

WHEREAS the Conference Board of Ordained Ministry is responsible for guiding, preparing, evaluating, and presenting gifted, Spirit-filled candidates for licensed, commissioned, and ordained ministry, and

WHEREAS the Conference Board of Ordained Ministry presented 16 persons they found to be highly-qualified for provisional membership as clergy in the Florida Annual Conference, and

WHEREAS provisional membership was denied to this entire class of future leaders when some clergy, many of whom do not even plan to remain in the United Methodist Church, voted against them because the class included LGBTQ persons,

THEREFORE LET IT BE RESOLVED that the Florida Annual Conference affirms the work of the Conference Board of Ordained Ministry, believes wholeheartedly that the candidates they presented are called by God to ordained ministry, and expects that their commissioning will eventually happen; and

LET IT BE FURTHER RESOLVED that, while there is no mechanism outside of a vote by the clergy session that could rectify what was done to this class, the Florida Annual Conference invites these candidates for commissioning to participate in the Residency in Ministry process at the earliest opportunity, and if possible having the coming year count toward the required length of time that must pass before they can apply for ordination; and

LET IT BE FURTHER RESOLVED that the Bishop would consult with the cabinet and determine whether a clergy session might be convened, in accordance with ¶369.5, either as a part of the fall clergy gathering or another time, rather than waiting until Annual Conference 2023 to commission the class as recommended by the Board of Ordained Ministry; and

LET IT BE FURTHER RESOLVED that the Florida Annual Conference acknowledges that the actions of the clergy session were clearly harmful to the commissioning class of 2022, when they should have received gratitude for their hard work, admiration for their many gifts, and boundless hope for the church that they will soon lead instead. We apologize for the delay this action has caused in their careers, and for taking away what was supposed to be a joyous celebration on Saturday with colleagues, family, and friends; some of whom have already traveled to be in attendance.

Submitted by:

Latricia Scriven, Clergy, North West District

- Director, FAMU Wesley Foundation
- Pastor, New Life UMC

Heather Pancoast, Laity, North Central District

- Director, UF Wesley Foundation

A Resolution on Gun Violence

WHEREAS Jesus expressed specific concern for the welfare of children (Matthew 19:13-14) and wept over a city that did not know “the things that make for peace” (John 19:41-42), and;

WHEREAS in our baptismal covenant we “*accept the freedom and power God gives to resist evil, injustice and oppression in whatever forms they present themselves*” and;

WHEREAS we continue to face the uniquely American evil of mass shootings, most recently in racially motivated attacks on a shopping center in Buffalo and a Taiwanese church in Los Angeles, and in the attack on the Robb Elementary School in Uvalde, Texas, and;

WHEREAS one of the common elements in those events is the use of legally purchased, high-capacity weapons and ammunition, and;

WHEREAS majorities in both political parties favor preventing people with mental illnesses from purchasing guns, subjecting private gun sales and gun show sales to background checks, and refusing to permit people to carry concealed firearms without a permit, (<https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2021/09/13/key-facts-about-americans-and-guns/>) and;

WHEREAS the General Conference resolved:

For United Methodist congregations to advocate at the local and national level for laws that prevent or reduce gun violence. Some of those measures include:

- *Universal background checks on all gun purchases*
- *Ensuring all guns are sold through licensed gun retailers*
- *Prohibiting all individuals convicted of violent crimes from purchasing a gun for a fixed time period*
- *Prohibiting all individuals under restraining order due to threat of violence from purchasing a gun*
- *Prohibiting persons with serious mental illness, who pose a danger to themselves and their communities, from purchasing a gun*
- *Ensuring greater access to services for those suffering from mental illness*
- *Establishing a minimum age of 21 years for a gun purchase or possession*
- *Banning large-capacity ammunition magazines and weapons designed to fire multiple rounds each time the trigger is pulled*
- *Promoting new technologies to aid law-enforcement agencies to trace crime guns and promote public safety. (<https://www.umcjustice.org/who-we-are/social-principles-and-resolutions/our-call-to-end-gun-violence-3428>).*

THEREFORE, we call on United Methodists in Florida to:

- Express Christ-shaped compassion for victims of gun violence by including them in personal prayer and corporate worship;
- Engage in biblical and theological reflection on the nature of violence and Jesus’ vision of the Kingdom of God;

- Support and encourage research on gun violence to aid in the formulation of effective legislation;
- Call on our local, state and federal representatives to support reasonable gun safety laws including universal background checks, "red flag" laws, and renewal of the assault weapons ban;
- Boldly proclaim the hope of that day when God's Kingdom will come and God's will be done on earth as it is in heaven and claim the opportunity to participate in its coming.

