RESOLUTIONS AND PETITIONS
PETITIONS/RESOLUTIONS FOR ANNUAL CONFERENCE ACTION:

PETITION AC #2007-201

ENSURING YOUTH PARTICIPATION AT FUTURE SESSIONS OF ANNUAL CONFERENCE

WHEREAS the New York Conference has consistently expressed its support of youth ministry and its support of youth leadership in all facets of our Conference life, particularly as we endeavor to live out our lives together as expressed in our Conference’s new Vision Statement; and

WHEREAS annual conference membership shall include at least one youth (12-17 years of age at the time of election) and one young adult (18-30 years of age) from each district “to be selected in such a manner as may be determined by the annual conference.” ¶ 32 of the 2004 Book of Discipline; and

WHEREAS our Conference has, in the past, experienced periods of very active and meaningful involvement by many youth at and during the annual session of Conference which has deeply enriched the life of our Conference and our life together; and

WHEREAS youth involvement has dropped dramatically during the last 10 years and has become a concern to most of us; and

WHEREAS the New York Conference Council on Youth Ministry has struggled with this issue and has sought to answer the call for meaningful youth involvement and to find resolution to the various barriers that prevent identification of interested youth, timely election of those youth, and the means to actually attend annual conference; CCYM has created and proposes the below process as a means to bring resolution to this problem;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the New York Annual Conference directs that the following process shall be instituted concerning the at-large youth members to annual conference:

1. **Election:** The youth delegate at-large to annual conference from each district shall be nominated and elected by that District’s Council on Youth Ministry (DCYM). In those Districts, which do not yet have an organized District Council on Youth Ministry, the youth shall be nominated and elected by that District’s Council on Ministry (DCOM) until such time as a DCYM has been organized.

2. **Time Of Election:** The youth shall be elected by each district’s DCYM (or DCOM if there is no DCYM) by or before February of each year for the session of annual conference, which occurs in that year.
3. **Reporting To Conference Secretary:** It shall be the responsibility of the Chairperson of the DCYM/DCOM to report to the Conference Secretary the name, address, and telephone number of the youth so elected and shall report said information by or before February 10 of each year.

4. **Registration Information:** It shall be the responsibility of the Chairperson of the DCYM (or DCOM where there is no DCYM) to obtain from the NYAC Web Page or from the Conference Secretary the registration form and/or registration packet for the youth to timely register for annual conference.

5. **Payment:** The cost of registration for the youth elected pursuant to the above process shall be paid by that youth’s District for the 2008 Annual Conference and shall thereafter be included in the budget request of Connectional Ministries and shown as a separate line item in the budget prepared set forth by the Conference Council on Finances and Administration to be approved by the Annual Conference.

6. **Number Of Youth Elected For The 2008 Session Of Annual Conference:** The above process shall take effect immediately and there shall be one youth elected from each District pursuant to the above procedure for the 2008 annual conference session whether or not that District has already elected one youth for the 2008 session of annual conference during their 2007 District Conference (those Districts will be blessed by having more than one youth at-large from their Districts).

7. **Number Of Youth Elected For The 2009 Session Of Annual Conference And Each Session Thereafter:** There shall be two youth elected through the above process for the 2009 session of Annual Conference and for each annual conference session thereafter; and

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that the New York Annual Conference encourages local churches, especially churches that have multiple lay members to annual conference, to give serious consideration to electing youth and young adults as one of their local church’s lay members to annual conference.

Respectfully submitted by The New York Conference Council on Youth Ministry: Rebekah Forni, Chairperson; Natassia Velez, Vice-Chairperson; Jessie Moriarty, Member; Beth Capen, Adult Co-Coordinator; Christie House, Adult Co-Coordinator
PETITION AC #2007-202

SCHEDULING ANNUAL CONFERENCE SESSIONS FOR FULL LAY PARTICIPATION

WHEREAS, the New York Annual Conference (NYAC) has consistently expressed the importance of youth and young adult members to have a meaningful presence in the United Methodist Church, and its decision making processes, including the annual conference sessions; and

WHEREAS, the NYAC has reconfirmed, through our Vision Statement, our commitment to be engaged in “building up a healthy body of Christ”; and

WHEREAS, scheduling the New York Annual Conference session from Wednesday through Saturday excludes many laity who are in school or work, especially youth and young adults, from attending the legislative sections and many other significant portions of the annual conference; and

