustrates the joy of life lived in obedience to God's will; the spiritualities of indigenous peoples encourage a deep reverence for God's natural creation; Buddhism offers contemplative ways to connect to the divine; and Hinduism in its varieties brings the gift of tolerance. Engaging in dialogue with positive expectation offers the possibility of sharing mutually beneficial spiritual gifts as well as overcoming past hostilities.

Dialogue frequently has been misunderstood. Some see it as limited to the commonalities that exist between different religious traditions. It is important to discern and explore those commonalities and to utilize them to strengthen relationships. But there is more! Dialogue offers to both partners the opportunity of enriching their own faith through the wisdom of the other. In the process it helps overcome the deep mistrust, hatred, hostility, and conflict that characterize so many intercultural and interreligious relations. Each religious community asserts that its faith offers a way to resolve conflict in positive ways and has resources for building community among diverse peoples. Dialogue seeks to provide an environment which allows space for differences, builds on the positive affirmations of each faith, and brings them into relationship with each other.

Dialogue: A Way to Witness

The only precondition for dialogue—sometimes a challenging one—is a true willingness to enter a relationship of mutual acceptance, openness, and respect. Effective dialogue requires that both partners have deep convictions about life, faith, and salvation. True dialogue requires that Christians not suspend their fundamental convictions concerning the truth of the gospel, but enter into dialogue with personal commitment to Jesus Christ and with the desire to witness to that faith. Effective dialogue also requires that Christians be truly open to persons of other faith communities, to their convictions about life, truth, and salvation and to their witness, as others also are called to witness to their faith and teachings about the meaning of life. Engagement in dialogue is a form of Christian ministry.

Is not this urge to witness an obstacle to interreligious dialogue? It often has been, but it need not be. Where there is listening as well as speaking, openness and respect as well as concern to influence, there is dialogue and witness. Indeed, dialogue at its most profound level is an exchange of witness. Participants share with each other their perceptions of the meaning of life, of ultimate reality, salvation and hope, and the resources of their faith for enabling community. In genuine "dialogue," we "witness and are witnessed to." The most effective dialogue takes place when both sides really do care that the other hear, understand, and receive the other's wisdom. Part of our witness is our openness to hearing the witness of the other.

Dialogue at these depths holds great promise. Long-cherished convictions may be modified by the encounter with others. Misunderstanding may be clarified, potential hostilities reconciled, and new insights regarding one's own faith may emerge in contrast to that of another. The depths of another's faith may be so disclosed that its power and attractiveness are experienced. Dialogue is a demanding process, requiring thorough understanding of one's own faith and clear articulation of it to the other person. It asks that we "translate" our perspectives to one another with integrity,

that we have the patience and attentiveness to discern what meaning words and images have for the other persons as well as ourselves.

Dialogue is not a betrayal of witness. Dialogue and witness are wrongly placed in opposition to each other. They need each other. Dialogue creates relationships of mutual understanding, openness, and respect. Witness presses dialogue to the deepest convictions about life, death, and hope.

Many persons of other faiths are suspicious that dialogue is a new and more subtle tool for conversion. In some ways this is inevitable since Christians do want others to learn of and receive the truth and grace we know in Jesus Christ. The difference between dialogue and other forms of witness is that it is a context for learning from the other the truth and wisdom of the other faith as well as sharing with the other the truth and wisdom of our own. We leave to the Holy Spirit the outcome of our mutual openness.

Because of our theological understanding of John Wesley's insistence on prevenient grace, we know that our task of witness is set in the context of a world in which God is very much active and where people have already experienced the love of God in good measure through the activity of the Holy Spirit. Because we understand prevenient grace that "goes before," we know that the activity of the Holy Spirit is at work in the church and in the world, in the lives of all persons, including those of other religious traditions. A large part of our task, and foundational to interreligious dialogue and cooperation, is to learn to discern the Spirit's work.

Our concern is to be obedient to our own call to witness and to follow the imperative to be loving and neighborly to persons of other faith communities. In dialogue, these deeply held truths encounter each other in witness and love, so that greater wisdom and greater understanding of truth may emerge which benefit all parties in the dialogue. As we exhibit courtesy, reverence, and respect and become neighbors, fears of each other are allayed, and the Holy Spirit works within these relationships.

Neighbors and Witnesses: Into the New Millennium

The command to love one's neighbors and the call to witness to Jesus Christ to all people are inseparably linked. The profound challenge which this represents for United Methodist Christians can be seen most sharply in the new religious movements which have arisen in recent years. These movements have become a source of concern for many Christians. Some groups seem to utilize methods that are manipulative and coercive.

