

Social Justice Priorities

What They Are

These social issues are the foci of United Methodist Women's advocacy and mission work:

- Women's Rights
- Immigration
- Health Care
- Environment
- Economic Justice
- Racial Justice
- Public Education
- Child Advocacy
- Global Justice
- Domestic Violence
- Human Trafficking

Women's Rights

Scriptural Mandate

"There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus" (Gal. 3:28)

United Methodist Book of Discipline

*"We affirm women and men to be equal in every aspect of their common life."
(Social Principles, ¶ 162 F)*

Value

- We view ourselves as an instrument to transform the role of women in society. We commit ourselves to bridge gaps among women:
 - Church women and the women's movement in society
 - Christian women and women of other faith traditions and women of various races, ethnic identities and races

- Older women with younger women
- Poor women and all other women
- Single women and married women
- Lesbian women and heterosexual women
- Women employed outside the home and women working exclusively in the home
- The struggle of women and other freedom struggles
- Women in the United States and in other countries (Ministries with Women and Ministries with Children and Youth: A Gift for the Whole Church, March 1993)

Immigration and Civil Rights

United Methodist Women's immigration initiative is part of our ongoing commitment to racial justice, and civil and human rights. United Methodist Women seeks to welcome immigrants and advocate for just immigration policies.

Women's Division and United Methodist Church statements

United Methodist Women's work for immigrant and civil rights is based on United Methodist policy as affirmed by General Conference in 2008. The Book of Resolutions of The United Methodist Church (2008), which guides our actions, includes Resolution 3281, "Welcoming the Migrant to the United States," and Resolution 6028, "Global Migration: A Quest for Justice."

United Methodist Book of Discipline

We recognize, embrace, and affirm all persons, regardless of country of origin, as members of the family of God. We affirm the right of all persons to equal opportunities for employment, access to housing, health care, education, and freedom from social discrimination. We urge the Church and society to recognize the gifts, contributions, and struggles of those who are immigrants and to advocate for justice for all. (Social Principles 162.H)

Health Care

Scriptural Mandate

20 Then suddenly a woman who had been suffering from hemorrhages for twelve years came up behind him and touched the fringe of his cloak, 21 for she said to herself, "If I only touch his cloak, I will be made well." 22 Jesus turned, and seeing her he said, "Take heart, daughter; your faith has made you well." And instantly the woman was made well. (Matthew 9:20-22

United Methodist Book of Discipline

Health care is a condition of physical, mental, social and spiritual wellbeing ... Health care is a basic human right.

Providing the care needed to maintain health, prevent disease and restore health after injury or illness is a responsibility each person owes others and government owes to all, a responsibility government ignores at its peril. In Ezekiel 34:4a, God points out the failures of the leadership of Israel to care for the weak: "You have not strengthened the weak, you have not healed the sick, you have not bound up the injured." As a result, all suffer.

We believe it is a governmental responsibility to provide all citizens with health care. (Social Principles, ¶ 162 V)

Value

We United Methodists are called to a ministry of healing. We must continue to support direct health services where needed and to continue to provide, as we are able, such services in hospitals and homes, clinics and health centers. We have a responsibility to support public policies and programs that will ensure comprehensive health care services of high quality to all persons on the principle of equal access. (Petition on Health Care Delivery, October 1979)

Within a just society every person has the right to:

- Basic health services that are accessible and affordable in each geographic and cultural setting
- An environment that promotes health
- Involvement in the formulation of health care activities that meet local needs and priorities
- Information about his or her illness and to be an active participant in treatment and rehabilitation
- Receive compassionate and skilled care
- A health care system sensitive to cultural needs

- Access to funding sources when necessary for basic health services and to basic preventative health care services, rejecting dual standards of care based on ability to pay. (Health & Wholeness, April 1983)