WHEREAS, doing such we are (a) prohibiting youth from participating in the business of the conference, (b) preventing youth and the Conference Council on Youth Ministries (CCYM) from participating in the various outreach opportunities afforded at annual conference; and (c) limiting opportunities for CCYM and conference youth to raise money for the Youth Service Fund during the conference; and

WHEREAS, the Wednesday through Saturday conference schedule requires many lay people who work Monday through Friday to take three days off from work rather than two days and likewise results in non-participation of most high school youth; and

WHEREAS, when Annual Conference was held Thursday through Sunday then youth attendance and participation for the full duration of the conference was at its highest, but has now become virtually non-existent since instituting the current Wednesday-through-Saturday schedule; and

WHEREAS, the New York Annual Conference has once again taken active steps to include youth in the New York Annual Conference, as expressed through our Bishop’s call for 1,000 youth to attend the Saturday session of the 2007 Annual Conference;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT the NYAC requests that the Bishop please schedule future annual conferences to begin on Thursday and end on Sunday, commencing with the 2008 Annual Conference.

Submitted By:  The New York Conference Council on Youth Ministry: Rebekah Forni, Chairperson; Natassia Velez, Vice-Chairperson; Jessie Moriarty, Member; Beth Capen, Adult Co-Coordinator; Christie House, Adult Co-Coordinator
PETITION AC #2007-203

PROPOSAL FOR CONNECTIONAL MINISTRIES VISION TABLE
GUIDELINES

WHEREAS, prior to 1996, The Book of Discipline always had a section that detailed the responsibilities of the Annual Conference Council on Ministries (now known as the Connectional Ministries Vision Table);

And, WHEREAS, in 1996, General Conference decided to simply reference the Annual Conference bodies to their General Conference counterparts for those same disciplinary responsibilities;

And, WHEREAS, in 2004, General Conference approved legislation to the General Church structure, relative to eliminating the General Council on Ministries (GCOM), given that the General Church did not have the same need as Annual Conferences for a ministry coordinating body;

And, WHEREAS the 2004 General Conference failed to reinsert language regarding responsibilities of the Annual Conference counterpart to the GCOM;

And, WHEREAS, it is important to have written guidelines for the CMVT of the NYAC;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the New York Annual Conference adopt the following paragraphs which delineate the work and function of the Connectional Ministries Vision Table (formerly the Conference Council on Ministries)

The CMVT will focus and guide the mission and ministry of The United Methodist Church within its boundaries by: 1. envisioning the ministries necessary to live out the mission of the church in and through the annual conference; 2. creating and nurturing relationships and connections among the local, district, annual conference, and general church ministries; 3. providing encouragement, coordination, and support for the ministries of nurture, outreach, and witness in districts and congregations for the transformation of the world; 4. ensuring the alignment of the total resources of the annual conference to its mission; 5. developing and strengthening ethnic ministries, including ethnic local churches and concerns; 6. providing for advocacy and monitoring functions to ensure that the church is consistent with its stated values.  

1. Personnel — The CMVT shall employ staff to fulfill its purposes. Insofar as possible, CMVT staff and consultants shall include women, racial and ethnic persons, lay and clergy. Ordained clergy on the staff are subject to being appointed by the presiding bishop in consultation with the Executive Committee of the CMVT.
a) Director of Connectional Ministries—The CMVT will have a director of connectional ministries to focus and guide the mission and ministry of The United Methodist Church within the annual conference and who will serve as an ex-officio member of CMVT. The director may be lay or clergy.

i) The director shall serve as an officer of the annual conference and shall sit with the cabinet when the cabinet considers matters relating to coordination, implementation, or administration of the conference program, and other matters as the cabinet and director may determine.

ii) In partnership with the bishop and cabinet and the elected leadership of the conference, the director of connectional ministries shall have the following primary responsibilities:

- (1) to serve as steward of the vision of the annual conference, including the development, clarification, interpretation, and embodiment of the vision, and encouragement of emerging ministries;
- (2) to serve as leader of the continuous process of transformation and renewal necessary for the annual conference to be faithful to our Christian identity in a changing world;
- (3) to ensure alignment of the total resources of the conference to its vision;
- (4) to ensure the connections among the local, district, annual conference, and general church ministries for the purpose of networking, resourcing, and communicating their shared ministry;
- (5) to ensure initiatives and programs of the CMVT are carried out.