However, many people have found new vision, meaning, and hope in some of these new faith perspectives. These new religious movements are very diverse and they should not be lumped together indiscriminately, condemned, and dismissed. Neither should they automatically be embraced as valid expressions of human dignity and freedom. Careful study and contact will enable Christians to distinguish those which are manipulative and coercive and which are to be challenged for reasons of faith.

As we take seriously this calling to be witnesses and neighbors to people of all faith communities, old and new, we become aware of the biblical caution not to bear false witness (Matthew 19:18) and the admonition to live at peace with all people (Hebrews 12:14). How are we to avoid bearing false witness unless we know our neighbors and understand their faith commitments? How can one

truly love a neighbor and hold back what to Christians is the greatest of all gifts—God becoming present to people in Jesus Christ How can we live peacefully together, unless we are willing to be neighborly How can we say we love our neighbor if we are unwilling to be attentive to the message and the gifts which God has given him or her Love of neighbor and witness to Christ are the two primary attitudes United Methodist Christians must affirm in their relationship with persons of other faith traditions. When we affirm our love for the neighbor, we discover that God has given us another gift—people in other faith communities. We join hands with them to fight against the evil powers and principalities of this earth.

God is calling United Methodists into a new millennium full of its own challenges and opportunities. We seek to learn how the Holy Spirit works among all peoples of the world, especially among those in other religious traditions. We desire to read the holy texts that others believe to be inspired by God and to open ourselves to the power and spiritual insights held in the stories, images, and rituals of other traditions. And we pray for guidance as we yearn to proclaim the Savior whom we know among people who believe in other saviors and lords. May all our mission and witness to the peoples of this world be inspired by the Holy Spirit and centered in the love taught us by Jesus Christ.

Guidelines for Interreligious Relationships

The following guidelines will assist United Methodists to be faithful to their call to witness and the call to be neighbors with persons of other faith communities.

1. Identify the various faith communities in your area and begin to familiarize your congregation with them. This may involve planned experiences which bring faith communities into contact with one another or the formation of study groups which provide an introduction to other faith traditions.
2. Initiate dialogues with other faith communities, remaining sensitive to areas of historic tension yet open to the possibilities for deepened understanding and new insight. Each partner must forthrightly face the issues that cause separation as well as those that foster relationship.
3. Work in practical ways with persons of other faith communities to resolve economic, social, cultural and political problems in the community. Soup kitchens, food pantries, Habitat for Humanity projects and other such efforts can be an effective focus for shared concerns for the common good.
4. Together with persons of other faith traditions, plan community celebrations with an interreligious perspective. Prepare carefully. Sensitivity to the integrity of each tradition is essential. Care should be taken not to relativize all religious symbols and practices nor minimize religious differences.
5. Develop new models of community building which strengthen relationships and allow people to dwell together in harmony while honoring the integrity of their differences.

Intent

The intent in developing interreligious relationships is not to amalgamate all faiths into one religion. We Christians have no interest in such syncretism. To engage in interreligious dialogue is

neither to endorse nor to deny the faith of other people. In dialogue we mutually seek insight into the wisdom of other traditions and we hope to overcome our fears and misapprehensions. Far from requiring a lessening of commitment to Christ, effective dialogue is only possible when one's own faith is strong, and may ultimately serve to deepen or extend it.

We Christians are seeking to be neighbors with persons whose religious commitments are different from our own and to engage each other about the deepest convictions of our lives. In our assurance of and trust in God's grace in Jesus Christ, we open ourselves to dialogue and engagement with persons of other faith communities and to other Christians whose understandings, cultures, and practices may be different from our own.

This interreligious engagement challenges United Methodist Christians to think in new ways about our lives in the broader human community, about our mission, evangelism, service, and our life together within the Christian church. We seek to promote peace and harmony with persons of other religious traditions in our various towns, cities, and neighborhoods. Yet we do not hide our differences, nor avoid conflicts, but seek to make them constructive. In each place, we share our lives with each other, we witness and are witnessed to, we invite others into the Christian community and we are invited into theirs. Our prayer is that the lives of all in each place will be enriched by the differences of others, that a new sense of community may emerge, and that others may receive the gift of God in Christ, while we receive the gifts which have been given them.