Environment

Scriptural Mandate

For I am about to create new heavens and a new earth; The former things shall not be remembered or come to mind. But be glad and rejoice forever in what I am creating; For I am about to create Jerusalem as a joy, and its people as a delight. I will rejoice in Jerusalem, and delight in my people; No more shall the sound of weeping be heard in it, nor the cry of distress. No more shall there be in it an infant that lives but a few days, Or an old person who does not live out a lifetime ... They shall build houses and inhabit them; They shall plant vineyards and eat their fruit ... They shall not labor in vain, or bear children for calamity; Before they call I will answer, while they are yet speaking I will hear. The wolf and the lamb shall feed together, the lion shall eat straw like the ox; But the serpent – its food shall be the dust! ~Isaiah 65:17-25)

United Methodist Book of Discipline

All creation is the Lord's, and we are responsible for the ways in which we use and abuse it. Water, air, soil, minerals, energy resources, plants, animal life, and space are to be valued and conserved because they are God's creation and not solely because they are useful to human beings. God has granted us stewardship of creation. We should meet these stewardship duties through acts of loving care and respect. (Social Principles, ¶ 160)

Value

We call for sound stewardship of the earth and environmentally friendly lifestyles that preserve creation for the benefit of present and future generations. United Methodist Women's environmental advocacy responds to this call.

Get involved in our environmental work:

- Connect on UMWOnline to the Environment group for resources and discussion.
- Be a Green Unit! Take the pledge to promote environmental justice. Download this checklist (PDF, 60K) and contact Esmeralda Brown at ebrown@unitedmethodistwomen.org.
- Green Teams activate local United Methodist Women members to organize their communities around environmental issues impacting their area. Learn more to start yours now!

- Chlorine Free Campaign: We converted use of paper and household products to dioxin-free, chlorine-free products in 1997 and never looked back. You can too! See our tips on using Chlorine-Free Paper.
- Climate Change: Read about United Methodist Women's involvement at Copenhagen.

"They shall not hurt or destroy on all my holy mountain, says the Lord."

Economic Justice

Scriptural Mandate

"God remembers those who suffer; He does not forget their cry, And he punishes those who wrong them. ... The needy will not always be neglected; The hope of the poor will not be crushed forever." (Psalm 9:12, 18)

"Protect the rights of the poor and needy." (Proverbs 31:9)

"Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God. Blessed are you who are hungry now, for you will be filled. Blessed are you who weep now, for you will laugh." (Luke 6:20a)

United Methodist Book of Discipline

As a church, we are called to support the poor and challenge the rich... Poverty most often has systemic causes, and therefore we do not hold poor people morally responsible for their economic state. (Social Principles, ¶ 163 E)

Value

As globalization quickens the consolidation of wealth and power by fewer individuals and corporations, United Methodist Women continues to stand for economic justice for those on the margins of society.

United Methodist Women work in this area includes:

- Advocacy for debt relief for impoverished nations crippled by efforts to repay loans to international bodies
- Support for the abolition of sweatshops and child labor
- Promotion of Fair-Trade policies and products
- Support for farm worker rights
- Participation in living wage campaigns

Racial Justice

Scriptural Mandate

"From one ancestor he made all the nations to inhabit the whole earth." (Acts 17:22)

United Methodist Book of Discipline

"We recognize racism as sin and affirm the ultimate and temporal worth of all persons. We rejoice in the gifts that particular ethnic histories and cultures bring to our total life. We commend and encourage the self-awareness of all racial and ethnic groups and oppressed people that leads them to demand their just and equal rights as members of society." (Social Principles, ¶ 162 B)

Value

Racial justice is an ongoing focus of United Methodist Women mission work. We conduct regular racial justice workshops with members, and work in coalition with human and civil rights groups to track hate-crimes and to promote racial justice in the United States and the world.

United Methodist Women's Charter for Racial Justice was created and adopted by the Women's Division in 1978 and successfully adopted by the whole denomination in 1980. General Conference has consecutively readopted it, every eight years since, most recently in 2008. The Charter continues our urgent call for study and action on the principles and goals of its vision.

Public Education

Scriptural Mandate

"I have come in order that you may have life—life in all its fullness." (John 10:10b)

United Methodist Book of Discipline

We believe that every person has the right to education. We also believe that the responsibility for education of the young rests with the family, faith communities, and the government. In society, this function can best be fulfilled through public policies that ensure access for all persons to free public elementary and secondary schools to post-secondary schools of their choice.

