

# SOCIAL PRINCIPLES 2020

## Guide for Public Conversations on the Draft of the Revised United Methodist Social Principles

Thank you for agreeing to convene a public conversation to consider the draft of the revised Social Principles. This document will be considered at the 2020 United Methodist General Conference.

### BACKGROUND

“The Social Principles, while not to be considered church law, are a prayerful and thoughtful effort on the part of the General Conference to speak to the human issues in the contemporary world from a sound biblical and theological foundation as historically demonstrated in United Methodist traditions.

They are a call to faithfulness and are intended to be instructive and persuasive in the best of the prophetic spirit. The Social Principles are a call to all members of The United Methodist Church to a prayerful, studied dialogue of faith and practice“ (2016 Book of Discipline, Social Principles Preface).

### WHY REVISE THE SOCIAL PRINCIPLES?

The General Conference in 2012 initiated a process to revise the church’s Social Principles. A full review of the Social Principles has not occurred since the 1968-1972 quadrennium, when the first Social Principles document was proposed. Since that time, numerous additions have been made and wording has changed. All of this has resulted in a document that is in need of comprehensive updating.

### WHAT HAS BEEN DONE SO FAR?

From 2012 to 2016 Church and Society conducted several listening consultations across the connection. Questions were asked about how the Social Principles are actually practiced in a variety of places, including in Africa, the Philippines, Europe, and the United States, where The United Methodist Church has members.

In 2016, The General Conference of The United Methodist Church asked the Board to begin a revision process. The board suggested that a new document address three goals – that the revised Social Principles be more succinct, theologically grounded, and globally relevant.



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## TAKING THE NEXT STEP—PUBLIC CONVERSATIONS

A draft of the revised Social Principles has been prepared by six writing teams that included 60 United Methodist clergy and laity, scholars and practitioners, from across the world.

Between April and August 2018, we are soliciting feedback so that we can perfect the draft document. To do this we invite you to hold public conversations on the draft of the revised Social Principles.

## HOW DO I GET INVOLVED?

Here are some steps to make this conversation run smoothly.

1. Invite people to sign up in advance to participate in a conversation on the draft of the revised Social Principles.

We encourage you to set a goal of gathering a diverse group of at least 18 participants for about 2 hours. There are six sections to the Social Principles and it would be helpful to have teams of at least 3 people consider each section of the draft document.

### Suggested Invitees

*Peace With Justice Coordinator\**

*General Board of Church and Society board member\**

*Representatives from Ethnic Caucuses*

*Youth and Young People*

\*You can find these names at [www.umcjustice.org](http://www.umcjustice.org)

2. Send a thank you beforehand to those who have agreed to participate in the conversation. Include a link to the entire document for their consideration. The document can be found at [www.umcjustice.org/sp2020](http://www.umcjustice.org/sp2020)

If participants would like to compare the draft of the revised Social Principles with the current Social Principles, they can go online and read the current language by section at [www.umc.org/what-we-believe/social-principles-social-creed](http://www.umc.org/what-we-believe/social-principles-social-creed).

3. Encourage participants to read the draft document and come prepared to share their impressions of the draft based on the questions listed below.
4. If desired, recruit one facilitator for each of the six sections of the Social Principles before your gathering. This should be someone who is comfortable guiding the conversation without dominating the process. This should be a person whose main job is to listen and to reflect back what they hear in the group. If you are unable to do this ahead of time, you may ask for volunteers at the time of the event.

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## **SAMPLE LETTER OR EMAIL TO PARTICIPANTS**

Here is a sample letter to send:

*Dear (insert name here),*

*The General Board of Church and Society is leading a process to revise the Social Principles of The United Methodist Church.*

*Thank you for agreeing to participate in a conversation on the draft of the revised Social Principles.*

*The final document will be considered at the 2020 General Conference of The United Methodist Church in Minneapolis, MN.*

*You will find a copy of the entire draft of the revised Social Principles at this link on the Church and Society webpage: [www.umcjustice.org/sp2020](http://www.umcjustice.org/sp2020)*

*Each participant is invited to participate in a small group that will discuss one of the six sections of the draft of the revised Social Principles. These sections are -- The Community of all Creation, The Nurturing Community, The Social Community, The Economic Community, The Political Community, and The World Community.*

*The time and location for the public conversation is \_\_\_\_\_.*

*Before this conversation, it would be helpful, but not required, for you to read over the sections and be prepared to reflect on the following questions:*

- Do you see language that represents our Church's goals to create a document that is more succinct, theologically grounded, and globally relevant?*
- Are the sections you have read particularly inspiring?*
- Are there sections you have read that need to be strengthened or changed?*

*Thank you. We look forward to seeing you at the public conversation on the draft of the revised Social Principles.*

## **ROOM SET UP**

We suggest, if possible, you use a room where chairs can be set up in a half circle for the opening session and then split the group up into 6 distinct groups for small group discussion. Each small group will read and reflect only on one section of the draft of the revised Social Principles.

Because participants will spend 45 minutes in their small group we suggest the groups be placed at some distance from each other to avoid distractions.

Potential supplies are: copies of the draft of the revised Social Principles, pens, paper, large poster paper for group notes.

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## **A SUGGESTED PROCESS FOR THE GATHERING**

Here are suggestions on introducing the conversation process.

