

Resolutions
Presented to the 2015 Session of the
North Carolina Annual Conference

1. Resolution on “Love Your Neighbor”

Whereas Jesus said that in order to inherit eternal life, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbor as yourself;” and

Whereas he told the story of the Good Samaritan (a deeply hated ethnic and religious minority) in response to the question, “Who is my neighbor?” and

Whereas we have witnessed the persecution of Christians and other religious minorities by religious extremists in other countries, but have also witnessed the protection of Christians by Muslims in Nigeria, Egypt, and Iraq; and

Whereas we have witnessed the verbal and physical abuse of Muslims and other religious minorities in our state, including the murder of three Muslim students in Chapel Hill; and

Whereas that verbal and physical abuse is often the result of misinformation about Muslims and others of Middle Eastern descent.

Therefore let it be resolved that the North Carolina Conference of the United Methodist Church calls upon its pastors and churches to remember that God’s definition of “neighbor” extends to those who may be different and believe differently than do we; and

Be it further resolved that we encourage our churches to enter into interreligious conversations with our neighbors in our communities, especially those in the family of Abrahamic religions: Judaism and Islam; and

Be it further resolved that we encourage our churches to seek partnerships in working with our neighbors of different faiths in those areas we share in common, specifically in efforts of peace, justice, and mercy.

Adopted the Commission on Christian Unity and Interreligious Relationships
North Carolina Annual Conference of The United Methodist Church

2. Resolution Against Slavery and Human Trafficking

Whereas Slavery and Human Trafficking continue to exist in the world,

Therefore Be It Resolved that the North Carolina Annual Conference affirms the following efforts to eradicate slavery

And Be It Further Resolved that the North Carolina Annual Conference submit this resolution to the 2016 General Conference to replace Resolution 6021 – “Church Supports Global Efforts to End Slavery” and Resolution 6023 – “Abolition of Sex Trafficking”

The North Carolina Annual Conference by this resolution will:

1. Affirm human rights and dignity of all peoples who are on the move, asserting the right to freedom of movement, and resisting violations and curtailments of such rights through forced migration, including trafficking in persons;
2. Advocate for economic and trade policies that facilitate job development that is accessible to all sectors of societies with wages that allow all persons to thrive according to God’s will;
3. Champion anti-slavery efforts by petitioning the United Nations and the legislative bodies of all countries in which The United Methodist Church has an organized ecclesiastical structure, to demand the freeing of all subjected to modern-day forms of enslavement and bonded labor;
4. Petition the United Nations and governments around the world to abolish slavery through the use of nonmilitary options such as negotiations leading to agreements with binding obligations and corollary sanctions;
5. Encourage swift resolution to civil strifes and armed conflict and engage in coordinated responses to mitigate disasters to prevent traffickers from preying on children;
6. Officially support stock/mutual fund divestment campaigns that urge people to remove funds from organizations and corporations whose 180 actions profit from and contribute to slavery’s existence;
7. Create environments that model safe, healthy and violence-free communities in order to raise children who do not accept violence as normative;
8. Implement children’s ministries that bolster self-esteem and provide educational and economic opportunities for women and children who are especially vulnerable to traffickers;
9. Build a new generation of male leaders across the church who model non-violent, emotionally healthy masculinity, serving as positive change-makers in society.
10. Educate pastors, lay leaders, children and families, teachers, healthcare providers, outreach workers about fraudulent promises of traffickers and the resulting exploitation and abuse;

11. Advocate for local, regional, national and international laws and funds that ensure trafficking victims have access to services that enable them to heal from the trauma including counseling, reproductive health care, education/job training, legal services and shelter;

12. Commit to interrupting the demand for slaves by purchasing fair trade products, including coffee, tea, chocolate, t-shirts, athletic equipment and other goods for personal and ministry-related activities; and,

13. Demand that corporations eliminate exploitative labor in their business practices, and use their influence to eradicate all slavery from their supply chains.

