

We are committed to the dignity and worth of all humans regardless of gender, race, ethnicity, color, socio-economic status, disability, the unborn, or any other distinctions (Acts 10:34-35) and will respect them as persons made in the image of God (Genesis 1:26-27) and redeemed by Christ's death and resurrection.

The Old Testament law commands such respect (Deuteronomy 5:11-21). Jesus summarized this law as love for God and neighbor (Matthew 22:36-40). He ministered to all without distinction and His death on the cross was for all (John 3:16; Romans 5:8).

We are therefore pledged to active concern whenever human beings are demeaned, abused, depersonalized, enslaved or subjected to demonic forces in the world, whether by individuals or institutions (Galatians 3:28; Mark 2:27; 1 Timothy 1:8-10). We are committed to give meaning and significance to every person by God's help. Remembering our tendency to be prejudicial, as Christians we must grow in awareness of the rights and needs of others.

With Regard to Poverty

Poverty represents one important way in which the dignity of persons is threatened, and the Scriptures explicitly command us to care for those in need. The Old Testament reveals God's special care and protection for the poor by establishing social obligations toward those in need in a covenant community such as the sabbatical year and the gleaning law (Exodus 21:2; 22:22-27; 23:10-11; Leviticus 19:9-10; Deuteronomy 15:1-5; Psalm 10:17-18; 12:5). The New Testament also shows God's heart for the poor in the ministries of Jesus and His disciples by preaching the gospel to the poor and obliging us to share our resources generously with those in need, treating them with fairness and equity. (Luke 4:18-19; 7: 21-22; Galatians 2:10; 1 Timothy 6:17-18; James 2:1-7). As we minister to the poor, destitute and those in need, we do so with basic underlying convictions:

- A. We commit to the Biblical principle of caring for the destitute of wealth, influence, position and honor, as well as widows and orphans and other marginalized groups, including the disabled, the elderly and the sick. This care is an essential expression of Christ's love through His church. (Deuteronomy 10:17-18; 24:17-18; Isaiah 59:6-10; Acts 6:1-3; James 1:27).
- B. We commit to pursue economic justice, prioritizing the needs of the destitute. These needs are primarily met through their inclusion within the family of God, where caring for those in need takes precedence over personal, institutional, or societal avarice. We diligently avoid participating in any activity that oppresses or defrauds the poor. (Amos 2:7; 4:1; Micah 2:2; Isaiah 10:1-2; 32:7; Ezekiel 22:6-7; Jeremiah 5:25, 28).
- C. We commit to open our hands to the destitute and needy, and to support policies that grant them proper access to resources, work, security and protection (Deuteronomy 15:7, 11; 26:12).

With Regard to Racism

Racism represents an egregious affront to the dignity and worth of persons and its presence is manifest in the life, history, and institutions of all nations. Slavery and genocide are grievous stains, warranting collective lament, repentance, and repair. Racial oppression in all its forms continues to exact harm throughout the world, distorting the dignity of persons and God's love for the great multitude of all nations (Acts 17:26, Revelation 7:9). The Free Methodist Church was itself born out of a desire to stand against the ~~sin~~ evil of slavery, and we continue to recognize the sin of racism and oppose it in all its forms. We do so with the following convictions:

- A. We commit to lament and repent for the ways that we have been complicit in or failed to recognize acts of racial oppression.

- B. We commit to an attitude of ceaseless humility and self-examination, recognizing the ease with which our own limitations can make us blind to the experiences and interests of others (Philippians 2:3-4). We shall seek to identify, confess, and redeem thoughts, attitudes, or behaviors that manifest discrimination against a person on the basis of race, ethnicity, or any other distinction between social groups that we create or enforce.
- C. Because systemic racism—the way in which human institutions or structures can both actively and passively preserve patterns of discrimination and exclusion—is less perceptible, but no less harmful than overt, individual racist acts, we commit, ~~therefore~~ not just to avoid or sanction individual prejudicial attitudes and actions, but seek to redeem processes, systems, and institutions that continue to perpetuate injustice on the basis of race or ethnicity ~~identity~~.
- D. Therefore, in our own churches and denomination, we commit ourselves to model the racial redemption and reconciliation we hope to see in the world, proclaiming the transformative victory of Jesus Christ into places of great brokenness, looking forward to the day when all people gather before the throne of God.

With Regard to Immigrants, Refugees and Those in Bondage

Issues surrounding immigrants and refugees and modern slavery/human trafficking* globally are complex. They require solutions that both serve the vulnerable and oppressed and also challenge individuals, organizations, and systems that create oppression and enslavement. These solutions include, but are not limited to: prayer, education, rescue, aftercare, proclamation, voting, protest, and an engaged discipleship that sees living justly as integral to spiritual and community formation.

As we minister to all immigrants and refugees, we do so with basic underlying convictions:

- A. We commit to the Biblical principle of caring for the foreigners among us regardless of racial or ethnic background, country of origin, or legal status.
- B. We commit to acting redemptively with love rather than fear, and to reach out to meet needs as we see them.
- C. We commit to identifying intolerance and working to end it, as well as ending any personal inclinations to refer to individuals in less than loving terms.
- D. Where there is a conflict, it is our duty to oppose all unjust and harsh laws and to seek to change them.
- E. We commit to responding to this crisis in terms of the Great Commission, seeking to reach the lost whoever they may be; ministering to all, caring for all, and showing God's grace to all people.

As we minister to all who are touched by modern slavery/human trafficking, we do so with basic underlying convictions:

- A. We commit to centering the work of setting captives free on Jesus our redeemer and his mission.
- B. We commit to working for holistic freedom; God desires for each person to experience the joy and hope of being free from physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual captivity.
- C. We commit to integrating the work of ending modern slavery/human trafficking with both the orthodoxy and orthopraxy of the church. Ending modern slavery/human trafficking is integrally related to ending other injustices. Additionally, hopeful solutions for injustices are found in the community and character formation of people and institutions pursuing holiness.
- D. We commit to setting captives free within an atmosphere of worship and community, seeking partnerships with others while embracing lament, humility, prayer, and love.
- E. We commit to work towards the mobilization of all influencers within society, knowing that the church on mission with God is the greater change agent in society.

*For both local and global context; the terms modern slavery and human trafficking are used. Globally, the term human trafficking is more common. In the U.S., and among leading abolitionist organizations, the term modern slavery is widely used. The term human trafficking has a specific legal context, but within a church context the two terms are somewhat interchangeable. The term modern slavery is stronger for this resolution because of our historical context and because of the reality of the problem.