

# A Resource for talking about



# PEACE AND JUSTICE

**And what does the Lord require of you?  
But to do justice, to love kindness,  
and to walk humbly with your God.  
Micah 6:8**

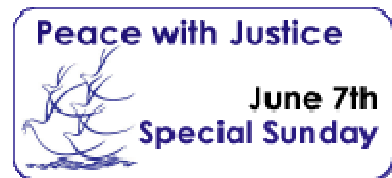
As people of faith, we struggle to respond to God's call for justice and peace.

What does it mean to *do justice* anyway?

How do we know if our church is *doing justice*?

This resource is devoted to understanding what justice is, how justice differs from charity/missions, and how our churches can be engaged in social justice ministries.

**DON'T FORGET TO ORDER YOUR  
MATERIALS FOR "PEACE WITH JUSTICE"  
SUNDAY! [www.umc-gbcs.org](http://www.umc-gbcs.org)**



## Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) about JUSTICE

### **1. What's the difference between charity and justice?**

It's not always easy to determine the difference between charity and justice. However, one helpful way to think about it is that charity seeks to alleviate the *effects* of injustice (hunger, homelessness, poverty) while justice seeks to alleviate the *causes* of injustice (corporate greed that denies workers a fair wage, lack of healthcare, inadequate access to resources).

In short, charity feeds the hungry and justice asks *why* people are hungry. Both are important and should be attended to by communities of faith. However, sometimes churches engage in acts of charity without also engaging in acts of justice.

William Sloane Coffin says this about charity and justice:

“Had I but one wish for the churches of America I think it would be that they come to see the difference between charity and justice. Charity is a matter of personal attributes, justice a matter of public policy. Charity seeks to alleviate the effects of injustice; justice seeks to eliminate the causes of it. Charity in no way affects the status quo, while justice leads inevitably to political confrontation.”

Walter Brueggeman says:

“Justice is to sort out what belongs to whom, and to return it to them.”

## **2. My church has a Missions Committee. Isn't that enough?**

Missions is an integral part of what it means to be United Methodist. Methodist churches have a long and impressive history of doing mission work.

However, much of our mission work would probably count as charity and not justice. We need to prayerfully consider how we can engage in alleviating the immediate needs of those who are suffering (charity) *as well as* work toward transforming the systems and structures that *cause* people to suffer (justice).

Bono, lead singer of *U2* and human rights advocate, says this:

“It's not about charity after all, is it? It is about justice. Let me repeat that; it's not about charity, it's about justice. And that's too bad. Because you're good at charity. Americans, like the Irish, are good at it. We all like to give and we give a lot, even those who can't afford it. But justice is a high standard. Africa makes a fool of our idea of justice...because there's no way we can look at what's happening in Africa and, if we're honest, conclude that deep down, we really accept that Africans are equal to us. In Africa, 150,000 lives are lost every month. A tsunami every month. And it's a completely avoidable catastrophe. It's annoying, but justice and equality really are mates, aren't they? Justice always wants to hang out with equality. And equality is a real pain.”

## **3. How do I know if my congregation is doing justice work?**

Go to the Church and Society website <http://rncumc.org/rmc/csn.html>. Click on “Resources.” Click on “Is your church a Peace & Justice church?”



#### **4. What can my congregation do to move toward being a Peace and Justice church?**

It's important to remember that movements don't happen over night. Take baby steps. Pray. Get together with a few people in your congregation who are passionate about justice work and brainstorm.



Use only fair trade coffees and teas at coffee hour and church events. Educate people about fair trade. Refer to [www.equalexchange.com](http://www.equalexchange.com) or [www.umcor.org](http://www.umcor.org) (coffee ministries).

Show "Movies with a Message" on regular movie nights (or afternoons). Discuss themes of justice in the movie. (See our suggestions for movies on the website)

Offer a class on the Social Principles. (See our web site for power point and leader's guide in addition to the 2004 and 2008 SP)

Have an advocacy Sunday where folks can write letters to representatives. "Bread for the World" offering of letters is one example, but you can create your own around issues that your congregation feels strongly about such as health care, immigration, the death penalty, climate change, hate crimes.

#### **5. Isn't doing justice "political?" I thought the church wasn't supposed to be political.**

*Social Justice is a part of who we are as Methodists!*

"The United Methodist Church has a long history of concern for social justice. Its members have often taken forthright positions on controversial issues involving Christian principles. Early Methodists expressed their opposition to the slave trade, to smuggling, and to the cruel treatment of prisoners.

[The Social Principles] are a call to faithfulness and are intended to be instructive and persuasive in the best of the prophetic spirit." 2009-1012 *Social Principles of the United Methodist Church*, Preface

*Social Justice is biblical!*

"Let justice roll down like mighty waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream."  
Amos 5:24

"Mercy in God, Mercy and Truth have met together, justice and peace have kissed each other."  
Psalm 85

“The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor”

Luke 4:18-19

*Social Justice is a matter of faith!*

William Sloan Coffin says:

“The separation of Church and State is a sound doctrine, but it points to an organizational separation. It is not designed to separate Christians from their politics. For our faith certainly should inform our common life, as well as our personal, more private lives.”

“Public good doesn’t automatically follow from private virtue. A person’s moral character, sterling though it may be, is insufficient to service the cause of justice, which is to challenge the status quo, to try to make what’s legal more moral, to speak truth to power, and to take personal or concerted action against evil, whether in personal or systemic form.”