Submitted by: The North Carolina Conference Board of Church and Society

3. Resolution On Caring For The Most Vulnerable In North Carolina

Whereas under the United Methodist Church Social Principles, as disciples following the teachings and example of our Lord Jesus Christ, “we recognize and affirm the full humanity and personhood of all individuals with mental, physical, developmental, neurological, and psychological conditions or disabilities as full members of the family of God. We also affirm their rightful place in both the church and society.” Our Social Principles further, through active ministry and advocacy, “urge the Church and society to recognize and receive the gifts of persons with disabilities to enable them to be full participants in the community of faith.” And

Whereas, mental disorders are physical brain disorders needing medical care in their own right but often tied inextricably to physical illness beyond the brain. Yet persistent stigma against the mentally ill in all levels of society prevents many persons with mental illnesses from getting or seeking the medical and social help they need; and

Whereas, a study in 2014 by the World Economic Forum and Harvard School of Public Health projected that the global economic costs of mental illness over the next two decades would be more than the costs of cancer, diabetes, and respiratory ailments put together; and

Whereas, according to the U.S. Public Health Service in 2010, North Carolina has almost 335,000 adults with serious mental illness and 99,000 children who live with serious mental health conditions; and

Whereas, untreated mental illness has deadly and costly consequences. Suicide causes more deaths than homicide. About seven percent of people with major depressive disorders will take their own lives; in 2010, suicide was the eleventh-leading cause of death overall and the third-leading cause of death among youth and young adults aged 15-24. During the 2006-2007 school year, according to the National Alliance for the Mentally Ill, approximately 68 percent of North Carolina students aged 14 and older living with serious mental health conditions and who received special education services dropped out of high school, with serious implications for their financial and social futures; And

Whereas, North Carolina’s public mental health services, set back by misguided and ineffective “reform” in 2001, has become inadequate to meet the growing population of mentally ill citizens. Starting in 2001, North Carolina reduced beds in state psychiatric hospitals in an attempt to move patients to community treatment centers, but not only failed to provide adequate community funding, the state privatized community mental health centers that had been working, turning them into “local management entities” without making sure that there were enough private providers to replace their services. The state legislature, moreover, continues to cut funding for state mental health services in its last two budgets; And

Whereas, as a result, according to a 2014 report, “North Carolina’s Mental Health Crisis,” from the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services, North Carolina’s hospitals are seeing admissions to their emergency departments in every higher numbers. Wait times for psychiatric patients in emergency departments waiting for mental health and substance abuse mental health care ranges from “long hours to multiple days;” the average delay for admission to a state hospital in FY 12 was three days and rose to 3.5 days in FY 13.” A 2010 report estimated that more than \$7 million is spent boarding people with psychiatric distress in emergency departments; and

Whereas, mental health’s burden is growing on law enforcement. According to the same DHHS report, estimates based on national studies indicate that about 17 percent of the jail/prison population has a serious mental illness, 72 percent of which has a co-occurring substance use disorder. The North Carolina prison system rivals the state psychiatric hospitals as the largest provider of mental health treatment; and

Whereas, every community and every congregation is touched by the mental health crisis in North Carolina, where the true individual, social, financial, and spiritual toll is incalculable, a human tragedy demanding Christian response;

Now, Therefore, Be It Resolved, that the North Carolina Conference of the United Methodist Church encourages all its local charges to be in ministry to persons with mental disorders or disabilities within our congregations and surrounding communities, including helping to provide access to appropriate treatment, financial and social support, and full hospitality and inclusion within the life of our faith community; and

Further Be It Resolved that the North Carolina Conference encourages all local charges to consider forming spiritual support groups for persons with mental illness and to provide all available education and resources to helping members of our charges understand the nature of mental disorders and help them to look past the fear and stigma associated with mental illness to love and care for those who suffer from them; and

Be It Further Resolved, that the North Carolina Conference encourages all local charges to partner with groups like the National Alliance for the Mentally Ill and other mental health associations within the state to develop additional ways of providing ministry and to become active and effective advocates for persons with mental disorders on the local and state level — so that some day we can stand before our Lord and say we United Methodists have truly done our best to care for this neglected and vulnerable group of the “least of these.”

