

## **VI. RESOLUTIONS ADOPTED BY THE FIFTIETH REGULAR SESSION**

### Resolution Number 1

#### **Urging the West Virginia Conference to Be Seekers of Knowledge and Advocates of Understanding Among Adherents of Abrahamic Faiths**

WHEREAS, there are between five and seven million self-identified Jews living in the United States, making our country at least a close second for the largest Jewish population in today's world; and

WHEREAS, we are understandably concerned about the destiny of our Jewish sisters and brothers, many of whom live in the ancient land where God began to reveal himself to Abraham, a land where God worked among Abraham's descendants for centuries to prepare them for his ultimate self-revelation in Jesus; and

WHEREAS, we as United Methodist Christians celebrate that God chose the Jews as the medium to reveal God's son to humanity; and

WHEREAS, the followers of Islam, over five million of whom live in the United States, also trace the roots of their faith to Abraham and his descendants; and

WHEREAS, there are three major world faith traditions, known as "The People of the Book" who have a shared religious heritage; and

WHEREAS, such a shared heritage does not guarantee harmonious existence together, as evidenced by the religious crusades of medieval times, the Spanish Inquisition, the persecution of Roman Catholics (at times) and of Protestants (at other times) in various European nations, the sectarian struggles that have existed in our country from its earliest days until the present, the recent "troubles" in Northern Ireland, the current conflicts among Palestinian Christians, Israeli Jews, and Palestinian Muslims, as well as numerous other conflicts among and between the various bodies who cherish our common spiritual ancestors; and

WHEREAS, a large number of us who gather here in this conference, as well as a large number of people in the congregations we represent, have a profoundly limited knowledge of the historical and religious perspectives that have led to and continue to play a part in these conflicts;

BE IT THEREFORE RESOLVED that the West Virginia Conference of the United Methodist Church commit ourselves to being seekers of knowledge and advocates for understanding among the various adherents of the Abrahamic religions;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that we encourage our pastors, as well as laity in positions of leadership, to encourage members of their congregations to educate themselves concerning the religious and political histories of the Abrahamic faiths, and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that appropriate agencies of the West Virginia Annual Conference use appropriate means to disseminate relevant information and church positional statements in order to engage our people in an effort to promote understanding and communication among all "People of the Book," wherever we may encounter them, both within our fellowship and without and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that we recognize the image of God present in all our brothers and sisters, whether United Methodists or not, whether Christians or not, whether spiritual children of Abraham or not, and that we dedicate ourselves to promoting the ultimate goal of peaceful understanding among all God's creations.

## Resolution Number 2 **Revision of the Social Principles**

WHEREAS a working draft of a proposed replacement for the current Social Principles was made available by the General Board of Church and Society on April 11, 2018; and

WHEREAS this working draft has eliminated language in the current Social Principles expressing reservations about the widespread use of abortion, including the statement that "Our belief in the sanctity of unborn human life makes us reluctant to approve abortion," the statement that "We cannot affirm abortion as an acceptable means of birth control," the statement that "we unconditionally reject it as a means of gender selection," and the statement that "We oppose the use of late-term abortion known as dilation and extraction (partial-birth abortion)"; and

WHEREAS this working draft does not replace any of these statements with language which is even remotely similar; and

WHEREAS the concern of the United Methodist Church about widespread use of abortion for routine birth control is serious and long-standing;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the West Virginia Annual Conference affirms the current language of the Social Principles regarding abortion; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that we oppose the proposed change in our teaching about abortion; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that we urge pastors and laypersons to examine the working draft at <https://www.umcjustice.org/who-we-are/social-principles-and-resolutions/social-principles-revision/social-principles-2020/sp2020-english>; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that these pastors and laypersons are asked to provide their input on this and other relevant issues addressed by the working draft; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the West Virginia Annual Conference urges those who are nominated as delegates to the 2020 General Conference to make a particular point of examining this working draft and comparing it with our existing Social Principles.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the wording be added that "As United Methodists we affirm our responsibility to advocate and help provide for the spiritual, physical and emotional needs of all children."