- ADOPTED 1980
- REVISED AND READOPTED 2000
- REVISED AND READOPTED 2008
- RESOLUTION #89, 2004 BOOK OF RESOLUTIONS
- RESOLUTION #79, 2000 BOOK OF RESOLUTIONS
- See Social Principles, ¶ 162B.

6030. Responsible Travel

The travel and tourism industry has become one of the fastest growing and largest sectors in the global economy. The annual revenues are second only to the weapons industry and, according to the United Nations, earnings from tourism are expected to triple in the next 20 years. The impact of travel and tourism on local economies, disadvantaged communities, women and children, indigenous peoples, and the environment has become a serious concern and requires thoughtful reflection by people of faith on our role as participants in these activities.

We are called by Scripture to be sojourners in ways which promote justice:

Exodus 12:48-49—Sojourners are to abide by one law for both the native and for the stranger.

Exodus 22:21—You shall not wrong a stranger or oppress [him/her], for you were a sojourner in the land of Egypt.

Leviticus 19:34—When a stranger sojourns with you in your land, you shall not do [him/her] wrong. The stranger who sojourns with you shall be as a native among you. You shall love [him/her] as yourself.

1 Peter 1:17—Conduct yourselves with reverent fear throughout the time of your exile (sojourning).

To travel is not to take a vacation from our faith. Just as we are called to express hospitality by welcoming the stranger, we are also called to abide in love and justice with our neighbors when we visit them, whether near or far away. When sojourning in a strange land, travelers should behave with reverence and respect for the people, their culture, and the land upon which they live.

Too often travel and tourism is exploitative as a result of the globalization of local economies in ways that transform self-sufficient communities into consumer-oriented and dependent societies. The impact of the travel industry can be viewed as a new form of colonialism in which local people are displaced and priced out of their own communities. Local people are most commonly employed in low-wage service positions without benefits. They are also faced with rising prices for basic needs such as food, transportation, and housing to meet the demand of tourists, hotels, and resorts. In the wake of this transformation, traditional knowledge and skills are forgotten, and the natural environment is exploited to meet the needs of a tourist economy.

Exploitative travel and tourism also impacts women and children who become victims in sex trade or trafficking, child prostitution, and/or pornography.

The impact of tourism is of particular concern to indigenous peoples. Tourism may exploit sacred sites such as burial grounds, ritual areas, and other places which hold significance in the cultural traditions of the indigenous peoples sometimes without their input or permission.

God's creation, the natural environment, can also be a victim of exploitative tourism when the local resources are viewed as a commodity to be consumed by the tourist industry as resources, entertainment, or merely as a dumping ground for the waste products they produce.

A just alternative to exploitative travel and tourism is "sustainable tourism." Sustainable tourism development in the travel industry should include the following principles:

- support for community and indigenous involvement in the planning, implementation, and monitoring of any tourism policies or development plans; and, wherever possible, ownership or joint venture of destination sites/travel programs;
- creation of tourist/travel programs that combat poverty by ensuring that a larger share of the profits and jobs generated by tourism remain in the local communities through purchases of local crafts, foods, and supplies;
- practice of travel behaviors that are respectful of cultural norms and traditions within the society; and
- development of forms of tourism that are not destructive to the local or global environment.

Therefore, The United Methodist Church calls on general agencies, annual conferences, and members of local churches to model sustainable travel and tourism and to reflect on the following when traveling:

- Does the travel respect and protect God's creation Are there ways to lower and/or offset carbon emissions from the mode of transportation Is the travel respectful of resources in and the natural habitat of the community being visited
 - Are the products/souvenirs purchased on travel locally produced using sustainable materials (e.g. no threatened species of plants or animals
 - Does the travel respect and strengthen the community being visited? Is the visit respectful of local culture and customs? Are members of the local community fully involved in and benefiting from the site visits and cultural experiences? Is the tourist revenue being shared by the community? Are the workers in the restaurants, hotels, and tour companies being paid a living wage? Are gratuities adequately provided?
 - How will the travel inform conversation and action upon returning home? What local stories and experiences will be communicated with colleagues, friends, and family? What successes and/or challenges of the local community can be connected to actions at home? What organizations advocate for policies and reforms that would further strengthen the community and empower local residents to address systemic challenges?
- ADOPTED 2000
 - REVISED AND READOPTED 2008
 - RESOLUTION #287, 2004 BOOK OF RESOLUTIONS
 - RESOLUTION #266, 2000 BOOK OF RESOLUTIONS
 - See Social Principles ¶ 165A, B, and D.