We affirm the right of public and independent colleges and universities to exist, and we endorse public policies that do not create unconstitutional entanglements between church and state. (Social Principles, ¶ 164 E)

Value

In 2002, United Methodist Women launched "Campaign for Children, Phase III: Public Education" to support, help improve and advocate for U.S. public schools. Read more about the Campaign for Children.

We encourage each United Methodist Women unit to visit its local schools and explore ways to effectively promote quality, safe and accessible public education for every child. United Methodist Women members volunteer in local schools, donating supplies to public school students and advocating state and federal legislators on behalf of public education.

Child Advocacy

Scriptural Mandate

"He called a child, whom he put among them, and said, 'Truly I tell you, unless you change and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. Whoever becomes humble like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. Whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me.'"
(Matthew 18: 2-5)

United Methodist Book of Discipline

Once considered property of their parents, children are now acknowledged to be full human beings in their own right, but beings to whom adults and society in general have special obligations...

Children have the rights to food, shelter, clothing, health care, and emotional wellbeing, as do adults, and these rights we affirm as theirs regardless of actions or inactions of their parents or guardians.

In particular, children must be protected from economic, physical, emotional and sexual exploitation and abuse. (Social Principles, ¶ 162 C)

Value

The legacy of United Methodist Women began, in part, by advocating for children through funding mission for their health and education. We have continued to be strong advocates for the rights and needs of children.

Until children have strong advocates in the general population, we will champion their cause. Our call is for the whole of church and society to share the urgency of this concern. ("Ministries with Women and Ministries with Children and Youth: A Gift for the Whole Church," March 1993.

Campaign for Children

Beginning in 1988, the Women's Division carried out its commitment to children

through the Campaign for Children.

During Phase I (1988-1993), nearly 10,000 local units United Methodist Women made commitments to make a difference in the lives of children through worship, education, community service, and legislative action.

Phase II, from 1994-1999 and called "Making the World Safe for Children and Youth in the Twenty-first Century," placed greater focus on issues facing youth, including violence, teen pregnancy, and empowerment to become full participants in society.

Phase III, beginning in 2002, focused on advocating for greater support for public schools in the United States.

Global Justice

Scriptural Mandate

"Turn from evil and do good; seek peace and pursue it." (Psalms 34:14)

United Methodist Book of Discipline

God's world is one world... 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. (Social Principles, ¶ 166)

Value

Because United Methodist Women believes we are all a part of the beloved community, we keep a close watch on international governments and organizations through partnerships with the United Nations to ensure they support policies with the interests of women, children and youth in mind.

As Christians, we advocate for peace at home and abroad. Peacemaking is not just about ending conflict but about changing the way we respond to differences at all levels—from individuals and communities to nations.

We envision a world where might does not make right, where differences are not settled with violence, and where resources go to meet the human needs of all rather than for destruction.

Domestic Violence Awareness

Domestic violence is not just a women's issue. It is an issue of faith. United Methodist Women and United Methodist Men have partnered to launch a domestic violence initiative to raise awareness and provide training in United Methodist congregations.

Human Trafficking

Human trafficking is a form of modern-day slavery, and is the second largest criminal industry in the world after drug trade. Traffickers force vulnerable persons into contract slavery, forced labor and sexual trafficking.

Scriptural Mandate

“Again I looked and saw all the oppression that was taking place under the sun; I saw the tears of the oppressed - and they have no comforter; power was on the side of their oppressors - and they have no comforter.” - Ecclesiastes 4:1 NIV

*“Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom.”
- 2 Corinthians 3:17 NRSV*

United Methodist Book of Discipline

As United Methodists, we proclaim faith in the God of freedom and condemn slavery as wrong and incompatible with Christ’s teachings. We recognize that we are called to follow Christ in proclaiming release to the captives and setting the oppressed free (Luke 4:16-19). We affirm that each person is of equal value in the sight of God and will work to create communities in which each person’s value is recognized, maintained, and strengthened. We affirm God’s abundant grace for everyone and strive to embody this grace toward all involved, both those trafficked and those who are trafficking.