b) Direction of Communications—There shall be a director of communications to focus and guide the communications ministry of The United Methodist Church within the annual conferences.

i) The director shall have the following primary responsibilities:

- (1) To help identify, equip, and coordinate the work of a communications team (staff and/ or volunteer);
- (2) To develop and guide the implementation of strategies for effective communication among annual conference agencies, districts, and local churches;
- (3) To promote and coordinate activities to enhance the awareness and reputation of the Church;

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2 2004 BOD, Para. 607
(4) To help guide the strategy to interpret the conference budget and other benevolences;

(5) To provide guidance and training in effective communications for annual conference, district, and/or local church leaders;

(6) To lead the conference in developing effective relationships with the news media within the annual conference;

(7) To guide conference leaders in developing and implementing an effective communication strategy under the connectional ministry;

(8) To lead the conference in using new and emerging technologies as tools for ministry;

(9) To provide the connectional relationship between the conference and United Methodist Communications.³

2. Membership — The membership of the Annual Conference CMVT shall consist of the presiding bishop; the district superintendents, district COM chairpersons, one representative of each conference agency or commission; the conference secretary; two representatives of the conference youth organization; two representatives of the conference United Methodist Women, one of whom shall be the president; two representatives of conference United Methodist Men, one of whom shall be the president; two young adults to serve at large; the conference lay leader; one additional lay person from each district; the consultants of age-level ministries; representatives of ethnic and language ministries; representatives of active, ongoing and emerging ministries; and such additional members as the Annual Conference may determine. Consideration shall be given to inclusiveness.

The person or persons serving as members of the General Boards and agencies (such as The Connectional Table), of the United Methodist Church shall be member(s) of the Annual Conference Connectional Ministries Vision Table as full voting member(s).

The following shall be members of the CMVT without vote: salaried and volunteer Annual Conference staff, the conference treasurer, and one or more members of the Council on Finance and Administration.

3. Officers — The officers of the council shall be a chairperson, an incoming chairperson, an immediate past chairperson, a secretary, a budget chairperson, an incoming budget chairperson, an immediate past budget chairperson and such other officers as the CMVT shall determine. They shall be elected by the CMVT. The CM administrative assistant shall be the secretary of the CMVT.

³ 2004 BOD, Para. 608 (modified)
Persons elected for the leadership team will serve three years, one year in each position (rotating from incoming, to chair or budget chair, then to immediate past).

4. **Executive Committee** — There shall be an executive committee consisting of the officers, the bishop, at least one district superintendent chosen by the Cabinet, the conference lay leader, the Director of Connectional Ministries, the chairpersons of the District Committees on Ministries, and other members as the CMVT may determine. Approximately one-half of the members of the executive committee shall be laypersons. Consideration shall be given to inclusiveness.

5. Relationships — The CMVT shall have the following relationships, including the amenabilities indicated:
   
   **a)** Between sessions of the Annual Conference, all Annual Conference program agencies shall cooperate with and be amenable to the CMVT of the Annual Conference in matters relating to development, implementation, and administration of the program.

   **b)** All Annual Conference agencies shall submit the elements of program, which are to be promoted in, supported by, or implemented by the local churches of the conference to the CMVT for consideration, coordinating, and calendaring prior to presentation to the local churches. The CMVT may request district or Annual Conference agencies to implement a program for the entire conference.

   **c)** The Connectional Ministries staff shall be responsible, in cooperation with the District superintendents, for the implementation of the conference program.

6. **Responsibilities** — The responsibilities of the Annual Conference Connectional Ministries Vision Table are:

   **a)** To describe, coordinate, and organize opportunities to respond to the missional priority, should any be adopted by the General Conference.

   **b)** To assist the Annual Conference and local churches in discovering their mission and to determine program emphases which will enable them to fulfill their mission.

   **c)** To receive program recommendations from the local churches, district and Annual Conference agencies, and the Jurisdictional and General Church; to evaluate these recommendations and to formulate a coordinated conference program to be presented to the Annual Conference for consideration.