Submitted by Ken Ripley, Chair
Committee on Disability Concerns

4. Resolution to the North Carolina Annual Conference of the UMC: Concerning Discriminatory Language in The Book of Discipline

Whereas, the New Testament instructs us to love and care for one another, avoid condemnation and let God be our judge, (Luke 6: 32-38) and to love our neighbor as ourselves (Matthew 22:39). It teaches us that our neighbor may be very different from ourselves (Luke 10:23-37). We believe as Christians in our local church our role is not to judge or condemn others, but to love those who may be unlovable in our society; to care for those who may not be able to repay us; to do good and care for those who may not be able to return kindness and welcome. We believe our call is to do no harm to others, but instead to offer grace and radical hospitality and allow that God will work in every person's heart and spirit. We are to be merciful as our Father is merciful, and while the Old Testament Law very specifically identified sins, Love is the greatest power in the world and Jesus set us free from the Law, so that we can love and care for one another, and

Whereas, our Bishop Hope Morgan Ward has encouraged us to be people of grace and has shown great leadership of our Church in her writings about our journey regarding the subject of Homosexuality and the Church within the book, Finding Our Way, (edited by Bishop Reuben Job) stating that:

“The term emend, used in the parlance of editing and publishing, helps us reflect upon what happens in our life together. We revised our life from within. We persevered in the United Methodist family to make it better, more whole, more life-giving. The more familiar term amend describes the process of adding something to our life that was not previously present. In this way, that which is amended becomes better, stronger, wiser. Emendment captures our journey more accurately. From within, there arises a greater capacity to live well with differences” and

Whereas, we believe as United Methodist Christians that we should all be a living example of the UMC statement: "Open minds, open hearts, open doors." It is with the spirit of acceptance and inclusion that we are requesting a resolution from the North Carolina Annual Conference, and

Therefore Be It Resolved that the North Carolina Annual Conference of The United Methodist Church seek for all discriminatory language be identified, considered, and emended from the Book of Discipline and Social Principles by the General Conference of the United Methodist Church so that all persons who profess their faith in Christ can be seen as sinners redeemed by God, accepting his grace, and welcomed into the United Methodist Church regardless of age, race, gender, or sexual orientation. We especially implore the General Conference that the following statement from the Social Principles*: “The United Methodist Church does not condone the practice of homosexuality and considers this practice incompatible with Christian teachings” be removed. We request that it be replaced with

language that is positive, welcoming, and non-judgmental as it does not currently reflect the beliefs of many members of the United Methodist Church.

Submitted by Methodist Federation for Social Action, North Carolina Conference chapter
Reconciling United Methodists and Friends North Carolina
Epworth United Methodist Church, 3002 Hope Valley Rd., Durham, NC 27707

*Book of Discipline Social Principles Paragraph 161

“We affirm that all persons are individuals of sacred worth, created in the image of God. All persons need the ministry of the Church in their struggles for human fulfillment, as well as the spiritual and emotional care of a fellowship that enables reconciling relationships with God, with others, and with self. ~~The United Methodist Church does not condone the practice of homosexuality and considers this practice incompatible with Christian teachings.~~ We affirm that God’s grace is available to all. We will seek to live together in Christian community, welcoming, forgiving, and loving one another, as Christ has loved and accepted us. We implore families and churches not to reject or condemn lesbian and gay members and friends. We commit ourselves to be in ministry for and with all persons.”

5. Declare Trinity a United Methodist Historical Site

Whereas, the United Methodist Church affirms the need to remember its past as being an instrumental part of its present and future ministry amid a changing world; the Committee on Archives and History for the North Carolina Conference recommends the following:

Whereas Trinity United Methodist Church in Durham, NC can show a date as early as the 1830's in its founding history.

Whereas Trinity United Methodist Church has participated in the development and nurture of Methodism throughout the entire community of Durham and its environs.

Whereas Trinity United Methodist Church still continues today to be active in the Durham and world communities;

Be it resolved that the Commission on Archives and History asks this Annual Conference to support Trinity United Methodist Church in its request to become a **United Methodist Historical Site**.

