

1 **Document: 700.07**

2 **Name: Help Us Find Our Shawnee Children**

3 **Authors: Shawnee Tribe, Ben Barnes, Tribal Chief, Thomas Rawlinson, member of Shawnee**  
 4 **Tribe; NIC Church and Society, Elisa Gatz, chair; NIC MFSA Luis F. Reyes and Elisa Gatz,**  
 5 **co-chairs; NIC RMN Alka Lyall, Luis F. Reyes, and Elisa Gatz, co-facilitators**

6  
 7 **Action:**

- 8 • The Northern Illinois Conference of the United Methodist Church acknowledges the  
 9 harm done to the Shawnee people at the Shawnee Methodist Mission and Indian  
 10 Manual Labor School.
- 11 • The conference, individually and collectively, pledge its support in finding the remains  
 12 of the missing Indigenous children. This may include a time of prayer and  
 13 remembrance and an education of the history of Indian Boarding Schools in local  
 14 congregations. It also calls on the UMC to acknowledge their part in this history, repent  
 15 to the Shawnee people, and be open participants in the search for these missing  
 16 children.
- 17 • Furthermore, the NIC will sponsor similar legislation supporting the Shawnee people's  
 18 search for their missing children at the 2024 General Conference.

19

20 **Rationale:**

21 The Shawnee Methodist Mission and Indian Manual Labor School operated in Kansas from  
 22 1830-1870, near present-day Fairway. As with other mission schools such as the Kamloops  
 23 Indian Mission School in British Columbia, Native children were taken from their parents and  
 24 forced into a system that has been called "cultural genocide." The discovery last year of  
 25 hundreds of unmarked graves at Kamloops has forced an international reckoning of the role  
 26 churches played in such atrocities.

27

28 In the words of Tribal Chief Ben Barnes, "It was here that the Methodists running the mission  
 29 forced young Shawnee children to work as field hands and manual laborers. In the windowless  
 30 attics of the still-standing dormitory, you can see where our children were forced to sleep and  
 31 carved messages left behind on the rafters. During our research, we discovered that parents  
 32 arrived at the school to check in on their children, only to learn right then they had died. We  
 33 are concerned because there is no cemetery at the Shawnee Indian Mission. We do not know  
 34 where these children of ours have been buried."

35

36 In 2012, the UMC initiated the Acts of Repentance. The Council of Bishops statement begins:  
 37 "As the Council of Bishops, we are here to repent and express remorse for the church's past  
 38 conduct in its relationships with Native and indigenous peoples in all the places where we have  
 39 extended the mission of the church for over two hundred years. We are here to commit  
 40 ourselves to addressing the wrong and asking for the forgiveness of those who have been  
 41 wronged by failing them so profoundly. We confess to God, acknowledging our guilt, resolving  
 42 to cease the harm, pledging ourselves to live differently, reversing the damage that has been  
 43 done through our participation in violence, maltreatment and neglect of Native and indigenous  
 44 peoples so that we may bring about healing and restoration to all."

1 **Document: 700.09**

2 **Name: Let's Overcome Christian Nationalism**

3 **Authors: NIC Church and Society, Elisa Gatz, chair; NIC MFSA Luis F. Reyes and Elisa**  
 4 **Gatz, co-chairs; NIC RMN Alka Lyall, Luis F. Reyes, and Elisa Gatz, co-facilitators**

5 **Action:**

- 6 • The Northern Illinois Conference of the United Methodist Church condemns the use of  
 7 Christian symbols and prayers by the attackers on the U.S. Congress at the Capitol on  
 8 January 6, 2021. We invite our clergy and lay leaders to condemn that attack, as well as  
 9 any future attacks.
- 10 • The Northern Illinois Conference of the United Methodist Church disavows the lies  
 11 spread about the 2020 Presidential Election that incited the mob carrying Christian  
 12 symbols to violently attack Congress while it was certifying the Electoral College votes  
 13 on January 6, 2021. We assert that the election of President Biden was free, fair, and  
 14 legal.
- 15 • We call upon our pastors and lay leaders to lead studies of Christian nationalism using  
 16 resources including [www.ChristiansAgainstChristianNationalism.org](http://www.ChristiansAgainstChristianNationalism.org); "The Capitol  
 17 Insurrection Was as Christian Nationalist as It Gets," [www.nytimes.com/2021/02/28/](http://www.nytimes.com/2021/02/28/opinion/christian-nationalists)  
 18 [opinion/christian-nationalists](http://www.nytimes.com/2021/02/28/opinion/christian-nationalists); Taking America Back for God by Whitehead and Perry;  
 19 The Power Worshippers: Inside the Dangerous Rise of Religious Nationalists by  
 20 Katherine Steward; and White Too Long, The Legacy of White Supremacy in American  
 21 Christianity by Robert Long.

22

23 **Rationale:**

24 Members of the Northern Illinois Conference were horrified at the assault on the U.S. Capitol on  
 25 January 6, 2021. We were dismayed by the use of Christian symbols during the violent attack on  
 26 the Congress. The sight of the cross, the Christian flag, "Jesus Saves" signs, and a "Jesus 2020"  
 27 flag modeled on the Trump campaign flag – along with the prayers professing a belief in God  
 28 empowering the insurrectionists onto victory – abused Christianity. We became more aware of  
 29 the dangerous ideology of Christian nationalism.