There are no additional costs to be incurred by the Florida Annual Conference as a result of this resolution.

Submitted by: James A. Harnish, retired elder

Supported by:

Bryant Manning
 Ivan Corban
 Warren Willis
 Dan Johnson
 Mary Lee Downey
 Jim Green
 Wayne Curry
 Marti Chumbler
 Debbie Keller Allen
 Steve Harper
 Christy Allen Holden
 John Hill
 Tim Smiley
 Kandace Brooks
 Ellen Miavitz-Brown
 Todd Bardin
 David Killingsworth
 Matt Wallis
 Bob Bushong
 Kevin Johnson
 Louis and Anita Williams
 Jeanine Spangenberg
 Clontz
 Nancy Winckler-zuinga
 Brett Wells Bultemeier
 Judith Pierre-Okerson
 Heather Harding
 Sandi Opalinski

Victoria Williams
 Lee Hall-Perkins
 Tracie Fulkman Ashley
 Jennifer Potter Buff
 David Gill
 Joyce Alexander
 Brett Opalinski
 Gary Spencer
 David Dodge
 Andy Oliver
 Ben Richards
 Beth Farabee Snarr
 Andrea Lynne Whisnant
 John Powers
 Jad Denmark
 Rick Gebauer
 Danny Bennett
 Wilma Ivelisse Reyes
 Melissa Pisco
 Chris Green
 Brittany Leclair
 Ellen Arterburn Pollock
 Mark and Margaret
 Charles
 Peggy Diane Grace Moss
 Molly McEntire
 Nancy Vallario
 Kris Wise

M.e. Ram
 Jane Finnegan
 Claire Watson Chance
 Erica Marlene Blythe
 Madeline Luzinski
 Denny Ragsdale
 Maresi Brown
 Sarah Robles Wise
 Annette Stiles Pendergrass
 Stephanie Johnson Lain
 Laura Roy
 June Edwards
 Carrie McCannell-Scruggs
 Roy Terry
 Terri Hill
 Bailey Schreiner
 Becky Ambrose
 Rokitowski
 Maryaan West Mueller
 Cruz Edwin Santos
 Panela Feeser
 Ian Campbell
 Linda Tice
 Rachel Williams
 Martha Ross
 Sue Caldwell Panazze
 Katherine Zimmerman

RESOLUTION: EQUITY IN CONGREGATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

WHEREAS the early church modeled a radical sharing of possessions (Acts 2:45, 4:34-35) to ensure that all believers had the material resources they needed to thrive.

WHEREAS we believe intentional commitments to our churches and clergy of color will cultivate equity, peace, love, and fruitfulness and contribute to the growth of God's kingdom in Florida.

WHEREAS *Dismantling Racism: Becoming an Anti-Racist Conference Comprehensive Plan* states that we would "analyze present budgeting practices, allocation of funds, and salary inequities for clergy of color and devise a racially equitable financial plan that includes apportionment expectations for minority communities, forgiveness of debt for minority congregations, and salary support for clergy of color by January 2022."

WHEREAS current clergy compensation data in the Florida Conference reveals that full-time Black clergy receive an average of \$11,156 less per year in compensation than full-time White clergy. Likewise, full-time Hispanic/Latino clergy receive an average of \$8,679 less per year in comparison to their White colleagues.

BE IT RESOLVED that at least forty percent (40%) of expenditures from the Cabinet Development Fund over the next ten (10) years will be committed by The Florida Conference Cabinet and the Office & Committee of Congregational Vitality to churches and clergy of color, beginning July 1, 2022. This commitment includes, but is not limited to, the work of creating equity in clergy compensation, congregational development, and debt reduction.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that at least one-third (1/3) of all new church starts over the next ten (10) years will be located in communities of color, using funds from the New Church Development Fund.