## Resolution Number3

**Relating to Rental/Housing Allowances for Retired or Disabled Clergypersons of the West Virginia Annual Conference**

Approved with the report of the Board of Pensions

WHEREAS, the religious denomination known as The United Methodist Church (the "Church"), of which this Conference is a part, has in the past functioned and continues to function through ministers of the gospel (within the meaning of Internal Revenue Code section 107) who were or are duly ordained, commissioned, or licensed ministers of the Church ("Clergypersons");

WHEREAS, the practice of the Church and of this Conference was and is to provide active Clergypersons with a parsonage or a rental/housing allowance as part of their gross compensation;

WHEREAS, pensions or other amounts paid to active, retired, and disabled Clergypersons are considered to be deferred compensation and are paid to active, retired, and disabled Clergypersons in consideration of previous active service; and

WHEREAS, the Internal Revenue Service has recognized the Conference (or its predecessors) as the appropriate organization to designate a rental/housing allowance for Clergypersons who are or were members of this Conference and are eligible to receive such deferred compensation;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED:

1. THAT an amount equal to 100% of the pension or disability payments received from plans authorized under *The Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church* (the "*Discipline*"), which includes all such payments from the General Board of Pension and Health Benefits ("GBOPHB"), during the year 2018 by each active, retired, or disabled Clergyperson who is or was a member of the Conference, or its predecessors, be and hereby is designated as a rental/housing allowance for each such Clergyperson; and

2. THAT the pension or disability payments to which this rental/housing allowance applies will be any pension or disability payments from plans, annuities, or funds authorized under the *Discipline*, including such payments from the GBOPHB and from a commercial annuity company that provides an annuity arising from benefits accrued under a GBOPHB plan, annuity, or fund authorized under the *Discipline*, that result from any service a Clergyperson rendered to this Conference or that an active, a retired, or a disabled Clergyperson of this Conference rendered to any local church, annual conference of the Church, general agency of the Church, other institution of the Church, former denomination that is now a part of the Church, or any other employer that employed the Clergyperson to perform services related to the ministry of the Church, or its predecessors, and that elected to make contributions to, or accrue a benefit under, such a plan, annuity, or fund for such active, retired, or disabled Clergyperson's pension or disability as part of his or her gross compensation.

NOTE: The rental/housing allowance that may be excluded from a Clergyperson's gross income in any year for federal income tax purposes is limited under Internal Revenue

Code section 107(2) and regulations thereunder to the least of: (1) the amount of the rental/housing allowance designated by the Clergy person's employer or other appropriate body of the Church (such as this Conference in the foregoing resolutions) for such year; (2) the amount actually expended by the Clergy person to rent or provide a home in such year; or (3) the fair rental value of the home, including furnishings and appurtenances (such as a garage), plus the cost of utilities in such year.

#### Resolution Number 4

#### **Closed Properties, and the Sale and Other Disposition of the Same**

WHEREAS, it is deemed desirable by this Annual Conference to declare under what circumstances certain properties may be deemed to be closed, placed in the hands of the Board of Trustees of the Annual Conference and sold, or otherwise disposed of; and

WHEREAS, The Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church sets forth procedures that should be followed with regard to such matters;

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED:

1. When a local church property is no longer used, kept, or maintained by its membership as a place of divine worship, it shall be considered closed.
2. When a local church is closed and is, therefore, deemed to no longer serve the purpose for which it is organized, with the consent of the Bishop, a majority of the District Superintendents of this Conference and the District Board of Church Location and Building, the Annual Conference Trustees shall, upon such procedures as shall be prescribed by them, assume control of the property.
3. If circumstances do not make immediate action necessary, the Conference Board of Trustees may sell, transfer, lease or mortgage such property in accordance with the applicable provisions of The Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church, as revised from time to time.
4. For purposes of this Resolution, the circumstances which make immediate action necessary shall be deemed to include the following: the possibility that the property will decline materially in value prior to the next meeting of the Annual Conference; the need to expend substantial funds for repair, alteration, safety and health or the Board of Trustees for uses previously authorized by the Annual Conference or the Board; the existence of an exceptional offer of purchase which is not likely to reoccur in the immediate future; and such other unique circumstances which the Board determines, in its discretion, justify the sale of such property as being in the best interest of the Annual Conference and its members.