30 Our United Methodist faith compels us to recognize that Christian nationalism fuses Christian  
 31 and American identities so as to dishonor both the Christian faith and America's constitutional  
 32 democracy. We understand that Christian nationalism often overlaps white supremacy,  
 33 patriarchy, heteronormativity, authoritarianism, and militarism. We believe that no religion,  
 34 including Christianity, should be privileged by government policies. "The United Methodist  
 35 Church has for many years supported the separation of church and state." (UM Social  
 36 Principles)

37 We must stand up to and speak out against Christian nationalism, especially when it inspires  
 38 acts of violence and intimidation – including vandalism, bomb threats, arson, hate crimes, and  
 39 attacks on houses of worship – against religious communities at home and abroad.

1 **Document: 700.15**

2 **Name: Supporting the Rights of Immigrants, Refugees, and Asylum Seekers to Justice Equity**  
3 **and Right to Counsel**

4 **Author(s): Northern Illinois Church and Society, Elisa Gatz, chair; NIC RMN, Alka Lyall,**  
5 **Luis F. Reyes, and Elisa Gatz, co-facilitators; and NIC Methodist Federation for Social**  
6 **Action, Luis F. Reyes and Elisa Gatz, co-chairs.**

7  
8 **Action:**

- 9
- 10 1. Calls upon its clergy, lay leaders, and members to educate themselves about the  
11 plight of immigrants, asylum seekers, and refugees attempting to enter this country  
12 and particularly here in the Northern Illinois conference.
  - 13 2. Urges its clergy, lay leaders, and members to consider ways to support Justice for Our  
14 Neighbors and other advocacy and support groups such as Interfaith Immigration  
15 Coalition, Illinois Coalition for Immigrant and Refugee Rights, and CLASP, whose  
16 missions are to offer free high-quality legal services to low-income immigrants,  
17 asylum seekers, and refugees; to engage in education and advocacy efforts; and, to  
18 provide hospitality and needed childcare, and other related necessary services to aid  
19 them in feeling welcomed and supported.
  - 20 3. 4. Urges its clergy, lay leaders, and church members, on their own behalf to contact  
21 (write, call, or meet) their State Representatives and Senators to urge them to co-  
22 sponsor HB 0025 and SB 3144 respectively, the Immigration Right to Counsel Act.
  - 23 5. Directs the Conference Secretary [or other appropriate Conference rep] to write our  
24 State legislators to vote for and support the Immigrant Right to Counsel Act, and  
25 advocate for better state laws to promote the health, welfare and security of  
26 immigrants.
  - 27 6. Urges its clergy, lay leaders, and members to continue to call upon our U.S.  
28 representatives, to continue to pursue more and better decisions to care for the health,  
29 welfare, and security of immigrants, refugees, and asylum seekers, such as the recent  
30 decision to terminate the federal law, Title 42, which was misused to block migrants  
31 from seeking asylum at our southern borders and elsewhere in the U.S.

32  
33 **Rationale:**

34  
35 United Methodists, at the conference and General Conference level, have consistently passed  
36 resolutions and endorsed measures to protect the rights of immigrants, refugees, and asylum  
37 seekers..[1]

38  
39 We are grateful that, Justice For Our Neighbors (JFON), was created initiated by the General  
40 Board of Global Ministries in 1999 to help serve thousands of immigrants across the United  
41 States. . The JFON network effectively provides services to our community here within the  
42 Northern Ill. Conference, and also is a strong forum for advocacy on behalf of immigrant  
43 rights. See, [nijfon.org](http://nijfon.org). We appreciate the work of JFON and other organizations to advocate on  
44 the state level for passage of a state law providing immigrants rights to counsel.  
45 On the Federal level, we note with joy that the Interfaith Immigration Coalition has released a  
46 statement in support of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), announced plans  
47 to terminate Title 42 by May 23. The public health order, first invoked by the Trump

1 administration and continued by the Biden administration, has been misused for over two years  
2 to block migrants from seeking asylum at the U.S. southern border under the guise of protecting  
3 public health. Title 42 has resulted in approximately 1.7 million expulsions of asylum seekers  
4 back to harm, which has disproportionately impacted Black migrants. Over 10,000 documented  
5 incidents of kidnapping, torture, rape, and other violent attacks against vulnerable migrants have  
6 been reported since the start of the Biden administration due to Title 42. This is indeed a great  
7 step in support of the rights of asylum seekers and refugees, and we also know that more is  
8 required of faith communities to support the advocacy and humanitarian work of JFON,  
9 Interfaith Immigration Coalition, [should we include CLASP?] and comparable organizations

10  
11 We are called to these actions because as Jesus said “I was a stranger and you welcomed  
12 me.” Matthew 25:35B; and “do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for by doing that  
13 some have entertained angels without knowing it.” Hebrews 13:2; “When an alien resides with  
14 you in your land, you shall not oppress the alien.” Leviticus 19:33.