Commission on Archives and History

6. Amend The Book Of Discipline's Paragraph on Abortion (161J)

Whereas, Scripture teaches that each and every human being is created in the image and likeness of God (Genesis 1:26-27);

Whereas, Jesus Christ was sent by God the Father and anointed by the Holy Spirit "to preach good news to the poor, to proclaim release to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, and to announce that the time had come when you [Father] would save your people." ("A Service of Word and Table I," The United Methodist Hymnal [1989], p. 9);

Whereas, in the power of the Holy Spirit, the Church universal through the ages has consistently witnessed and ministered, within the Church and to society, to protect all innocent people from death -- including the unborn child, and mother, from abortion -- and to offer forgiveness and healing, that are available through Jesus Christ, to those who have been involved in morally unjustifiable killing (including abortion) (Dr. Dennis R. Di Mauro's A Love for Life: Christianity's Consistent Protection of the Unborn [Wipf & Stock, Eugene, OR, 2008], which includes the witnesses of Augustine, Thomas Aquinas, Martin Luther, John Calvin, John Wesley, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, and Karl Barth);

Whereas, the universal church's consistent witness on life and abortion is represented by the united methodist church's stated belief in "the sanctity of unborn human life" and "the sacredness of the life and well-being of the mother and the unborn child" (paragraph 161j on abortion, the social principles, the book of discipline [2012]);

Whereas, Paragraph 161J, as presently written, has allowed some in The United Methodist Church to support, in a one-sided way, a broad range of pro-choice politics, policies, and laws -- to the point that most of our denomination's public witness on life and abortion clearly contradicts the universal Church's, and The United Methodist Church's, recognition of "the sanctity of unborn human life" and "the sacredness of the life and well-being of the mother and the unborn child" (Paragraph 161J on Abortion, The Social Principles, The Book of Discipline [2012]; and see the articles on "abortion" on the General Board of Church and Society website);

Whereas, Paragraph 161J is morally inconsistent because it speaks of "the unborn child" and yet supports laws that permit abortion, which always takes the life of the unborn child (Paragraph 161J on Abortion, The Social Principles, The Book of Discipline [2012]); and

Whereas, the 2012 Book of Discipline's Social Principles' Paragraph 161J on abortion, as amended below, can lead The United Methodist Church to rejoin historic Christianity's teaching on life and abortion that aspires to protect the unborn child and mother.

Therefore Be It Resolved, that the 2015 session of the North Carolina Annual Conference of The United Methodist Church hereby charges its Conference Secretary to petition, in a timely and

appropriate manner, the 2016 General Conference to amend Paragraph 161J of The Book of Discipline to read:

J) Abortion -- The beginning of life and the ending of life are the God-given boundaries of human existence. While individuals have always had some degree of control over when they would die, they now have the awesome power to determine when and even whether new individuals will be born. Our belief in the sanctity of unborn human life makes us reluctant to approve abortion.

But we are equally bound to respect the sacredness of the life and well-being of the mother and the unborn child.

We recognize tragic conflicts of **physical** life with **physical** life that may justify abortion, and in such cases we support the legal option of abortion under proper medical procedures by certified medical providers. We support parental, guardian, or other responsible adult notification and consent before abortions can be performed on girls who have not yet reached the age of legal adulthood. We cannot affirm abortion as an acceptable means of birth control, and we unconditionally reject it as a means of gender selection or eugenics (see Resolution 3184).

We oppose the use of late-term abortion known as dilation and extraction (partial-birth abortion) and call for the end of this practice except when the physical life of the mother is in danger and no other medical procedure is available, or in the case of severe fetal anomalies incompatible with life. This procedure shall be performed only by certified medical providers. **Whenever the unborn child may be capable of surviving outside his or her mother's womb, every reasonable effort should be made to preserve both lives.** Before providing their services, abortion providers should be required to offer women the option of anesthesia.

We call all Christians to a searching and prayerful inquiry into the sorts of conditions that may cause them to consider abortion. We entrust God to provide guidance, wisdom, and discernment to those facing an unintended pregnancy.

The Church shall offer ministries to reduce unintended pregnancies. We commit our Church to continue to provide nurturing ministries to those who terminate a pregnancy, to those in the midst of a crisis pregnancy, and to those who give birth.