Financial Impact

This resolution will have a financial impact on the Cabinet Development Fund and the New Church Development Fund. It would direct 40% of all expenditures from the Cabinet Development Fund over the next ten (10) years to churches and clergy of color, and it would commit funds from the New Church Development Fund to plant of at least one-third (1/3) of all new church starts over the next ten (10) years in communities of color.

Implementation

This resolution will be implemented by the Bishop's Anti-Racism Task Force, the Board of Trustees, the Office & Committee of Congregational Vitality, and the Cabinet of the Florida Conference.¹

Submitted By

The Resolutions Sub-Team of the Bishop's Anti-Racism Task Force (Julius David, Rev. Lee Hall-Perkins, Beth Potter, Rev. Bailey Schreiner, Rev. Dr. Latricia Scriven, Rev. Melissa Stump, Warren Pattison)

Supported By

Rev. Debbie Allen, Rev. Tracie Ashley, Rev. Dr. Sharon Austin, Deborah Baker, Donna Baxla, Bronwyn Bedient, Rev. Robert Bledsoe, Rev. Jennifer Potter Buff, Arleigha Byer, Rev. Andrea Byer-Thomas, Nick Carey, Rev. Paul Chilcote, Nancy Constant, Lee Cross, Lea Ellen DeWitt, Robert Dinwiddie, Rev. Bethany Douty, Rev. John Ekers, Rev. Bette-Jo Foster, Susan Garcia-Nikolova, Colleen Gass, Gloria Gertrup, Angela Gibson, Rev. Dale Golden, Rev. Ivan Gonzalez, Christina Goudard, Rev. Pamela Green, Rev. Amy Greene, Betsy Grizzard, Rev. Terry Heck, Rev. Dr. Rinaldo Hernandez, Laurie Hofts, Thomas Hofts, Rev. Christine Allen Holden, Rev. Dr. Kevin M. James, Sr., Rev. Jason Knott, Rev. Madeline Luzinski, Rev. Mike Luzinski, Lashley Marks, Lee McAuliffe, Paul McCrea, Diane McCreary, Molly McEntire, Rev. Pam McMillan, Nancy Metz, Ronald Metz, Cristi Moore, Tracy Newman, Rev. Andy Oliver, Linda Palmer, Patty Perez, Gwen Pipkin, Vicky Pitner, Beth Potter, M.E. Ram, Rev. Lois Rogers-Watson, Rev. Dr. Latricia Scriven, Rev. Kathi Sheehan, Ivor Singer, Mary Scott Singer, Rev. Tracey Stallworth, David Stump, Rev. Melissa Stump, Patty Surface, Rick Surface, Mary Talbott, Rev. Nicki Taylor, Jerry Thomas, Rev. Vicki Walker, Rev. Matthew Wallis, Rev. Andy Whitaker Smith, Forrest White, Ken White, Rev. Allee Willcox, Alice Williams, Kris Wise, Rev. Sarah Wise, Larry Young

A RESOLUTION TO PROVIDE GUIDANCE AND ENSURE ECONOMIC EQUITY IN FINANCIAL, PROPERTY & REAL ESTATE TRANSACTIONS INVOLVING AFRICAN AMERICAN AND ETHNIC CHURCHES

PREFACE: David Scott, author of the article, "*A Primer on UMC Assets*," makes this observation, "The church is a mix of the human and the divine. We pursue heavenly ends, but we use and must use earthly ends to pursue them." This quote sets the stage for this resolution that is centered on equity and ecclesiology. More specifically, how do we ensure that African American churches in the Florida United Methodist Conference (FLUMC) are afforded opportunities to attain equity in leveraging their economic resources to refresh and revitalize ministries, missional engagement, and discipleship? The focus on equity is essential to addressing historical inequities in the structure, location and provision of resources impacting African American United Methodist Churches before and since the 1968 merger.