15  
16 <sup>[1]</sup> We call upon all UM churches to welcome newly arriving migrants, to treat them as one of  
17 our native born, see in them the presence of the incarnated Jesus, show hospitality to the  
18 migrants in our midst, oppose unfair and inhumane immigration policies, such as those that  
19 support family separation. See, 2016 Book of Resolutions, #3281 (Welcoming the Migrant to the  
20 US); 2016 Book of Discipline, Social Principles par. 162.

21

1 **Document: 700.16**

2 **Name: Supporting the Right to Free Speech and to Engage in Nonviolent Actions including**  
3 **Boycotts**

4 **Authors: Northern Illinois Church and Society, Elisa Gatz, chair; NIC RMN, Alka Lyall, Luis**  
5 **F. Reyes, and Elisa Gatz, co-facilitators; and NIC Methodist Federation for Social Action,**  
6 **Luis F. Reyes and Elisa Gatz, co-chairs.**

7  
8 **Action:**

- 9
- 10 1. Calls upon its clergy and laity to support the right to engage in nonviolent resistance
- 11 including the use of boycotts and divestments.
- 12 2. Urges its clergy and laity to educate themselves about the damage anti-BDS laws have
- 13 done to free speech rights and other nonviolent actions.
- 14 3. Urges its clergy and laity ,to consider the dangers posed by an Illinois statute that
- 15 penalizes companies for engaging in actions critical of Israel, even when those actions
- 16 are taken out of concern for human rights.
- 17 4. Urges its clergy and laity, on their own behalf to contact (write, call, or meet) their State
- 18 Representatives and Senators to urge them to review Illinois 'anti-BDS law and
- 19 proposed U.S. legislation and consider whether these efforts to protect the State of Israel
- 20 justify the chilling of and actual infringement on free speech, and chilling the efforts of
- 21 companies to comply with international law and human rights.
- 22

23 **Rationale:**

24  
25 In 2005, after years of occupation and oppression, Palestinian civil society issued an urgent cry  
26 to the international community to use boycott divestment and sanctions ("BDS") actions until  
27 Israel: 1) provides equal rights to Palestinian/Israeli citizens inside Israel, 2) recognizes the right  
28 of return for Palestinian refugees, and 3) ends the occupation of Palestine.

29  
30 In recent years, this Palestinian-led movement has garnered international support from  
31 churches – including the United Methodist and Presbyterian churches - universities and other  
32 institutions as it seeks to apply economic pressure on Israel over its treatment of Palestinians.

33  
34 United Methodists, at both Annual and General conference levels, have consistently passed  
35 resolutions and endorsed measures to protect the rights of Palestinians. The NIC was the first  
36 US conference to pass a divestment resolution in 2006.

37  
38 On May 3, 2012, the UMC passed the resolution "Opposition to Israeli Settlements in  
39 Palestinian Land," calling for a boycott of all products produced in Israel's illegal settlements on  
40 Palestinian land. The GC also asked "*all companies* that profit from and/or support settlements  
41 through their business activities to examine these and stop any business that contributes to  
42 serious violations of international law, promotes systemic discrimination or otherwise supports  
43 ongoing military occupation."

44  
45 The UMC Resolution foreshadowed the 2014 U.N. Human Rights Council's resolution urging  
46 businesses to avoid supporting the establishment and maintenance of Israeli settlements in the  
47 occupied Palestinian Territories.

1 Since then, at both State (including Illinois) and Federal levels, there have been massive  
2 efforts aimed at suppressing criticism of Israel through the use of boycott or divestment  
3 initiatives (see, <https://palestinelegal.org/righttoboycott>). These efforts are disturbing given  
4 that over 30 years ago, the Supreme Court held that boycotts are a form of free speech  
5 protected by the First Amendment (*NAACP v. Claiborne Hardware*), such laws have been  
6 declared unconstitutional by Federal courts (see [https://www.aclu.org/letter/aclu-letter-](https://www.aclu.org/letter/aclu-letter-opposing-revised-version-israel-anti-boycott-act)  
7 [opposing-revised-version-israel-anti-boycott-act](https://www.aclu.org/letter/aclu-letter-opposing-revised-version-israel-anti-boycott-act)).

8 Laws that seek to punish companies for engaging acts perceived as critical of the State, or to  
9 cease profiting from or supporting the illegal settlements, go too far. Efforts to silence,  
10 infringe, or simply to chill First Amendment free speech rights, including bills that target the  
11 use of boycotts or divestment for social justice issues, regardless of whether to support the  
12 rights of Palestinians to life with dignity, freedom of movement, and basic human rights, or  
13 for other social justice issues, are inappropriate and must not be condoned.

14

15 Illinois 'anti-BDS statute permits a seven-member board to determine that a company is  
16 "boycotting" Israel and/or "any territory controlled by Israel," and place that company on the  
17 prohibited investment list. In just the past few years, this Board has invoked the statute  
18 threaten Air BnB, Ben and Jerry's, Air Canada.