



Issue Paper

The United Methodist Church and Peace

Official Position of the 2004 Book of Discipline

¶165 -- ***The World Community*** — "We commit ourselves as a Church to the achievement of a world community that is a fellowship of persons who honestly love one another. We pledge ourselves to seek the meaning of the gospel in all issues that divide people and threaten the growth of world community."

¶165.VI.B — ***National Power and Responsibility*** — Some nations possess more military and economic power than do others. Upon the powerful rests responsibility to exercise their wealth and influence with restraint. We affirm the right and duty of people of all nations to determine their own destiny. We urge the major political powers to use their nonviolent power to maximize the political, social, and economic self-determination of other nations rather than to further their own special interests. We applaud international efforts to develop a more just international and economic order in which the limited resources of the earth will be used to the maximum benefit of all nations and peoples. We urge Christians in every society to encourage the governments under which they live and the economic entities within their societies to aid and work for the development of more just and economic orders.

¶165.VI.C — ***War and Peace*** -- We believe war is incompatible with the teachings and example of Christ. We therefore reject war as a usual instrument of national foreign policy and insist that the first moral duty of all nations is to resolve by peaceful means every dispute that arises between or among them; that human values must outweigh military claims as governments determine their priorities; that the militarization of society must be challenged and stopped; that the manufacture, sale, and deployment of armaments must be reduced and controlled; and that the production, possession, or use of nuclear weapons be condemned. Consequently, we endorse general and complete disarmament under strict and effective international control.

Resolutions From the 2004 Book of Discipline

Resolution Number 338: The United Methodist Church and Peace (adopted 1984, amended and readopted 2000).

Resolution Number 327: Justice, Peace, and The Integrity of Creation (adopted 1992, amended and readopted in 2000).

Resolution Number 337: Prayer for Military Personnel and for Peace in Iraq (adopted 2004).

Resolution Number 367: Replace "In Defense of Creation" with New Document and Study Guide (adopted 2004)

Resolution Number 342: "Just 1 Day" Ministry of Peace (Adopted 2004)

Resolution Number 328: Korea—Peace, Justice, and Reunification (adopted 1988, amended and readopted 2000 and 2004)

Resolution Number 331: Reduction of U.S. Military Personnel in Okinawa (adopted 2004)

Resolution Number 271: Enlarge the Cabinet of the President of the United States to Include a Secretary of Peace (adopted 2000)

Resolution Number 272: Support for the Development of U.S. Department of Peace

Resolution Number 332: Peace with Justice Sunday and Special Offering (adopted 1992, amended and readopted 2004)

Background

In 1946, the union of the Evangelical Church and the United Brethren in Christ created the Evangelical

United Brethren. In 1968 the Evangelical United Brethren and the Methodists joined together to form the United Methodist Church. All three of these churches had long histories of ministries of peace and justice. The United Methodist Church was created in the crucible of the War in Vietnam and the growing peace movement of that time. One of the great controversies facing the new church was the role of civil disobedience in Christian faith and witness. The issue was part of the struggle against racism, but it was also part of the struggle for peace. John Wesley once said that, "The Gospel of Christ knows no religion but social, no holiness but social holiness." With this foundation the United Methodist Church has always been involved in the world, making witness to its faith in Christ and how that faith ought to shape world affairs.

Why This Is an Issue

As long as nation wages war against nation and people against people, the issue of peace will continue to come before General Conference. At least one Annual Conference wants General Conference to call for a U. S. Department of Peace and Nonviolence. The General Board of Church and Society will bring several petitions about peace to the Conference. These include:

- A new resolution about Military Conscription, Training and Service.
- A new resolution stating "Concern for the Negative Effects of U.S. Training of Foreign Military and Police.
- Amendments to Resolution number 338, "the United Methodist Church and Peace.
- Amend Resolution 337, "Peace in Iraq."
- Change the language in ¶165C by adding the words, "We oppose unilateral first/preemptive strike actions and strategies on the part of any government."
- Change the language of ¶164.V.A by adding the words, "The practice and commission of genocide, war crimes, and crimes against humanity and aggression as infamous and atrocious evils. Such evils are destructive humanity, promote impunity, and therefore must be unconditionally prohibited by all governments."