We mourn, and are committed to ~~promoting the diminishment of~~ **diminishing**, high abortion rates. The Church shall encourage ministries to reduce unintended pregnancies such as comprehensive, age-appropriate sexuality education **grounded in Christian teaching**, advocacy in regard to contraception, and support of initiatives that enhance the quality of life for all women and girls around the globe.

Young adult women disproportionately face situations in which they feel they have no choice due to financial, educational, relational, or other circumstances beyond their control. The Church and its local congregations and campus ministries should be in the forefront of supporting existing ministries and developing new ministries that help such women in their communities. ~~They should~~

~~also support those crisis pregnancy centers and pregnancy resource centers that compassionately help women explore all options related to unplanned pregnancy.~~ We particularly encourage the Church, the government, and social service agencies to support and facilitate the option of adoption **as a generally preferable alternative to abortion.** (See Paragraph 161L.) We affirm and encourage the Church to assist the ministry of crisis pregnancy centers and pregnancy resource centers that compassionately help women find feasible alternatives to abortion.

Governmental laws and regulations do not provide all the guidance required by the informed Christian conscience. Therefore, a decision concerning abortion should be made only after thoughtful and prayerful consideration by the parties involved, with medical, family, pastoral, and other appropriate counsel. (The Book of Discipline [2012])

Therefore, Be It Further Resolved, that the 2015 session of the North Carolina Annual Conference of The United Methodist Church hereby charges its Conference Secretary, because of the fifty-word limit that has been imposed on the printed rationales in the public listings of General Conference petitions, to include with this petition the following rationale: "The current wording of Paragraph 161J has been treated by some United Methodists as a means for one-sidedly advocating for public policies advancing elective abortion. These amendments to Paragraph 161J would more clearly align our church with biblical, historic Christian teaching that defends unborn children and their mothers from abortion."

Rev. Paul T. Stallsworth
Whiteville United Methodist Church
Whiteville, NC

7. Resolution: Withdraw The United Methodist Church from The Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice

Whereas, “The Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice (RCRC) was originally founded in 1973 as the Religious Coalition for Abortion Rights (RCAR) to safeguard the newly-won constitutional right to privacy in decisions about abortion.” (“History,” <http://rcrc.org/homepage/about/history>, accessed on 01/15/15);

Whereas, RCRC works to defend and expand the absolute right to abortion – that is, the right to all abortions, whatever the circumstances, without exception – in American law;

Whereas, one RCRC publication describes aborting unborn children as “God’s work” or “holy work, service provided by God’s people on behalf of God’s people,” and encourages religious leaders to bless the work of providing elective abortions (Prayerfully Pro-Choice:ResourcesforWorship,RCRC,<http://www.readbag.com/rcrc-pdf-prayerfully>, pp.73-74,101-102,accessed on 02/02/15);

Whereas, RCRC, in its “Words of Choice: Countering Anti-Choice Rhetoric” (https://web.archive.org/web/20110320103739/http://www.rcrc.org/pdf/Words_of_Choice.pdf, accessed 02/02/15), explicitly argues against using the following words, phrases, and moral claims that are found in The United Methodist Church’s central teaching on abortion (Paragraph 161J, The Book of Discipline [2012]):”abortion as...birth control,” “[abortion] as...gender selection,” “adoption,” “crisis pregnancy centers,” “mother,” “notification and consent,” “partial-birth abortion” opposition, “sacredness of...life,” “sanctity of...life,” and “unborn child”;

Whereas, RCRC works for abortion rights in any and all circumstances, while The United Methodist Church teaches that moral discernment, on matters related to abortion, is essential, because the Church “[is] equally bound to respect the sacredness of the life and well-being of the mother and the unborn child,” “cannot affirm abortion as an acceptable means of birth control,”and “unconditionally reject[s] [abortion] as a means of gender selection or eugenics” (Paragraph 161J on Abortion, The Social Principles, The Book of Discipline [2012]);

Whereas, RCRC has consistently lobbied government against any attempt to limit the practice of partial-birth abortions, while The United Methodist Church has since 2000 “oppose[d] the use of late-term abortion known as dilation and extraction (partial-birth abortion) and call[s] for the end of this practice” with rare exceptions (Paragraph 161J on Abortion, The Social Principles, The Book of Discipline [2012]);

