



WHY HAVE SOCIAL PRINCIPLES?

The United Methodist Church, including its predecessor bodies, has a long and rich history of concern for social justice. Its members have often taken forthright positions on controversial issues involving Christian principles.

“There is no holiness, but social holiness” – John Wesley

The Social Principles of The United Methodist Church

The United Methodist Church (UMC) expresses its social principles as a commitment to translate their faith into action in the world. These principles, rooted in the Wesleyan (John Wesley and Charles Wesley) tradition, serve as a guide for ethical aspirations in public policies and personal commitments, reflecting a desire to love God and neighbors as themselves.

- The Social Principles are not church law but rather “represent the prayerful and earnest efforts of the General Conference to speak to issues in the contemporary world from a sound biblical and theological foundation that is in keeping with the best of our United Methodist traditions” (BOD, p. 106).
- First approved in 1972 General Conference in Atlanta, Georgia, and has been part of *The Book of Discipline* (BOD), our governing documents, since then. The BOD is revised every four years along with the accompanying *The Book of Resolutions* that collects in one volume all current and official social policies and other resolutions adopted by the General Conference.
- Only General Conference, UMC’s highest legislative body, can revise the Social Principles.

Connectional structure of UMC

The *polity* of The United Methodist Church (UMC) refers to its form of government, which is connectional rather than congregational. Our local churches are linked together in a larger structure, with shared resources and responsibilities. The UMC polity is organized in a hierarchical structure, moving from the global level down to local churches.

- **General Conference:** The legislative body that sets church-wide policy and doctrine.
- **Council of Bishops:** Provides leadership and guidance to the church.
- **Judicial Council:** Interprets church law and resolves disputes.
- **Annual Conferences:** Geographic regions where local churches and clergy are organized under the leadership of a Bishop.
- **Districts:** Subdivisions within Annual Conferences, often led by a District Superintendent.
- **Local Churches:** Individual congregations that make up the UMC.

Agencies of the UMC

Agencies provide resources and services that equip local congregations and provide a connection for ministry throughout the world. These organizations (councils, boards, commissions, committees, divisions or other units) can be found at all levels of the connection (churchwide, regional and local).

General Conference establishes general agencies (or churchwide agencies) to provide essential services and ministries beyond the scope of individual local congregations and annual conferences, and they are important for providing a common vision, mission and ministry for the entire global church.

UMC Agencies are:

- Archives & History
- Church & Society
- Communications
- Disciple Ministries
- Finance & Administration (GCFA)
- Global Ministries (GBGM and UMCOR)
- Higher Education & Ministry (GBHM)
- Religion and Race
- The Status & Role of Women
- United Methodist Men
- The UM Publishing House
- United Women in Faith (formerly known as United Methodist Women)
- Wespeth (Pension & Health Benefits)

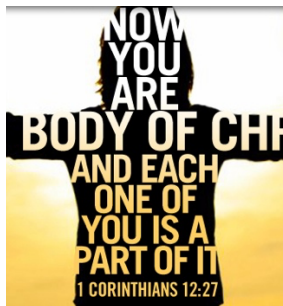
The REVISED Social Principles of the UMC 2025-2028

- This is the first full revision update since 1972.
- The 2012 GC tasked the General Board of Church & Society with the task of revising.
- Six writing teams coordinated across the globe.
- Editorial Revision Team.
- Online surveys
- Extensive consultation with Central (outside the U.S.) and Annual Conferences
- Solicited help from scholars, bishops, church bodies, and leaders across denomination.
- The 2020/2024 GC in Charlotte, NC, adopted the revised set of Social Principles.

Preface of the revised Social Principles

The Social Principles are not church law. This is a living document meant to be revised when needed. The purposes of the revision were to:

- Increase their theological grounding.
- Reflect the worldwide nature of the church in all areas of the document.
- Ensure it is written concisely and clearly.



We are one body with many parts as stated in 1 Corinthians 12:12-27

- We are diverse.
- All parts are valuable.
- Our high calling is “to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God.” –*Micha* 6:8

The General Rules (from John Wesley) help us:

1. Do no harm, 2. Do good, and 3. Follow the ordinances of God.

The main sections of the newly revised Social Principles

- Community of All Creation (§ 160 in BOD)
- The Economic Community (§ 161)
- The Social Community (§ 162)
- The Political Community (§ 163)
- Our Social Creed (§ 164)

The four sections (areas of concern) of the Social Principles are interrelated. Another way of considering the dimensions of the four sections is to look at the **role** of each section, the **predominant faith statement**, our **responsibility**

defined, and **the issues discussed**. –*From the User’s Guide in the The Book of Resolutions*, p. 27.

Community of All Creation