   **d)** To provide staff personnel and necessary resources for the implementation and administration of the program adopted by the conference.
e) To receive and coordinate the budget requests of all conference program agencies and to determine priorities to make budget recommendations to the Conference Council on Finance and Administration.

f) To cooperate in ecumenical projects and events which have been approved by the Annual Conference.

g) To interpret the programs of the general Church, the Jurisdictional or Central Conference, and the Annual Conference to the local churches; and to promote all General and Annual Conference benevolences.

h) To promote principles of good communication within the conference and to provide two-way channels of communication among Annual Conference agencies, district Councils on Ministries, and local churches.

i) To provide for relationships with all news media within the conference; to lead the conference in making creative use of television and telecommunication ministries; to provide training in communication; and to perform public relations functions for the conference.

j) To give leadership in research and planning for the Annual Conference.

k) To provide guidance and training for district and/or local church leaders.

l) To provide linkage with general program agencies and provide names of Annual Conference agencies and persons who carry program responsibilities related to each general program agency.

m) To receive a report of the NYAC member to The Connectional Table.  

Signed: Lucy E. Jones, Sara Thompson Tweedy, Robert Hunsinger, Annette Griffith and Inday Day on behalf of the Connectional Ministries Vision Table

PETITION AC #2007-303

THE CHURCH’S ROLE IN PARTISAN POLITICAL ACTIVITY

WHEREAS, the American electorate is highly polarized and divided on a great number of political issues; and

WHEREAS, the members of the United Methodist Church, like the rest of American society, have a wide range of views on these difficult issues; and

WHEREAS, divergent thinking on many issues reflects United Methodists’ theological and denominational heritage, including this statement of John Wesley: “As to all opinions which do not strike at the root of Christianity, we think and let think;” and

4 From 1992 BOD with modifications
WHEREAS, the United Methodist Church has implemented the Igniting Ministries advertising strategy through which it promises to be a denomination of “open hearts, open minds and open doors” and that Methodists “may not all believe exactly the same thing, but the people of The United Methodist Church believe in God and each other;”

WHEREAS, Jesus Christ calls his people to be peacemakers and to reconcile the world, not to add to polarization and division; and

WHEREAS, several petitions passed by the 2006 New York Annual Conference body take sharply partisan political stands (particularly Petitions No. 2006-305 Supporting Latin American Democracies, 2006-308 Iraq War Withdrawal and 2006-309 Impeachment of the President of the United States) that, through their divisiveness, jeopardize the Church’s ability to “embody a beloved community of hope” and “build up a healthy body of Christ.”

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the congregations of the Upper Catskills Larger Parish of the United Methodist Church declare that they believe the New York Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church to be in error in this entrance into partisan political activity; and we call upon the New York Annual Conference to return to its appropriate role of reconciliation and step back from the partisan political arena to pursue its proper ministry of building the Kingdom of God through the life and mission of its many local congregations.

This resolution was referred to “Church and Society” for further action/consideration.

Approved February 15, 2007, by the Upper Catskills Larger Parish Council, and the Administrative Councils of Andes United Methodist Church, Fleischmanns United Methodist Church, Halcott United Methodist Churches, Margaretville United Methodist Church, and Roxbury United Methodist Church

PETITION AC #2007-307

END THE DEATH PENALTY

WHEREAS, 2006 was the 50th Anniversary of United Methodist Opposition to the Death Penalty, officially stating at the 1956 UM General Conference, “We stand for the application of the redemptive principle to the treatment of offenders…to reform of penal and correctional methods…. We deplore the use of capital punishment”;

WHEREAS, we believe the death penalty devalues lives sacred to God and seriously impairs opportunities of Christ to redeem, restore and transform all persons and for the offender to experience and express remorse;
WHEREAS, since 1973, 123 persons on death row death have been found innocent and exonerated and others have had their sentence reduced because the death sentence was unwarranted;

WHEREAS, needs of the loved ones of a murder victim are not best served by a process that perpetuates violence and promotes revenge, nor is there “closure” in an execution;

WHEREAS, the stigma on a family of a person on death row or who is executed can have lasting, detrimental effects, especially on the child of the one incarcerated;

WHEREAS, some who are involved in death penalty cases—carrying out their civic or professional responsibilities (including jurors, attorneys, judges, prison personnel, medical personnel)—have reported being traumatized in their part in the killing of another human being;

WHEREAS, resources of personnel and money from investigation to execution could be better utilized to relieve human suffering;

WHEREAS, the judgment in Matthew 25 describes acts of justice and kindness as if done to Jesus (Matthew 25:40)

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that we reaffirm our denomination’s opposition to the death penalty.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:

• that we will speak up against the death penalty, urging the elimination of the death penalty from all criminal codes