Whereas, RCRC has consistently favored the availability of partial-birth abortion, while the 2012 General Conference decided that the Church’s General Council on Finance and Administration “shall be responsible for ensuring that no board, agency, committee, commission, or council shall expend

United Methodist funds in a manner that violates the expressed commitment of The United Methodist Church to 'oppose the use of late-term abortion known as dilation and extraction (partial-birth abortion) and call for the end of this practice [with rare exceptions]'(Paragraph 161J). The council shall have the right to stop such expenditures.” (Paragraph 806.10, The Book of Discipline [2012]);

Whereas, RCRC supported the Freedom of Choice Act (FOCA), which if adopted would have overturned all federal, state, and local laws even mildly restricting abortion, while The United Methodist Church's General Board of Church and Society withdrew its support of FOCA in 2008, because this RCRC-supported bill was in conflict with The United Methodist Church's position on abortion (“Living in the Truth: Church and Society, Obama, and Abortion,” Lifewatch[03/01/09],p.6, www.lifewatch.org/pdf/lifewatch_newsletter_03-09.pdf, accessed 02/02/15; and Paragraph 161J on Abortion, The Social Principles, The Book of Discipline [2008]);

Whereas, Bishop Timothy W. Whitaker, retired bishop of The United Methodist Church, has declared: “At the 2004 General Conference, the church endorsed our [United Methodist] agencies' continued participation in the Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice without much of a debate about how participation in this coalition compromises our public witness against abortion” (“Do No Harm!,” Lifewatch [03/01/05], p. 3, www.lifewatch.org/pdf/lifewatch_newsletter_03-05.pdf, accessed 02/02/15);

Whereas, the 2008 General Conference narrowly voted, when many African delegates were not present, to continue participation in RCRC;

Whereas, during the 2012 General Conference, although a legislative subcommittee and committee had both voted to withdraw The United Methodist Church from RCRC, a regular plenary vote on this matter never took place, so that this petition had no opportunity to be adopted;

Whereas, “the members of our denomination are not of one mind over the precise conditions in which abortion can be supported” (#2026, The Book of Resolutions [2012], p. 124), and therefore agencies of the entire United Methodist Church should not be permitted to join a political lobby such as RCRC;

Whereas, other mainline denominations, with positions on abortion similar to that of The United Methodist Church, have either chosen not to become members of RCRC (e.g., the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and the Disciples of Christ) or severed ties with RCRC (American Baptist Churches USA and the Northern Province of the Moravian Church);

Whereas, “Reverends like us should never oppose access to abortion or sex- ed” (sic, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/posteverything/wp/2014/09/29/reverends-like-us-should-never-oppose-access-to-abortion-or-sex-ed/>, accessed on 02/02/15) – written by RCRC's President and CEO Rev. Harry Knox, and by RCRC's Board of Directors Chair Dr. Alethea R. Smith-Withers – advocates for “abortion care” and thereby demonstrates that RCRC's work in the public arena continues, through its total lack of compassion for the unborn child, to be divisive in The United Methodist Church; and

Whereas, individual United Methodists can dialogue with RCRC without legitimating RCRC's educational and political agenda, which conflicts with our Social Principles' teaching on life and abortion (Paragraph 161J on Abortion, The Social Principles, The Book of Discipline [2012]).

Therefore Be It Resolved, that the 2015 session of the North Carolina Annual Conference of The United Methodist Church hereby charges its Conference Secretary to forward this resolution, in a timely and appropriate manner, to the 2016 General Conference to withdraw immediately the General Board of Church and Society and the United Methodist Women from membership in the Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice (RCRC).

Therefore, Be It Further Resolved, that the 2015 session of the North Carolina Annual Conference of The United Methodist Church hereby charges its Conference Secretary because of the fifty-word limit that has been imposed on the printed rationales in the public listings of General Conference petitions, to include with this petition the following rationale: "RCRC is a one-sided political lobby that opposes all disapproval or limitation of abortion. RCRC's advocacy often directly contradicts our Social Principles on abortion, but it still uses our Church's name. Several Annual Conferences and many United Methodist leaders have urged the Church to end all association with RCRC."

Respectfully submitted by
Richard Laney