### **Words of Welcome from Church and Society (5 minutes)**

Facilitator says:

*Thank you for prayerfully participating in this process.*

*We welcome you and appreciate your time. Our goal is to introduce the draft of the revised Social Principles to United Methodists broadly, by inviting groups to reflect on this document from all parts of world and in a wide variety of ministry settings.*

*Your presence offers a unique perspective and our collective wisdom will contribute to the process of creating a revised Social Principles.*

*We hope that you will learn from this process but we also welcome your written comments and reflections. We want you to let us know what you think. You can send Church and Society your comments at [www.umcjustice.org/sp2020](http://www.umcjustice.org/sp2020)*

*Thank you for coming to participate.*

**Prayer** – Invite participants to join in a moment of silent prayer and then say this prayer or one of your choosing (1 minute)

Facilitator says:

*We thank you, O God, for bringing us together to consider this draft of the revised Social Principles document. Help us to not only learn from what we read, but to also offer prayerful reflections on the principles addressed here.*

*Guide our thoughts, give us minds to learn, ears to listen, and hearts open to your Spirit's guidance during this time. In Christ's name we pray. Amen*

### **Process Overview (2 minutes)**

Play the 2-minute video at [www.umcjustice.org/sp2020](http://www.umcjustice.org/sp2020) as an overview of the revision process thus far.

### **Introductions (5 minutes)**

Facilitator says:

*Please state your name, where you are from, and what section of the draft of the revised Social Principles that you would like to consider.*

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### **Divide the Group into Six Sections (5 minutes)**

Facilitator ensures that all six sections are covered by the six small groups. Ask for volunteers to move to less-popular sections, so that groups are somewhat even. Agree on a time to reconvene (45 minutes is the suggested time allotment for discussion).

### **The Conversation Group process (5 minutes)**

When groups have gathered, group facilitators will welcome everyone and briefly describe the conversation group process.

The Facilitator may then say this:

*Today we have an opportunity to join in a conversation about sections of the draft of the revised Social Principles document. We will use these questions as a guide for our conversations:*

- *In this section do you see language that represents our goals to create a document that is more succinct, theologically grounded, and globally relevant?*
- *Does the draft reflect our distinct theology and heritage as United Methodists?*
- *What in the section is particularly inspiring?*
- *What in the section needs to be strengthened or changed?*

The facilitator should ask if someone would be willing to take notes and then share a brief five minute summary, when the large group reconvenes.

### **Clarify Ground Rules or Agreements (5 minutes)**

Facilitator may say:

*It is critical that everyone is able to share their thoughts with others and be respected and heard. Our goal is to create an environment where everyone is included. We encourage those of you who tend to talk less to try to talk more and those of you who tend to talk more to give others a chance to share.*

*Practice curiosity when reading the text. Listen to understand perspectives that may not be your own. Try to speak from your own perspective.*

*We want to hear from all of you.*

*The group will take 45 minutes to prayerfully review and discuss the section you have been assigned. You may want to take a few minutes to read or review the text. Again, these are the questions we will use to guide our discussion:*

- *In this section do you see language that represents our goals to create a document that is more succinct, theologically grounded, and globally relevant?*
- *Does the draft reflect our distinct theology and heritage as United Methodists?*
- *What in the section is particularly inspiring?*
- *What in the section needs to be strengthened or changed?*

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## **Return to the Whole (30 minutes)**

As a convener, invite each of the conversation groups to share with the whole group a few highlights and a brief summary of their discussion.

This should not last more than 5 minutes for each section.

After all the groups have had an opportunity to share, explain that every United Methodist is invited to offer their thoughts on the draft document. Because every voice is important each person is encouraged to share their impressions and perspective and to offer their inputs to the General Board of Church and Society. This is not only in regards to the section each person worked on, but the document as a whole.

Every United Methodist can do this by commenting at [www.umcjustice.org/sp2020](http://www.umcjustice.org/sp2020).

## **Closing Prayer (2 minutes)**

The facilitator asks the entire group to join hands and form a circle if possible.

The facilitator asks the whole group to look around the circle and acknowledge with their eyes the people who they have met and especially those with whom you have had an opportunity to share. Invite them to acknowledge the people they did not get a chance to be in a group with.

Then join in prayer using this prayer or something similar.

Facilitator may say:

*We thank you, O God, for the witness and guidance of the Church. Thank you for all those who have gone before us, for all they have taught us. Thank you for our minds and the ability to think, to reason and to learn. Thank for the gift of Holy Scripture and our tradition from which we receive guidance and wisdom. May we glean from careful, prayerful study, a renewed appreciation for the experiences of life, and the situations and questions with which we struggle. May we learn to do justice, love kindness, and to walk humbly with you. Open our hearts and minds to follow in your way and to be faithful disciples, both personally and as your Church in a hurting world. In the name Christ, Amen.*

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## **WHAT DO WE DO AFTER THE PUBLIC CONVERSATION?**

Please contact the General Board of Church and Society and let us know that you hosted a conversation on the draft of the revised Social Principles.

You will be asked your name as a conversation convener, date of the public conversation, location, Conference or local church, and the number of participants who attended the public conversation.

## **THANK YOU**

Thank you so much for supporting this effort. Your leadership is greatly appreciated.

## **QUESTIONS?**

Contact:

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