As United Methodists, we are committed to a clear set of Social Principles, one of which speaks to our responsibility to the Social Community. An excerpt from the Social Community Principle compels us to address and redress issues of "...disparate treatment and lack of full access and equity in resources, opportunities, and participation in the Church and in society based on race or ethnicity. [...] We commit as the Church to move beyond symbolic expressions and representative models that do not challenge unjust systems of power and access."

The history of Black congregations in the Methodist church is fraught with trauma and structural inequity. A 2018 article from the United Methodist News recounts the fractured history of race and discrimination in the Methodist Church:

"It was an earlier 1939 merger that created The Methodist Church from the Methodist Episcopal Church, Methodist Episcopal Church South, and Methodist Protestant Church. The Southern church only agreed to union after a compromise created a jurisdiction based exclusively on race — not geography. Nineteen black annual conferences of the Methodist Episcopal Church were placed in the Central Jurisdiction and the white conferences were placed in five regional jurisdictions. (Seventeen of the 19 black conferences voted against the 1939 Plan of Union)."

WHEREAS, according to Black Methodists for Church Renewal (BMCR) there are more than 2,400 black United Methodist congregations and approximately 500,000 African American members in the United States. Let us examine the case of one of the Conference's most long-standing African American congregations – Ebenezer United Methodist Church.

WHEREAS, the Rev. Dr. Aaron D. Hall, Sr., was the youngest District Superintendent in the Central Jurisdiction and continued as a leading figure in the newly reorganized Florida Annual Conference and served for 33 years as the Senior Pastor at Ebenezer United Methodist Church. Founded in 1898, Ebenezer was one of the leading African American United Methodist churches in its community, in the District and in the Conference for many, many years after the

merger. Originally founded in Miami's historic Overtown community, in 1973, Ebenezer left its church building on N.W. 3rd Avenue and relocated to the Allapattah community joining two other congregations – one White, one Hispanic - at the Allapattah United Methodist Church. Overtime as White families left the inner city, and the church, Ebenezer became the primary custodian of the property. By the 2000's the Church had accumulated a substantial amount of debt, mostly related to the ministry protection insurance and other property related challenges involved in the upkeep and maintenance of a 25,000+ square feet edifice. Seeking relief, in 2006-07 a former Church Pastor met with the former Bishop and the Extended Cabinet – the administration in place at the time -- for a remedy to alleviate the church of its mounting debt. Promises were made but ultimately went unfulfilled and likely not well documented. Now, the church is on the precipice of praying and planning for the future of its property that will impact generations to come. Ebenezer is no doubt not the only black or ethnic church facing such a fateful decision. As such the church serves as a symbol of the legacy and the challenges black United Methodist Churches face as they look toward the future while attempting to overcome and address the vestiges of discrimination which created the economic fragility and instability many black churches continue to experience. The work of the Conference is to ensure that the future and circumstances of black and ethnic churches reflect the Social Principles the global church espouses; that we become an exemplar for equity.

WHEREAS, in 2018 the Eastern Pennsylvania Conference significant efforts were undertaken to address the financial inequities black congregations face by waiving all ministry protection costs which pose major financial hardships to black churches. The FLUMC should endeavor to emulate this process as there may be evidence of practices within our conference regarding the burdensome costs black congregations continue to face in maintaining large buildings which formerly belonged to white congregations prior to, and just after, the 1968 merger.

WHEREAS, The United Methodist Church, FLUMC, is promoting "People Over Property", an examination of the role of church buildings and properties in the mission of making and winning disciples for Jesus Christ. Many of our older church buildings are showing signs of age and the cost of maintaining, upkeep and renovation is taxing and straining on diminishing congregations and church budgets.

WHEREAS, the racial wealth gap continues to impact and suppress the income levels of blacks in the U.S., and therefore negatively impact stewardship efforts at black churches. According to the Brookings Institution, at \$171,000, the net worth of a typical white family is nearly ten times greater than that of a Black family (\$17,150) in 2016. Further, inheritance and other forms of wealth transfer account for more of the racial wealth gap than any other demographic and socioeconomic indicators.