(This resolution is based on the *2016 Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church*, ¶2549).

## Resolution Number 5

**Closed Church – Real & Personal Property Funds**

WHEREAS, the Annual Conference annually approves the closing of specific church properties upon recommendation of the Cabinet and the Conference Board of Trustees;

WHEREAS, said properties are sold by the Annual Conference Board of Trustees;

WHEREAS, not all proceeds from the sale of said properties are designated by the Annual Conference and are thus placed in a Property Account of the Annual Conference;

WHEREAS, requests may be made to the Annual Conference Board of Trustees for these funds by local churches for capital improvements; and,

WHEREAS, the Board of Trustees makes recommendations to the Annual Conference at a regularly scheduled session of the Annual Conference for the dispersing of these funds;

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that 10% of the net proceeds from the sale of closed churches, after all legal fees and expenses related to the sales have been paid, be allocated for an endowment fund for capital improvements, repair, and restoration of ethnic local churches. These funds shall be invested through the W.Va. United Methodist Foundation, Inc., and that the income shall be administered by the Annual Conference Ethnic Local Church Committee (Fiscal Policy 47),

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that 40% of the proceeds from the sales of closed church properties, after all legal fees and expenses related to the sales have been paid, shall be allocated to the New Church Development and Congregational Revitalization Fund of the Annual Conference, invested through the W.Va. United Methodist Foundation, Inc.;

FINALLY, BE IT RESOLVED that the Annual Conference authorizes the Annual Conference Board of Trustees, in consultation with the Cabinet, to disburse, as available, up to \$50,000 a year of those funds between sessions of the Annual Conference. Said disbursement is to be reported to the Annual Conference at its next regularly scheduled session.

## Resolution Number 6

**Parsonage Allowances - Clergy in Extension Ministries**

WHEREAS, The West Virginia Annual Conference of The United Methodist Church is the qualified employing organization of its clergy; and

WHEREAS, The Internal Revenue Code, Section 107, provides for clergy to exclude (a) the rental value of a home furnished as part of compensation, and (b) the rental allowance paid as part of compensation, to the extent used to rent or provide a home,

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that in the calendar year 2018, the actual expense for housing, not to exceed \$18,000, be designated as the parsonage allowance excludable under Section 107 of the Internal Revenue Code as part of the compensation of clergy employed by the West Virginia Conference in positions other than local churches such as Director of Administrative Services, Conference Secretary, Conference Staff, and Administrators of Conference Programs and Projects. District Superintendents shall have \$4,000 be designated as the parsonage

exclusion excludable under Section 107 of the Internal Revenue Code as part of the compensation of clergy employed by the West Virginia Annual Conference in positions other than local churches.

### Resolution Number 7 **De-List Pitcher UMC as an Historic Site**

WHEREAS Pitcher United Methodist Church in Marion County became a United Methodist Historic Site with the approval of The West Virginia Conference of The United Methodist Church; and

WHEREAS Pitcher United Methodist Church has closed and the property has been sold to private parties; and

WHEREAS the site of the former Pitcher United Methodist Church no longer represents a connection to the history of Methodism in Marion County.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the West Virginia Conference of The United Methodist Church recommends that Pitcher United Methodist Church be de-listed as a United Methodist Historic Site; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that The West Virginia Conference of The United Methodist Church requests that the General Commission of Archives and History of The United Methodist Church take all necessary actions to effect the de-listing of Pitcher United Methodist Church.