• that we will encourage and educate so that transformative love is practiced in the church’s ministry to/with victims of crime and their loved ones, and offenders and their families;

• that, on the passage of this resolution, a minute of silence will be observed to remember murder victims and their loved ones, followed by a minute of silence to pray for persons presently on death row and their families;

• that the Bishop of the New York Annual Conference and the Board of Church and Society are urged to write (or e-mail) the Governors, Lt. Governors, and Attorneys General of Connecticut and New York and legislators who are within the bounds of NYAC with a statement saying that we have approved this resolution along with a copy of the resolution; individual United Methodists are encouraged to do the same;

• that the Conference Board of Church and Society will maintain a list of persons able to lead congregations in education and dialogue about the death penalty, and will make the contact information available to the conference by promoting use of those persons.
Submitted by the Conference Board of Church and Society. Signed by the following members of the Board: Jeff Wells, chairperson; John Collins; Ann Craig; Bryan Hooper; Louise Stowe-Johns. Also signed by Mary Carbee, Chairperson of Church Council, First UMC, Amityville, NY.

PETITION AC #2007-308

A PETITION TO END THE WAR IN IRAQ

Methodist Church in New Haven, Connecticut praises the action of the Council of Bishops, adopting the Resolution on the War in Iraq in October of 2005, which declares;

“WHEREAS, the prophet Micah reminds us that God calls nations to ‘beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears to pruning hooks,’ and that nations will no longer “lift up sword against nation, and neither shall they learn war any more” (Micah 4:3); and

WHEREAS, peacemaking is a sacred calling of the Lord Jesus Christ; and,

WHEREAS, The Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church 2004 (Para. 165.C) states, “We believe war is incompatible with the teachings and example of Christ;” and,

WHEREAS, the continuing loss of Iraqi civilian lives, especially children, and the increasing death toll among United States and coalition military grieves the heart of God; and,

WHEREAS, the premises advanced by the United States government for engaging in this war, namely, the presumption of weapons of mass destruction and alleged connection between Al Qaeda and Iraq have not been verified; and,

WHEREAS, the cycle of violence in which the United States is engaged has created a context for the denigration of human dignity and gross violations of human rights of prisoners of war.”

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED: that First & Summerfield United Methodist Church in New Haven, Connecticut petitions New York Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church, which includes approximately two thirds of the State of Connecticut to call for the immediate withdrawal process of all United States troops and all coalition forces from Iraq;

THEREFORE BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED: that the New York Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church supports an Iraqi-led peace process, including a peace conference to shape a post-occupation transition and an international peacekeeping presence;
THEREFORE BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED: that the New York Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church calls the United States government to increase support for US veterans of the Iraq war;

THEREFORE BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED: that each local church in the New York Annual Conference is strongly encouraged to send this resolution to President Bush, Vice President Cheney, United States Senators and United States Congressional Representatives.

Adopted at the Meeting of the Church Council, February 18, 2007 First & Summerfield United Methodist Church, New Haven, CT. Rev. Taka Ishii, Pastor; Rev. John Carr, Chair of the Church Council

PETITION AC #2007-309

SUPPORT THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A DEPARTMENT OF PEACE

WHEREAS Christ calls us to be peacemakers;

WHEREAS our Constitution is to “establish Justice”, “insure domestic Tranquility”, and “promote the general Welfare”;

WHEREAS bills have been introduced in both the House of Representatives (H.R. 808) and the Senate (Senate Bill 1756) to establish a Department of Peace at the cabinet level to research and facilitate nonviolent solutions to national and international conflict, to give assistance to state and county jurisdictions to do the same; and to create a Peace Academy as a sister organization to the U. S. Military Academy;

WHEREAS the General Conference of 2000 adopted a resolution (271) to “Enlarge the Cabinet of the President of the United States to Include a Secretary of Peace,” and in 2004 adopted a resolution (272) “Support for Development of U. S. Department of Peace”;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the New York Annual Conference endorses the creation of a Department of Peace

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Conference Board of Church and Society disseminate information about the bills; and,

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Bishop of the New York Annual Conference, the Board of Church and Society, and individual United Methodists are urged to write (or e-mail) U. S. Senators and Representatives from Connecticut or New York, within the bounds of the NYAC, to co-sponsor or support these bills.

