

## CIVIL AND HUMAN RIGHTS

### What does the Bible say?

The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free. **(Luke 4:18)**

Remember those who are in prison, as though you were in prison with them; those who are being tortured, as though you yourselves were being tortured. **(Hebrews 13:3)**

When all the prisoners of the land are crushed under foot, when human rights are perverted in the presence of the Most High, when one's case is subverted- does the Lord not see it? **(Lamentations 3:34-36)**



### What does The United Methodist Church say?

In the love of Christ, who came to save those who are lost and vulnerable, we urge the creation of a genuinely new system for the care and restoration of victims, offenders, criminal justice officials, and the community as a whole. **(Social Principles ¶164.H)**

A justice system that reflects God's desires for the world is one that is healing and restorative. Those who have been victimized by crime and the communities in which they reside need healing. Healing can come as safety and security are restored and the broken bonds of mutuality and shared existence are mended. Those who commit crimes must be held accountable through making amends to those they have caused to suffer, and they must be given the opportunity to return to their full place in society and community. **(2016 Book of Resolutions, #5031, "Criminal Justice")**

We support measures designed to remove social conditions that lead to crime, and we encourage continued positive interaction between law enforcement officials and members of the community at large. **(Social Principles ¶ 164.H)**

Criminalization of personal behaviors or conditions perpetuate unfair racial disparity, class distinctions, stigmatization, and waste resources needed for other purposes. Therefore, the Church supports the repeal of laws that criminalize personal conditions or behaviors. **(2016 Book of Resolutions, #5031, "Criminal Laws and Penalties")**



# CRIMINAL JUSTICE REFORM IN THE UNITED STATES



**CHURCH & SOCIETY**

The United Methodist Church

Living **FAITH** Seeking **JUSTICE** Pursuing **PEACE**

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# CRIMINAL JUSTICE REFORM IN THE UNITED STATES

### What do the facts say?

- There are 2 million people in the nation's prisons and jails—a 500% increase over the last 40 years. (Institute for Crime and Justice Policy Research)
- The number of people serving life sentences endures even while serious, violent crime has been declining for the past 20 years and little public safety benefit has been demonstrated to correlate with increasingly lengthy sentences. (The Sentencing Project, 2022)
- Black men are six times as likely to be incarcerated as white men and Latinos are 2.5 times as likely. For Black men in their thirties, about 1 in every 12 is in prison or jail on any given day (Bureau of Justice Statistics)
- From 1980 to 2017, the number of women in jails and prisons in the U.S. grew 750%. Over 225,000 women are incarcerated today. (The Sentencing Project, 2019)
- Our spending on jails and prisons reached \$87 billion in 2015, an increase of 1000% from the \$7.4 billion spent in 1975 (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2018).



### What do you say?

Take **ACTION** for justice...

**Connect** with other United Methodists and learn more about mass incarceration and advocacy opportunities for reform - [www.umcjustice.org](http://www.umcjustice.org)

**Follow** updates from the Interfaith Criminal Justice Coalition. Church and Society developed this interfaith coalition to educate people of faith and advocate reforming unfair and inhumane criminal justice policies. To learn more about the coalition's work visit [www.interfaithjustice.org](http://www.interfaithjustice.org)

**Visit** your local prison or jail and build relationships with our sisters and brothers inside. Support families of the incarcerated and those who have recently been released.



For more information contact:  
[advocacy@umcjustice.org](mailto:advocacy@umcjustice.org)

[www.umcjustice.org](http://www.umcjustice.org)

**General Board of Church and Society**

100 Maryland Ave, NE Washington, DC 20002

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