### Resolution Number 8 **Advocating for the Rights of Children Living Under Israeli Occupation**

*Background: Now in its 50th year, Israel's military occupation of the West Bank, including East Jerusalem and the Gaza Strip, remains entrenched while instability and violence define much of life for Palestinian children. This resolution focuses on the widespread, systematic, and institutionalized ill-treatment of Palestinian children from the occupied West Bank who are arrested and detained by Israeli forces and prosecuted in an Israeli military court system that denies basic fair trial rights. It also highlights our responsibility as United Methodists and as U.S. citizens to take action on behalf of these children.*

WHEREAS Israel is the only country in the world that systematically prosecutes children in military courts, with approximately 500 to 700 children entering the Israeli military detention system in any given year,<sup>1</sup> and

WHEREAS in a 2013 landmark study of this detention system, the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) reported that ill-treatment in the Israeli military detention system is "widespread, systematic, and institutionalized throughout the process,"<sup>2</sup> and

WHEREAS despite sustained engagement by UNICEF and repeated calls to end night arrests and ill-treatment and torture of Palestinian children in Israeli military detention, Israeli authorities have persistently failed to implement practical changes to stop violence against child detainees,<sup>3</sup> and

WHEREAS the U.N. Convention on the Rights of the Child has been ratified by every single member of the United Nations except the United States,<sup>4</sup> and ratification by the United States could also underscore our nation's responsibility for humane treatment of all children,

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the West Virginia Annual Conference of The United Methodist Church calls on the government of the United States to adhere to its own established law – in this case, the U.S. Foreign Assistance Act – and urge that the US would use financial and diplomatic leverage to end the practices of arrest and detention of Palestinian children; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that this conference calls on the United States Senate to join with 196 other nations in ratifying the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child so as to bring stronger international pressure to bear on Israel to comply with the Convention's provisions, particularly those governing the treatment of children held in detention, and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the members of this 2018 annual conference take action by: 1) Relaying these two calls to their congregations; 2) Writing their members of Congress, as well as the President, Vice President, and Secretary of State, urging them to respond to our calls; and 3) Encouraging and facilitating their congregations to do the same.

1. <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2016/children-behind-bars>
2. [https://www.unicef.org/oPt/UNICEF\\_oPt\\_Children\\_in\\_Israeli\\_Military\\_Detention\\_Observations\\_and\\_Recommendations\\_-\\_6\\_March\\_2013.pdf](https://www.unicef.org/oPt/UNICEF_oPt_Children_in_Israeli_Military_Detention_Observations_and_Recommendations_-_6_March_2013.pdf)
3. [https://www.unicef.org/oPt/UNICEF\\_oPt\\_Children\\_in\\_Israeli\\_Military\\_Detention\\_Observations\\_and\\_Recommendations\\_-\\_6\\_March\\_2013.pdf](https://www.unicef.org/oPt/UNICEF_oPt_Children_in_Israeli_Military_Detention_Observations_and_Recommendations_-_6_March_2013.pdf)
4. [https://treaties.un.org/Pages/ViewDetails.aspx?src=TREATY&mtdsg\\_no=IV-11&chapter=4&lang=en](https://treaties.un.org/Pages/ViewDetails.aspx?src=TREATY&mtdsg_no=IV-11&chapter=4&lang=en) and [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/U.S.\\_ratification\\_of\\_the\\_Convention\\_on\\_the\\_Rights\\_of\\_the\\_Child](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/U.S._ratification_of_the_Convention_on_the_Rights_of_the_Child)

### **Referrals**

The following petition was referred to the Delegation to the Special Session of General Conference to be held in February 2019.

### **On United Methodist Teaching Regarding Human Sexuality**

WHEREAS the Social Principles of the United Methodist Church state that “sexual relations are affirmed only with the covenant of monogamous, heterosexual marriage;” and

WHEREAS this statement and the other statements in paragraph 161 G of *The Book of Discipline of the United Methodist Church 2016* on the subject of human sexuality are consistent with the Holy Scriptures;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the West Virginia Annual Conference of The United Methodist Church affirms the teaching on human sexuality which is contained in The Social Principles; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that we oppose any effort to make any substantive change in this teaching of The United Methodist Church.