Submitted by the NY Annual Conference Board of Church and Society. Signed by the following members of the Board: Jeff Wells, chairperson; Guy D’Angelo; Bryan Hooper; Steve Phillips; Louise Stowe-Johns. Also signed by: Mary Carbee, Chairperson of Church Council, First UMC, Amityville, NY.
PETITION AC #2007-311

GLOBAL WARMING AND NEW YORK ANNUAL CONFERENCE LOANS AND GRANTS

WHEREAS, religious organizations such as the Evangelical Environmental Network, the National Council of Churches Eco-Justice Working Group, and the United Methodist General Board of Church and Society view global climate change as one of the greatest threats to God’s Creation.

WHEREAS, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change declared in early 2007 that global warming was “unequivocal” and that human activity was “very likely” to blame for heat waves, extreme storms and droughts, as well as ocean warming and wind patterns.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the NYAC Committee on Parish Development consider favorably requests for loans and grants to local churches for retrofitting buildings to reduce contributions to global warming.

Submitted by the NYAC Board of Church and Society. Signed by the following members of the Board: Jeff Wells, chairperson; John Collins, Ann Craig, Guy D’Angelo, Steve Phillips

PETITION AC #2007-312

IMMIGRANT MINISTRIES IN THE NEW YORK ANNUAL CONFERENCE

Background:

101. These excerpts from a 2002 report, by Michael E. Fix, Randolph Capps, are based on a survey of 3,447 immigrant families (i.e., those with at least one foreign-born adult) conducted during late 1999 and early 2000 by the Urban Institute and the Survey Research Center of the University of California, Los Angeles. It was conducted in five languages, included respondents from over 100 countries, and had a strong response rate of 69%. The following data is excerpted to reflect the New York context.

102. Despite the large number of immigrant in the labor force, large numbers of immigrants and their families in New York have low incomes, lack health insurance, and are food insecure. The most powerful predictor of poverty and hardship is their limited English skills. One in nine U.S. residents and one in four low-wage workers is an immigrant. Most of the children in poor immigrant families are citizens.
103. The 1996 welfare reform act was designed to reduce welfare dependency by promoting work. The law restricted LEGAL immigrants’ access to Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) and related employment services; it also reduced their access to food stamps, Medicaid, and State health programs for low-income working families. Legal immigrants arriving after welfare reform’s enactment were eligible for fewer benefits than are those who arrived before enactment. Although some benefits have been restored to legal immigrant children, undocumented parents or families are often afraid to seek help and expose themselves to the INS.

104. In 1999-2000, 30% of immigrant families with children in New York and Los Angeles were poor; more than half had incomes below 200% of the poverty level. In both cities nearly 75% of low-income immigrant families included at least one working adult.

105. In New York, two-thirds of foreign-born adults could be classified as limited English proficient (LEP). One-quarter lacked a high school diploma. Low educational attainment and limited English proficiency are closely associated with low earnings, poverty, and hardship. Hardship was more closely associated with limited English proficiency than either legal status or period of arrival to the United States. Only 20% of food insecure immigrant families received food stamps during the year before the survey. Half of families receiving food stamps in 1996-97 were no longer receiving benefits in 1999-2000, while another quarter had their benefits reduced.

106. In New York City, 28% of non-citizen children and 8% of citizen children in immigrant families were uninsured, versus 6% of children in native citizen families in New York State. These findings suggest that health insurance rates for children depend on the citizenship and legal status of both children and their parents. The findings also suggest that the New York State Children’s Health Insurance Program had succeeded in enrolling large numbers of children in immigrant families.

107. Thirty-eight percent of immigrant adults in New York City lacked health insurance coverage—rates roughly triple those for native citizens in New York State and California. The primary reason for this gap was that immigrants were less likely to have job-based health insurance coverage. They were, however, as likely as natives to be enrolled in Medicaid.

108. In New York hardship and the need for benefits are more closely associated with limited English proficiency than with citizenship or legal status. Thus more effective English language instruction is an essential anti-poverty tool for working immigrant families. One strategy that might increase English language acquisition would be to give credit for English instruction under revised TANF work requirements. To read full article: [http://www.urban.org/url.cfm?ID=310566](http://www.urban.org/url.cfm?ID=310566)
WHEREAS, language proficiency is a high determiner of poverty among legal and undocumented immigrant families,

WHEREAS, the Bible exhorts us to welcome the stranger;

WHEREAS, New York has long been a gateway for immigrants, including many of our families;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the New York Annual Conference challenges local congregations to take the next step in addressing the needs of immigrants within their area and establish programs such as conversational English opportunities, GED preparation, or other programs as needed;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the District Councils on Ministries of the New York Annual Conference will survey congregations in their districts to determine how many programs serve immigrants within our boundaries and report these findings to the Conference Board of Church and Society;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Conference Board of Church and Society bring to the 2008 Annual Conference, recommendations and program strategies to increase English proficiency, GED, and other programs as indicated by the results of the survey and additional research into immigrant realities.