WHEREAS, most clergy and lay leaders lack the experience and knowledge to manage real estate matters without significant education and guidance, a reality that is amplified in a 2021 article by Rick Reinhard which states,

“...clergy and lay leaders are not equipped — and sometimes less than

interested — in dealing with church real estate. Seminaries, like many institutes of higher learning, prepare students intellectually but not pragmatically, especially in matters involving property. Lay leaders often try to apply wisdom about their home ownership, but often those lessons do not apply. Similarly, clergy and lay leaders often find themselves debating moral and sentimental issues regarding property rather than tackling practical, often financial, issues.”

WHEREAS, the FLUMC membership is more than 70 percent white and as such the Conference must prioritize the preservation, vitality, and financial sustainability of black United Methodist congregations. In this period of racial reckoning, FLUMC leadership has begun an internal examination of racism and its ills, through the lens of anti-racism. This examination must extend to recognizing and reforming the church’s role in sustaining systems of oppression that limited opportunities for black Methodists in the Florida Conference.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, the Conference commits to working collaboratively and expeditiously with African American United Methodist Churches, to conduct a review the financial status of the churches, inclusive of market appraisal of properties under the churches’ jurisdiction, as part of a multi-pronged strategy to create a more equitable process for analyzing and managing real estate opportunities, contracts, agreements, and transactions involving black church properties, including:

- An assertive commitment to design protocols from interested congregations to receive the necessary funding and administrative access and support to review all current and prospective real estate and related financial transactions to ensure that black and ethnic congregations are granted the support, expertise, and flexibility needed to manage these transactions according to generally accepted business practices and according to the provisions of the *Book of Discipline, Section VI, Paragraph 2541, Incorporated Local Church Property - Sale, Transfer, Lease or Mortgage*, which requires the receipt of *fair market value* for church properties, inclusive of partnerships or collaborations where churches may be displaced and/or relocated from use of the majority square footage of the church building and/or related properties.
- Recognizing the widening of the wealth gap in the United States, that also impacts the financial capacity of congregations, the FLUMC must closely examine and develop an Equity Rubric, developed along with the appropriate experts in finance, real estate, business, law, and social justice, with concomitant input from black and ethnic congregations to ensure that all property transactions are fair, equitable and do not further the economic inequities that have systemically hampered and limited the missional engagements of black and ethnic congregations. This work should also be reflected and translated into curriculum to be taught in United Methodist Seminaries for the educational benefit of seminary students and local pastors through continuing education programs. The Equity Rubric should be developed by the Bishop’s Anti-

Racism Task Force and should include subject matter experts from Historically Black College & University faculty in relevant disciplines, or African American faculty (or faculty representing the majority demographic of the congregation), in relevant disciplines, from Florida Colleges or Universities in closer proximity to the congregation pursuing the consulting support

- A commitment to the production and dissemination of an annual Equity Report Card to be shared at each Annual Conference conveying the results of this effort (which may also include other equity initiatives taking place within the Conference). The Equity Report Card will be created, reviewed and disseminated by the Bishop's Anti-Racism Task Force and presented at the Annual Conference starting in 2023.
- And lastly, be it further resolved since as a Conference and a denomination still pending the results of General Conference that is expected to impact church property issues and involve financial remuneration due to or expected from the FLUMC, commits to dedicating equitable resources and to ensuring equitable results in real estate transactions for black churches and/or congregations of color as compared to similar transactions at White United Methodist churches/congregations. This must involve the allocation of financial management guidance and consultation with all documentation being provided to, and available exclusively, to the affected congregation(s).

As we move into the future with renewed hope and a keen focus on the work of anti-racism in the Florida Annual Conference, let us remember the history and experiences of our African American and ethnic congregations. Let us endeavor to do no harm, and fully consider the importance of the people *and* their property. As Florida Conference leaders let us endeavor to seek new ways and opportunities for collaboration and partnership which will help to facilitate renewal and new growth for all ministries, but especially our African American and ethnic congregations.

In the wake of this unprecedented pandemic all churches now have the opportunity to see themselves anew and to restructure their relationship with their buildings and properties, and to redirect resources toward creating the church of the future. With, or without, a traditional church edifice, black and ethnic congregations deserve every opportunity to leverage their properties and use the proceeds from any beneficial real estate transaction to leave a reinvigorated legacy for the future.

