

New Resolution

Suggested Title: Jubilee Freedom Today

RATIONALE:

Is a strategic step in the direction of our new chapter together as the United Methodist Church;
a building block for further "unity in our diversity" as we go forward together within the UMC.

Total number of pages: Six (6)

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Resolution: New

Action Desired: Create a new Resolution

General Church Budget Implications: None

Global Implication: None

The concept of Jubilee is drawn from the book of Leviticus, in which a year of Jubilee is celebrated every fifty years. "This fiftieth year is sacred—it is a time of freedom and of celebration when everyone will receive back their original property, and slaves will return home to their families." (Leviticus 25:10). During the Jubilee year: social inequalities are rectified, slaves are freed, land is returned to its original owners, debts are canceled, and forgiveness and reconciliation prevail.

Jubilee is Freedom that frees one from tears of disgrace! One is: Free to claim forgiveness and redemption! Free to embrace other cultures and races! And free from fear of touching and

connecting with other persons who are divinely different but beautifully created in the sovereign image of God.

The last millennium witnessed an emerging world community dominated first by Europe, then by Europe's offspring in North America. In the wake of this domination came colonization and the enslavement of African peoples. But what we know about the Black Church and Black preaching in the United Methodist Church and in the United States is that from its earliest practice there was a central focus: Freedom. But these exhortations on freedom had a three-pronged emphasis, freedom from sin, freedom from slavery and freedom from systemic racism against all racial ethnic peoples. Only in the last two centuries of the last millennium have the shackles been broken off; and only in the Twentieth Century have colonized nations won the rights of self-government. We need some fresh answers to: Why do white privilege, racism, shackles and colonization live on in attitudes and values and remain embedded in our practices, even when outlawed? Why and how did the category of race become so absolutely defining and confining even in our beloved United Methodist Church?

Our theological concept is rich in hope, born out of our grief, pain and suffering, and our belief in the eternal hope of God. It is a transformative hope, which takes its historical context from our desire for change. So let's embrace and live out the Jubilee which comes from the Hebrew word *yobel*, meaning "to be jubilant" or to "exult." (NAS Exhaustive Concordance)

Jubilee may be a painfully slow journey. However, as the Church makes its way on such a Jubilee pilgrimage, it will move every wall of separation and undertake this journey, beseeching and welcoming siblings of all races, cultures and ethnicities. The Church will share the message of salvation as it seeks the kingdom in the midst of a world filled with chaos and pain. As we

journey together, we will make discovery after joyful discovery, many of which are beyond our imagination.

As a Church, as a people, the whole polity, the whole family, the whole of humanity, we will remember to the profit of ourselves and our common future, that Jubilee is a universal mandate for a civil world, a civil church and a civil society. Despite neglect, disdain, and irreverence, Jubilee will not be denied. And, with our whole-hearted participation, it will be a Jubilee of justice, peace, security, and the kingdom of character.

Since the United Methodist Church has just recently celebrated its Jubilee Year (2018), it is most befitting that we focus on this concept as we approach the 2020 General Conference.

As we explore its practices, we will discover that Jubilee is the guarantor of the Good Society, with its provisions for self-adjudication of every kind of injustice and hostility that builds up in individuals, families, and societies. Skeptics say that Jubilee cannot work. But it can also be said that whether or not Jubilee can work, we will not know, until we have put its principles into practice.

Our great United Methodist Church is struggling with a number of models, and/ or structural changes to save itself. As people of freedom, though not the majority culture or color, our voice and vote must count in 2020. Before we are seduced by various factions, we need to remember what our priorities are, and how can we achieve them.

It was George Santayana, the historian/philosopher who once said, “those who do not learn the lessons of history, are doomed to repeat it’s mistakes” With that in mind, we are urged to recall that John Wesley abhorred the practice of slavery, and no doubt would detest the impact of

systemic racism, white supremacy and privilege over racial ethnic groups and others. Yet the insidious acts of slavery, racism and discrimination against other persons, particularly members of the African Diaspora shaped and influenced Methodism's development across its history in the United States.

Finally, whatever our conclusions and/or strategies, let Black people and other people of color not run from the struggle, or stay on the sidelines. We've come too far to turn back now.

While navigating through a myriad of critical social injustices and issues, whether Traditionalist, Centrist, or Progressive, let us together build up the body of Christ for serving in a hurting world, and thus, making the UMC become a more relevant church in times such as this.

Now, therefore, be it resolved that,

The 2020 General Conference of the United Methodist Church take action to maintain and enhance our identity as the United Methodist Church by embracing a full and diverse membership which empowers all constituents (lay and clergy), especially racial/ethnic groups seeking to establish and strengthen congregational life, endeavoring to engage in multicultural ministry, better integrating diverse congregations and multicultural staff; and to create an equitable formula for clergy appointments, including cross-racial lead pastor appointments and extension ministries appointments. This resolution will hold the church accountable to its Global Social Principles and Biblical mandates regarding people of color and ministry to the poor, as it goes through its transformation to become the beloved community of God, incorporating the rich legacy, heritage and contributions of the Black Church.

Be it further resolved, that regardless of what churches that choose to disaffiliate may do so under the principles of Biblical Jubilee without penalty, retribution or harm.

In the event that Black Churches and other racial ethnic UM churches feel led to disaffiliate with the UMC, certain conditions encompassing the principle of Jubilee should be in force:

1. The church's property deeds be released from the UMC to be legally owned by the congregation under its property deeds as an act of repentance and reparation.
2. All UMC National Plans, Africa University be fully funded for the next 12 years, no matter what new reconfiguration or shape the church may take to guarantee the survival and growth of remaining, existing and emerging congregations, to ensure the National Plans can continue their missions and have full representation and voice in the policy making decisions of the church. Also, the church will continue to recognize and support the five Racial Ethnic Caucus groups as official entities of the church.
3. Biblical Jubilee will become the normal practice of freedom and of celebration when every member (lay and clergy) will experience just and equal opportunities in all units and program areas of the church including parity in clergy appointments and lay staffing assignments.
4. Debts of arrears in apportionments and benefits are canceled for small rural and urban churches that are experiencing severe financial crisis due to such current realities as gentrification, unemployment, aging demographics, etc.
5. More intentional and consistent programs of recruitment, training and empowerment of more youth and younger adults to commit to follow their call of ordained and lay servanthood ministry should be established.
6. To grow into being a Global church, in polity, organization and spirituality: when conferencing and allocating funds, the church consider our: unique cultural and political differences which affect decision making at General Conference and fund ways to

improve communications, cultural competences, global travel, clergy and lay training as well as program development.

Be it further resolved, that Biblical Jubilee will become the normal practice of freedom and of celebration when every member (lay and clergy) will experience just and equal opportunities in all units and program areas of the church including parity in clergy appointments and lay staffing assignments.

Date: September 18, 2019

Signature of petitioner:

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