

GBGM Women's Division – Charter 2006: Looking Anew at the Charter for Racial Justice

by The Women's Division



The Charter for Racial Justice has been revisited and revised over the years as United Methodist Women faced new challenges within our organization and society. It has been an ongoing process of listening and responding to specific realities. The first Charter in 1952 was created to address legalized segregation. It was revised ten years later, in 1962, lifting up efforts to abolish the Central Jurisdiction and support civil rights struggles. Then in 1978, after a series of separate national gatherings of African American, Asian American, Native American and Latina United Methodist Women, a new charter marked the commitment to cultivate and honor the leadership of women of color from many racial and ethnic backgrounds within UMW, and to address institutional racism.



Watch for this Racial Justice symbol on this website and throughout resources for United Methodist Women. When you see it, you will find information and ideas for how you can be part of UMW's ongoing work to combat racism.

Image by: Women's Division

Source: Response

It has been 25 years since the current Charter was adopted by the whole Church at General Conference (1980). Building on this tradition of ongoing discernment and witness, we hope you will agree that in 2006 we take time to collectively assess the significant changes in our organization, our church, and our national demographics over the past 25 years in terms of the realities of race and ethnicity. Charter 2006 will be a year-long opportunity to revisit the Charter and consider what it means for the present.

- **What are the critical racial justice issues within our organization, church and society?**
- **How does the Charter help us respond?**
- **What changes might be useful in updating the Charter in the future, to respond to current realities?**

Please join us in making this a priority. We look forward to taking up the challenge of dismantling racism in our lives and our institutions, and pray that we all have the wisdom and commitment to act boldly and with love.

A Charter for Racial Justice Policies **in an Interdependent Global Community**

Adopted By The 1980 General Conference of The United Methodist Church

Because We Believe

- 1. that God is the Creator of all people and all are God's children in one family;**

2. that racism is a rejection of the teachings of Jesus Christ;
3. that racism denies the redemption and reconciliation of Jesus Christ;
4. that racism robs all human beings of their wholeness and is used as a justification for social, economic and political exploitation;
5. that we must declare before God and before each other that we have sinned against our sisters and brothers of other races in thought, in word and in deed;
6. that in our common humanity in creation all women and men are made in God's image and all persons are equally valuable in the sight of God;
7. that our strength lies in our racial and cultural diversity and that we must work toward a world in which each person's value is respected and nurtured;
8. that our struggle for justice must be based on new attitudes, new understandings and new relationships and must be reflected in the law, policies, structures and practices of both church and state;

WE COMMIT OURSELVES AS INDIVIDUALS AND AS A COMMUNITY TO FOLLOW JESUS CHRIST IN WORD AND IN DEED AND TO STRUGGLE FOR THE RIGHTS AND THE SELF-DETERMINATION OF EVERY PERSON AND GROUP OF PERSON. THEREFORE, AS UNITED METHODIST WOMEN IN EVERY PLACE ACROSS THE LAND...

We Will

UNITE OUR EFFORTS with all groups in The United Methodist Church

1. to eliminate all forms of institutional racism in the total ministry of the church with special attention given to those institutions which we support, beginning with their employment policies, purchasing practices and availability of services and facilities.
2. to create opportunities in local churches to deal honestly with the existing racist attitudes and social distance between members, deepening the Christian commitment to be the church where all racial groups and economic classes come together.
3. to increase our efforts to recruit women of all races into the membership of United Methodist Women and provide leadership development opportunities without discrimination.
4. to create workshops and seminars in local churches to study, understand and appreciate the historical and cultural contributions of each race to the church and community.
5. to increase local churches, awareness of the continuing needs for equal

education, housing, employment and medical care for all members of the community and create opportunities to work for these things across racial lines.

6. to work for the development and implementation of national and international policies to protect the civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights of all people such as through support for the ratification of United Nations covenants on human rights.

7. to support and participate in the world-wide struggle for liberation in the church and community.

8. to support nomination and election processes which include all racial groups employing a quota system until the time that our voluntary performance makes such practice unnecessary.

The Women's Division of the General Board of Global Ministries of The United Methodist Church wrote and adopted this Charter in 1978; in 1980 the Division recommended adoption of the Charter by the whole denomination. General Conference adoption constitutes a strengthened mandate to work for the speedy implementation within jurisdiction, conference, district and local structures. The Women's Division continues to call with urgency on all units of United Methodist Women to study and act on the principles and goals stated in this Charter.

HISTORY

Racism is the belief that one race is innately superior to all other races. In the United States, this belief has justified the conquest, enslavement and evangelizing of non-Europeans. During the early history of this country, Europeans assumed their civilization and religion were innately superior to those of both the original inhabitants of the United States and the Africans who were forcefully brought to these shores to be slaves. The myth of European superiority persisted and persists. Other people who came and who are still coming to the United States by choice or force encountered and encounter racism. Some of these people are the Chinese who built the railroads as indentured workers; the Mexicans whose lands were annexed; the Puerto Rican, the Cubans, the Hawaiians and the Eskimos who were colonized; and the Filipinos, the Jamaicans and the Haitians who live on starvation wages as farm workers.

In principle, the United States has outlawed racial discrimination but, in practice, little has changed. Social, economic and political institutions still discriminate, although some institutions have amended their behavior by eliminating obvious discriminatory practices and choosing their language carefully. The institutional church, despite sporadic attempts to the contrary, also still discriminates.

The damage of years of exploitation has not been erased. A system designed to meet the needs of one segment of the population cannot be the means to the development of a just society for all. The racist system in the United States today perpetuates the power and control of those of European ancestry. It is often called "white racism." The fruits of racism are prejudice, bigotry, discrimination, and dehumanization. Consistently, Blacks, Hispanics, Asians, Native Americans and Pacific Islanders have been humiliated by being given inferior jobs, housing, education, medical services, transportation and public accommodation. With hopes deferred and rights still denied, the deprived and oppressed fall prey to a colonial mentality which acquiesces to the inequities, occasionally with religious rationalizations.

Racist presuppositions have been implicit in U.S. attitudes and policies toward Asia, Africa, the Middle East and Latin America. While proclaiming democracy, freedom and independence, the U.S. has been an ally and an accomplice to perpetuating inequality of the races and colonialism throughout the world. The history of The United Methodist Church and the history of the United States are intertwined. The "mission enterprise" of the churches in the United States and "westernization" went hand in hand, sustained in their belief of their superiority.

We are conscious that "we have sinned as our ancestors did; we have been wicked and evil" (Psalm 106:6, Today's English Version). We are called for a renewed commitment to the elimination of institutional racism. We affirm the 1976 General Conference Statement on The United Methodist Church and Race, which states unequivocally: "By biblical and theological precept, by the law of the Church, by General Conference pronouncement, and by episcopal expression, the matter is clear. With respect to race, the aim of The United Methodist Church is nothing less than an inclusive church in an inclusive society. The United Methodist Church, therefore, calls upon all its people to perform those faithful deeds of love and justice in both the church and community that will bring this aim into reality."

Note: The new [Racial Justice Symbol](#) represents United Methodist Women and the Women's Division's commitment to work for racial justice. It symbolizes a world of racially and ethnically diverse peoples working together side-by-side to create a world in which every person has voice, rights an opportunity for abundant life. Within the image are two hands joined together to work for justice for all God's children.



See Also...

Topic: [Advocacy](#) | [Civil rights](#) | [Human rights](#) | [Race](#) | [Women](#) | [Youth](#) |

Geographic Region: [United States](#) |

Source: [Women's Division](#)