



## **IN SUPPORT OF ECONOMIC JUSTICE**

**Bishop J. Michael Lowry**  
*South Central Jurisdiction, Fort Worth Episcopal Area*  
*Central Texas Conference*



The United Methodist Women share with the United Methodist Church a deep commitment to economic justice for all people. In doing so we live out of the call of Christ remembering how the Lord started his public ministry. “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me. He has sent me to preach good news to the poor, to proclaim release to the prisoners and recovery of sight to the blind, to liberate the oppressed, and to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.” (Luke 4:18-19)

The words of Jesus in the “Judgment of the Nations” frame our ministry. “I assure you that when you have done it for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you have done it for me.” (Matthew 25:40).

We have watched with alarm the widening gap between those who live impoverished on the margins of society and the overabundance of the privileged few. In our Book of Resolutions, we note that too wide a disparity of income is not only a negation of God’s creative intent but dangerous to the health of the nation and its peoples, rich and poor alike.

Anchored on the witness of Holy Scripture we recall that “The prophets warn us that an economic system based on greed, economic exploitation, and the indifference to the needs of the poor is contrary to God’s will and leads to ruin for the society (Amos 8:4-6; Jeremiah 22:13-17).” (Resolution 4052, “Economic Justice for a New Millennium,” The Book of Resolutions of The United Methodist Church, 2012, pp. 546-547)

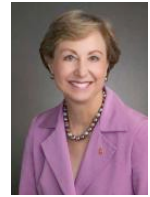
Advocating that biblical faithfulness be reflected in our economic life, The Discipline of the United Methodist Church calls for a fair minimum wage for all who are willing to work. Thus we state, “Every person has the right to a job at a living wage.” (The Discipline of the United Methodist Church 2016, ¶163C, “The Economic Community,” p. 132)

Together with all people of good will, United Methodist Women and the United Methodist Church are strongly committed to the cause of economic justice. Economic justice is one of the practical ways we live out the great commandment to love God and love our neighbor. (Luke 10:27) United Methodist Women were originally organized under the banner of “The Society for Christian Service.” Such is our call to action as Christ-followers. In concrete expression of social justice, in a commitment to a living wage for all, in determination of safe working conditions and an equitable distribution of financial resources, we are committed to work and ministry of economic justice for all people.



## **Religious Freedom in the UMC**

**Bishop Janice Riggle Huie**  
*South Central Jurisdiction, Retired*



United Methodists follow a Savior who served and respected all people. Jesus ate with a tax collector, honored the faith of the Syrophenician woman, and named the good Samaritan as more righteous than the religious leaders of his day. Jesus affirmed that every person has inherent worth and dignity.

The United Methodist Church urges policies and practices that ensure the right of every religious group to exercise its faith free from legal, political or economic restrictions. We condemn all overt and covert forms of religious intolerance. We assert the right of all religions to freedom from legal, economic and social discrimination. (Social Principles Par. 162.B)

The United Methodist Church fosters cooperation among spiritual, religious, and ecumenical bodies for the protection of religious freedom and belief. It enters healthy dialogues with peoples of differing faiths and encourage governments and civil society and enters healthy dialogues about racism and discrimination and to address and resolve especially those concerns that have institutionalized religious bases. (2016 Book of Resolutions, #6025)



## **The Criminalization of People of Color/Immigration**

**Bishop W. Earl Bledsoe**  
*South Central Jurisdiction, Northwest Texas-New Mexico Episcopal Area*  
Northwest Texas & New Mexico Conferences



The current state of affairs in the United States regarding immigration and the criminalization of people of color has reached a crisis and impasse. Not only has the current US administration doubled down on people of color with regards to immigration, but created fear and division by conflating the issue with terror, drugs, rape and crime coming across the southern border of the USA and Mexico.

In my episcopal area, we have witnessed firsthand the impact of how these fear tactics have created division in the church and community as well as its impact on asylum seekers fleeing persecution and poverty in other countries with illegal immigration and the criminalization of its effects on people of color.

Most recently the “zero tolerance” factor has separated families with children from one another and created untold mental stress on young children placed in fenced cages without adequate resources and care. The “zero tolerance” policies are being disproportionately implemented on people of color along the southern border.

The United Methodist Church, through its various agencies such as the Board of Church & Society and the General Commission on Religion and Race, as well as the continued commitment of the United Methodist Women to equal justice and civil rights for all persons, have enabled us to provide a theological and biblical framework for the advocacy of a change in our policies and approach. It is my hope that we as the church stand in solidarity with the immigrant over and against laws that disproportionately criminalize people of color. I also hope that we will take a more active role in advocating for reform of our immigration laws in the USA that reflect dignity and respect for people of color entering the USA.



## **Statement on Maternal and Child Health and The Book of Discipline of the United Methodist Church**

**Bishop Robert C. Schnase**

*South Central Jurisdiction, San Antonio Episcopal Area  
Rio Texas Conference*



The Christian faith is based on a story of incarnation. The God who created all people chose to take on the fullness of human life in the form of a baby, nurtured in the body of a woman. Mary's humble birthing of the infant Christ lends holiness to every birth and ties us inextricably to a concern for the health of mothers and babies.

Women around the world risk their health and even their lives when they bear children. Children, in turn, are the most vulnerable members of society and suffer disproportionately in many places from disease and malnutrition. In every place, primary caregivers of children need resources and support to help children claim fullness of life, physically, emotionally, and spiritually.

The United Methodist Church supports "social climates in which human communities are maintained and strengthened for the sake of all people and their growth" (§161). The church supports governmental provision of healthcare to all, including access to both "comprehensive reproductive health/family planning information and services" and primary health care in general (§162.V). We affirm the rights of children and young people to "food, shelter, clothing, health care, and emotional well-being," as well as to protection from exploitation and abuse (§162.C-D). In support of clergy families, the church provides for maternity and paternity leave for clergy welcoming children by birth or adoption (§355).

Finally, the church notes that children are integral members of the Body of Christ. Paragraph 226.4 outlines the responsibility of pastors, parents, and churches to raise children in the faith. Our founder John Wesley himself, in his historic examination questions posed to candidates for ordination asks (§336.14), "Will you diligently instruct the children in every place?" The concern of United Methodist Women for the overall health of mothers and babies falls squarely within the mandate of our faith as Wesleyan witnesses of Jesus Christ.

*Rev. Laura Merrill, Assistant to the Bishop*



## **Statement Regarding Public Education**

**Bishop Scott J. Jones**

*South Central Jurisdiction, Houston Episcopal Area  
Texas Conference*



Throughout its history, the Methodist Movement has had a strong focus on education. Wherever Methodists have gone, we have established schools and supported the finest academics for children and young adults.

Guided by our social Principles, we believe *all* young people deserve an education and that it is the shared duty of the government, the guardians of our children, and the church to ensure both access to and success within a free public elementary and secondary schools system and post-secondary school of a child's choice. Further, we affirm the joining of reason and faith.

Advocacy for strong schools and education of the young is an historic part of the way that United Methodists live out our faith in society. It is through the education of our children that our society and our communities ensure their strength and vitality. Children are of sacred worth to God and should be of the highest priority to the Church.

I call upon the leaders of Texas – Governor Abbott, Lieutenant Governor Patrick, the Legislature and all school boards – to provide adequate and sustainable funding for the education of all the children of our state. As United Methodists, We Love All God's Children.