



Resources for Putting Faith into Action

United Methodists, rooted in the teachings of Jesus and the prophets, have a long history of speaking out against injustice. Our Wesleyan heritage of "practical divinity," church teachings, and The United Methodist Church's mission statement call us to transform the world because we are disciples of Jesus Christ. The United Methodist General Board of Church and Society (GBCS) supports our denomination's peace and justice work and we look to their scripture-centered resources first. The updated Social Principles are especially relevant today.

Frequently Asked Questions

What is faith-based organizing?

Faith-based organizing is a Gospel practice at its core. Jesus invited, trained, and equipped disciples. He sent them out in pairs to spread the Good News. Jesus now sends us out as United Methodists to "make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world," as our mission statement reads. Organizing grows the reign of God on earth by fostering deep, intentional, and incarnational relationships in our churches and communities. This work leads to teams, networks, and movements working together for justice.

What about separation of church and state?

This phrase, coined by Thomas Jefferson, points to the First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution: "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances." This means that the government can't tell the people what to believe. Further, religious organizations have the right to tell the government about its grievances and concerns and may advocate for public policy that reflects our faith-informed values.

What about churches that are ideologically diverse, concerned about losing members, and would prefer to "stay out of politics"?

While every pastor and congregation will ultimately make their own choices, there is no such thing as neutrality. As Archbishop Desmond Tutu said, "If you are neutral in situations of injustice, you have chosen the side of the oppressor. If an elephant has its foot on the tail of a mouse, and you say that you are neutral, the mouse will not appreciate your neutrality" (as quoted in *Unexpected News: Reading the Bible with Third-World Eyes*, by Robert McAfee Brown [1984]). Jesus was not neutral; nor are we called to neutrality. We can advocate for peace and justice and love of neighbor without being partisan.

How to Have Courageous Conversations

Courageous Conversations is a toolbox created by Discipleship Ministries that local churches can use to inspire and encourage the church and individuals to participate in conversations that might seem difficult. It serves as an invitation for you and your church to learn skills and trust in the transforming presence of God's grace that is available to us all as we engage in difficult conversations. The aim of Courageous Conversations is learning.

- **[Courageous Conversations Introduction](#)**
- **[How to Have Courageous Conversations Booklet](#)**
- **[Courageous Conversations: Why Kindness Beats Niceness](#)**

Courageous conversations have nothing to do with being nice and everything to do with being kind, gentle and loving.

This information was compiled by the Northern Illinois Conference Board of Church and Society, Northern Illinois Conference Connectional Ministries office, and Rockford Urban Ministries. Send questions/comments to the Northern Illinois connectional ministries office, connectionalministries@umcnic.org.

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As the Northern Illinois Conference, we want to share these resources that will help churches in times like these. While many urgent issues deserve our attention and our responses will need to evolve, we now offer suggestions for how churches can confront these four immediate topics that challenge the dignity of all people.

Immigration Advocacy

You shall also love the stranger, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt.
(Deut. 10:19)

- **Read the United Methodist Social Principles**
The Social Principles include a statement on immigration. Read Political Community, Basic Rights and Freedoms, section G: “Migrants, Immigrants, and Refugees.”
- **Provide Immigrant Legal Resource Center “Red Cards”**
These informational cards help people assert their rights and defend themselves in many situations, such as when Immigration and Customs Enforcement agents show up at homes. Users may order or print cards, which are available in multiple languages, to help immigrants know their rights.
- **Host a “Know Your Rights” Training**
 - These two groups can help:
 - **ACLU of Illinois.** Consider starting or joining an ACLU chapter in your community. (A Methodist pastor from Chicago who advocated for workers rights’ and children’s safety was one of the founders of the ACLU!)
 - **Northern Illinois Justice For Our Neighbors.** This office is part of a network of legal clinics for immigrants that was established by The United Methodist Church.
- **Prepare to be a Sanctuary Church**
 - **Provide a safe space** for someone being threatened with deportation. Please contact your District Superintendent if your church is considering to be a Sanctuary Church.
 - **Visit the Baptist Joint Committee for guidance** on questions to consider as you explore this option.
- **Subscribe to email updates** from the United Methodist–endorsed organization Immigration Law & Justice Network and the Illinois Coalition for Immigrant and Refugee Rights.
- **Read the GBCS resource** “Immigrant Welcoming Communities.”
- **Lead a group discussion.** Consider using Sojourners magazine’s list of 22 Bible verses that address welcoming immigrants.
- **Host a fundraiser** for an immigration advocacy group.
- **Share with your community** some positive stories and dispel myths about immigration. Check out Welcome With Dignity 815 as an example.

General Resources for Clergy

- The United Methodist General Commission on Religion and Race
- Methodist Federation for Social Action
- Clergy Emergency League

Have another resource to add? Complete this form.

LGBTQ+ Advocacy

There is no longer Jew or Greek; there is no longer slave or free; there is no longer male and female, for all of you are one in Christ Jesus. (Gal. 3:28)

- **Read the United Methodist Social Principles**
The Social Principles include a statement on LGBTQ+. Read Social Community, Nurturing Community, section C: Human Sexuality.
- **Find resources** from Reconciling Ministries Network.
- **Start or join** a PFLAG chapter.

Denouncing Christian Nationalism

Peter opened his mouth and said: “Truly I understand that God shows no partiality, but in every nation anyone who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him.”
(Acts 10:34-35)

- **Read the GBCS resource** “Christian Nationalism in the United States: Faith and Facts.” (part of GBCS’s “Faith and Facts” cards series)

Reproductive Health-Care Access

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and the God of all consolation who consoles us in all our affliction, so that we may be able to console those who are in any affliction with the consolation with which we ourselves are consoled by God.
(2 Cor. 1:3-5)

- **Read the United Methodist Social Principles**
The Social Principles include a statement on reproductive health. Read Social Community, Other Social Issues, section K: “Reproductive Health and Abortion.”
- **Subscribe to emails** from Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice.
- **Encourage people to donate** to local and national abortion access funds. (Visit National Network of Abortion Funds.)
- **Share the pamphlet** “Spiritual Resources for Your Abortion Journey,” published by Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice, with people who are seeking an abortion and would like spiritual support.
- **Write letters to the editor and share publicly** why you, as a person of faith, support a woman’s right to choose.
- **Have a plan** in place to respond to protesters at your church.
- **Learn the history of the Clergy Consultation Service.** Invite like-minded clergy to discuss the possibility of reactivating such a group in your area.