Submitted by the Methodist Federation for Social Action and Endorsed by the NYAC Board of Church and Society, Elizabeth Braddon, R. Randy Day, Edward C. Horne, Betsy Ingram, Jaewon Kim, James Veatch

PETITION AC #2007-313

TO SUPPORT COMPREHENSIVE IMMIGRATION REFORM

WHEREAS, The Hebrew Bible tells us: “The strangers who sojourn with you shall be to you as the natives among you, and you shall love them as yourself; for you were strangers in the land of Egypt (Leviticus 19:33-34).” In the New Testament, Jesus tells us to welcome the stranger (cf. Matthew 25:35), for “just as you did it to one of the least of these, who are members of my family, you did it to me.” (Matthew 25:40).”

WHEREAS, We, the undersigned concerned clergy members of the New York Annual Conference, call for immigration reform because each day in our congregations, service programs, health-care facilities, and schools we witness the human consequences of an outmoded system. We see and hear the suffering of immigrant families who have lost loved ones to death in the desert or immigrants themselves who have experienced exploitation in the workplace or abuse at the hands of unscrupulous smugglers and others. In our view, changes to the U.S. legal immigration system would help put an end to this suffering, which offends the dignity of all human beings. We call upon our elected officials to enact legislation that includes the following:
• An opportunity for hard-working immigrants who are already contributing to this country to come out of the shadows, regularize their status upon satisfaction of reasonable criteria and, over time, pursue an option to become lawful permanent residents and eventually United States citizens;

• Reforms in our family-based immigration system to significantly reduce waiting times for separated families who currently wait many years to be reunited;

• The creation of legal avenues for workers and their families who wish to migrate to the U.S. to enter our country and work in a safe, legal, and orderly manner with their rights fully protected; and

• Border protection policies that are consistent with humanitarian values and with the need to treat all individuals with respect, while allowing the authorities to carry out the critical task of identifying and preventing entry of terrorists and dangerous criminals, as well as pursuing the legitimate task of implementing American immigration policy.

WHEREAS, While we support the right of the government to enforce the law and protect the national security interests of the United States, we recognize that our existing complex and unworkable immigration system has made it nearly impossible for many immigrants – who seek to support their families or reunite with loved ones – to achieve legal status. Reforming the immigration system to address this reality would allow the U.S. government to focus its enforcement efforts on real threats that face all Americans – citizens and immigrants alike.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT the New York Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church urges our elected officials to conduct the immigration reform debate in a civil and respectful manner, mindful not to blame immigrants for our social and economic ills or for the atrocities committed by the few who have carried out acts of terrorism. A polarized process that is lacking in civility would hinder deliberative discourse and not serve the best interests of our nation.

THEREFORE BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT the New York Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church calls attention to the moral dimensions of public policy and pursue policies that uphold the human dignity of each person, all of whom are made in the image of God.

THEREFORE BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT the New York Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church engages the immigration issue with the goal of persuading lawmakers to fashion an immigration system that facilitates legal status and family unity in the interest of serving the God-given dignity and rights of every individual. It is our collective prayer that the legislative process will produce a just immigration system of which our nation of immigrants can be proud.

THEREFORE BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT the New York Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church calls upon President Bush and our
elected officials in Congress to enact comprehensive immigration reform legislation that establishes a safe and humane immigration system consistent with the teachings and examples of Jesus Christ.


**PETITION AC #2007-317**

**RECOGNITION OF OUR ARMED FORCES**

WHEREAS, Jesus proclaimed, “Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends.”

