

Resolution 2019-01: "To Rebuild, Reclaim the Christian Community: 'Church'"

General Church Budget Implications: None

East Ohio Conference Implications: Yes

WHEREAS, prophets and religious leaders consistently direct us to live harmoniously instead of putting self-interest above "community":

- The harmony of Creation was destroyed by human disobedience;
- Isaiah chastised warring injustices, urging weapons become tools to plant and prune growth;
- Micah heralds God's "divine purpose" IS community: mercy, compassion, peace with justice.;

WHEREAS, Jesus modeled care and compassion for the humble, the poor, the children, the sick, the outcast, the "other"--people often overlooked and marginalized;

WHEREAS, John Wesley directs us to do no harm, to do good, to BE the hands and feet of Jesus Christ, **"for the Transformation OF THE WORLD,"** Not for our own reward, privilege, or power over and excluding others;

WHEREAS, we profess during communion:

Merciful God, we confess that we have not loved you with our whole heart.

We have failed to be an obedient church. We have not done your will,

we have broken your law, we have rebelled against your love,

we have not loved our neighbors, and we have not heard the cry of the needy.

Forgive us, we pray. Free us for joyful obedience, through Jesus Christ our

Lord. Amen

WHEREAS, last year, over 1,000 hate groups were identified in the U.S. (SPLC 2019). Most promote so41 called "white supremacy," whose teachings and beliefs inspire hatred and harm to people who do not look, think, or act as they do. Such divisive arguments and aims are contrary to ALL Biblical writings and teachings. Under the dogma and influence of such groups, discord is intensified; instead of harmony, friction escalates; instead of tolerance, fear and hatred of "other" is promoted, alleging "white" is God's "preferred";

WHEREAS, "community" is destroyed by attitudes that promote bullying, by legalizing killing claimed to be threat without a charge or trial, and by promoting a culture of anger and fear that fuels divisiveness. Christians are called to think and act differently: hate contradicts the teaching that prophets, Disciples, the tenets of Christianity, and our spiritual teachers have preached, modeled, mentored, and prayed us into becoming -- God's inclusive Church;

WHEREAS, though charges brought against former Attorney General Jeff Sessions by 600 clergy and UMC members for enforcing the separate detention of children were subsequently dropped, Former President of the UMC Judicial Council Rev. William B. Lawrence stated, " *I do not follow the logic that grants someone, even the president of the United States, the right to [invoke] 'superior orders' with regard to church law.*" *The Book of Discipline* matter reflects the values and tenets of United Methodist Church upholds for protecting families and welcoming "the stranger," especially the children;

WHEREAS, *The Book of Discipline* (2016) states "We believe the family to be the basic human community through which persons are nurtured and sustained in mutual love, responsibility, respect, and fidelity. We affirm the importance of loving parents for all children." Detaining children separated from their parents violates the most fundamental humane principles and practices of human rights;

WHEREAS, the **General Board of Church and Society** offered this comment:

"The United Methodist Church is resolved 'as followers of Jesus, to work to eliminate racism and violence directed toward newly arriving migrants to the United States.' Further, we 'denounce and oppose the rise of xenophobic, racist, and violent reactions against migrants in the United States, and support all efforts to build relationships among people, instead of building walls among diverse ethnicities and cultures.' (2016 *United Methodist Book of Resolutions*, ¶3281 "Welcoming the migrant in the US");

WHEREAS, UMW offered this statement following the Special General Conference: "United Methodist Women and its members will continue to stand together, committed to serving women, children and youth. For us, commitment to the Purpose and prayer are the only litmus tests for determining who can belong and who can devote themselves to mission. We have persisted through change before. We could not have been organized for mission for this long if we let our differences divide us."
(communications@unitedmethodistwomen.org, March 7);

WHEREAS, we are called to celebrate the joy of difference God created, especially to all who seek "to belong and ... devote themselves to mission." But instead of celebrating all committed relationships, we deny and judge, while tolerating, excusing, protecting, and even justifying sexual intimidation, sexual aggression, and sexual assault perpetrated by powerful individuals over those whose voices are suppressed; and

WHEREAS, in stark contrast to the harmonious community God created and Jesus directed, our neighborhoods remain largely segregated, health care is available mainly as a benefit of full time employment, wealth disparity has widened to such extremes that poverty entraps ever growing proportions of a society alleged to be the wealthiest on earth. Material possessions and the hoarding of privilege, power, and even the earth's resources for the benefit of some have become the accepted norm. God's people are told otherwise: **WE are "community"**: Now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED the people of East Ohio Conference of The United Methodist Church are called to renew our baptismal and confirmation vows to witness and live our faith as People of God. So that we may embrace an urgent and necessary Call to respect and celebrate 1 our plurality of differences, we commit ourselves to building a true "community" through personal and public activities, including:

- Engage reading, praying, and seeking to discern God's guidance in our individual lives endeavoring to strive towards true discipleship, transforming our communities by our example and participation in relationship with others;
- Engage in our church units through worship, study groups, and similar activities to explore and support one another's growth towards "lived" Christian values in community;
- Engage with others in our wider communities to bear witness to our affirmed Christian principles, seeking to demonstrate attitudes and behaviors of tolerance, inclusiveness, acceptance and celebration of our true "community" built of our many differences.

RATIONALE:

On February 20, when a house fire killed seven children of an immigrant Muslim family in Halifax, Nova Scotia, mayor Tony Mancini stated: "To have a Syrian refugee family leave their country... for a better life – that in itself is so brave.... To lose them all, it has touched everyone." Across the nation, people reached out with compassionate acts of care to mourn with the immigrant parents they had never met.

ODOT worker Brandon Anderson was clearing snowy roads outside Canton when he saw a motorist in

distress and pulled over to assist administering CPR. An ODOT spokesperson stated, "We're extremely proud of what he did." Described as "very caring...a fine young man with a fine character," Brandon's quick action was characteristic of him, said those who had known him since he was young. (*Canton Repository* March 7, 2019)

In Toledo, where nooses had been tossed or hung in GM factory restrooms with "whites only" scribbled, 17-year-old Southview High School cheerleader Nia Snelling kneeled during the National Anthem. She had discussed her intention with her father who told her the decision "has to be in your heart," and cautioned she might experience "backlash." Nia said her intention (to "open up dialogue") came from commitment because of the "still-evident discrimination... fear for their lives and ...blatant injustice" that many still face. (<https://www.toledoblade.com/local/politics/2018/12/27/sylvania-southview-cheerleader-nia-snelling-kneeling-national-anthem/stories/20181227166>)

Wesley Branch Rickey lived by Methodist principles instilled by his parents. Distressed by overt racism he had witnessed, he orchestrated Jackie Robinson's integrating major league baseball, committed to a belief that moral principles were the qualities for greatness, saying, "It is not the honor that you take with you, but the heritage you leave behind."

These stories bear witness to "being" the church even if we may have no vested interest in another person's situation, or their life. They model spontaneous acts of compassion, speaking out against injustice, and actively combating social injustices. Each of us may, and often do, encounter needs, simple or profound, throughout East Ohio. ***Hunger, poverty, hopelessness, un/underemployment, the lure of drugs, ill health, disintegration of families, loss of loved ones, discrimination, perceived isolation or unwantedness--These ARE realities around us.***

Submitted by: East Ohio Methodist Federation of Social Action, East Ohio Reconciling Ministries Network, East Ohio Board of Church & Society, and East Ohio United Methodist Women