Financial Impact:

The opportunity will be prioritized for African American and/or congregations of color, and the cost for each engagement (to include a Discovery Study inclusive of Real Estate Property Analysis, Development & Market Analysis, RFP/RFQ Development, and Revenue Generation Recommendations) would be approximately \$10,000-\$12,000 per congregation. Economies of scale are possible for churches with similar demographics, property characteristics and/or geographic settings. The costs for each engagement will come from, but not limited to, the Episcopal Fund and Congregational Vitality, and allotted to the Anti-Racism Task Force for

payment of consultancy services to fulfill the components/deliverables of this Resolution.

Respectfully Submitted,

H. Leigh Toney, Co-Leader, Lay Servant & Anti-Racism Representative
Ebenezer United Methodist Church, Miami, Florida

Approved with the unanimous vote of the Ebenezer United Methodist Church Administrative Council on Sunday, January 30, 2022.

Works Cited:

- (Source: <https://um-insight.net/in-the-church/umc-future/a-primer-on-umc-assets-concluding-thoughts/>) • (Source: <https://www.umnews.org/en/news/50-years-on-central-jurisdictions-shadow-looms>) • (Source: <https://www.inquirer.com/philly/news/united-methodist-church-forgives-debt-apology-20180719.html>) • (Source: <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/up-front/2020/02/27/examining-the-black-white-wealth-gap/>) • (Source: <https://religionunplugged.com/news/2021/6/10/the-united-methodist-church-must-tackle-its-looming-real-estate-crisis>)

RESOLUTION: BECOMING ACQUAINTED WITH LOCAL CRISIS PREGNANCY CENTERS WITHIN THE FLORIDA ANNUAL CONFERENCE

Whereas our United Methodist Discipline, on Paragraph 161, Section K states, “Young adult women disproportionately face situations in which they feel that they have no choice due to financial, educational, relational, or other circumstances beyond their control. The Church and its local congregations and campus ministries should be in the forefront of supporting existing ministries and developing new ministries that help such women in their communities. They should also support those crisis pregnancy centers and pregnancy resource centers that compassionately help women explore all options related to unplanned pregnancy. We particularly encourage the Church, the government, and social service agencies to support and facilitate the option of adoption. (See ¶ 161M.) We affirm and encourage the Church to assist the ministry of crisis pregnancy centers and pregnancy resource centers that compassionately help women find feasible alternatives to abortion.”

Whereas, as an example of the ministries crisis pregnancy centers engage in, The CareNet Manasota Pregnancy Center of Bradenton, Florida provided, from Jan 2021-Dec 2021, the following services: Source: Ms. Bittany Keller, Director of Client Services at Care Net Manasota Pregnancy Center in Bradenton Florida

- Eighty-two (recorded) babies born by pregnant mothers who came to the center.
- Twelve commitments to Christ by both male and female clients.
- Eighteen decisions by pregnant women, to carry their child to full term and delivery.
- 1,359 total appointments. Services include, free ultrasounds, educational parenting and pregnancy classes, receiving of material items, free pregnancy tests, post-abortive and miscarriage support, etc.
- Partnered with a Professional/ Licensed counseling service in April 2021 which uses the crisis pregnancy building, offering clients professional counseling free of charge.
- Abstinence program - Designed to educate individuals on sexual abstinence before marriage, and the importance of such decisions as could lead to Sexually Transmitted Diseases, Sexually Transmitted Infections, and potential pregnancies.
- Resume’ and Job assistance - whereby the client is assisted in creating a professional resume’, seeking potential job opportunities, preparing for interviews, and securing employment.
- Locking arms with other community programs and resources such as Better Together, Beds for Kids, Loving Hands, Turning Points, Solve Maternity Homes, Salvation Army, and several more organizations to ensure that individual and family needs are met.

Therefore, be it resolved that United Methodists of the Florida Annual Conference are encouraged to visit and get to know the people and ministries of the Carenet pregnancy centers in their local area.

The implementation and distribution of this Resolution is not foreseen to have any financial impact to the Florida Annual Conference.

This resolution is presented by the Reverend Doctor Gene Maddox, of Oneco United Methodist Church of the Florida Conference of the United Methodist Church.