WHEREAS, Countless service men and women have laid down their lives in order to protect and preserve the lives and freedoms of U. S. citizens

WHEREAS, U. S. Service men and women, daily, put their lives in jeopardy in order to protect and preserve our lives and freedoms

BE IT THEREFORE RESOLVED, that the New York Annual Conference salutes and honors those who have given their lives for the protection of our freedoms, and for the preservation of our right to worship
BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the New York Annual Conference extends thanks and recognition to all living active members of our Armed Forces, to all living inactive members of our Armed Forces, to all living retired members of our Armed Forces, and to the families of the aforementioned groups.


PETITION AC #2007-320

SUPPORT FOR SAME SEX MARRIAGE IN NEW YORK AND CONNECTICUT

WHEREAS THE United Methodist Church supports “Equal rights regardless of sexual orientation” in ¶162 H. in the Book of Discipline,

WHEREAS several States in the United States of America, including Connecticut, recognize legal civil unions between same-sex couples;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the New York Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church supports marriage and civil unions for any two adults who desire to make their relationship a legal, contractual agreement.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the New York Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church encourages the New York State and Connecticut Legislatures to pass legislation establishing marriage as a contract between two adult persons.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Secretary of the New York Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church send a copy of this resolution to each of the legislators of the New York and Connecticut legislatures and to their respective Governors, as well as the United Methodist Bishops who serve within the bounds of New York and Connecticut.

Submitted by the Methodist Federation for Social Action and Endorsed by the NYAC Board of Church and Society. Betsy Ingram, Taka Ishii, Jaewon Kim, Bob Lukey, Robert G. Hunsinger, James Veatch

PETITION AC #2007-323

UNITY IN CONFERENCE

WHEREAS, The New York Annual conference systematically engages in making disciples of Jesus Christ by inviting, welcoming, worshipping, and sending out the people of God;

WHEREAS, The New York Annual Conference claims to be characterized by (but not limited to) the following: 1. faith, hope, and love; 2. spiritual leadership; 3.
commitment of prayers, presence, gifts, and service; 4. cooperative ministry; 5. partnership in ministry; AND, 6. Clergy and Laity as the Body of Christ;

WHEREAS, “The New York Annual Conference through the grace of God embodies a beloved community of hope, building up a healthy Body of Christ, with heart-warmed United Methodists in mission for the transformation of the world."

WHEREAS, The fruit of the Spirit (Gal 5:22) should be evidenced in and during all sections and sessions of the New York Annual Conference proceedings,

THEREFORE, The New York Annual Conference urges all its delegates to promote unity in its body by being sensitive to, and by yielding to, the workings of the Holy Spirit; and, by showing restraint in the presentation of their positions.


PETITION GC #2007-302

RESOLUTION FOR MANDATORY ANTI-RACISM TRAINING

WHEREAS, racism and the underlying reality of white privilege continue to pervade virtually all social and political institutions in the United States, including the church;

WHEREAS, systemic racism causes grave harm and diminishes the human potential of all persons and degrades the spiritual and moral level of the U.S. as a nation;

WHEREAS, God has anointed the church, as the body of Christ, to bring good news to the poor, proclaim release to the captives, recovery of sight to the blind, and to let the oppressed go free. However, we as the body of Christ have not always fulfilled these sacred responsibilities in our ministries. We, the NYAC, acknowledge our need to collectively repent of our participation in racism in our church and our society;

WHEREAS, the resident ministers (probationary clergy members of the NYAC) of the classes of 2008 and 2009 participated in a two-day workshop entitled “Undoing Racism” presented by the People’s Institute for Survival and Beyond, and the participants found this event to be challenging, enlightening, inspiring, and profoundly valuable for doing ministry in the U.S.; and

WHEREAS, the resident ministers of the classes of 2008 and 2009 affirm the value of anti-racism education for all NYAC clergy;

THEREFORE BE IT IS RESOLVED that all members of District Committees on Ordained Ministry, the NYAC Board of Ordained Ministry, the Conference Commission on Religion and Race, the Bishop and members of the Cabinet shall participate in comparable anti-racism training by the time of the NY Annual Conference session in 2009.
BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that all active ordained elders, deacons, associate members, and local pastors of the NYAC shall participate in anti-racism training by the time of the NY Annual Conference session of 2011.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that comparable anti-racism training shall be a requirement for ordination beginning with the class of candidates who became Resident Ministers in 2007.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Conference Commission on Religion and Race shall be responsible for administering this training program.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the approximate annual costs of this training are $19,500 and these funds will be paid for the first year through a combination of a one-time grant from the Leadership Development portion of the Bishop’s Partners in Mission Fund up to a maximum of $10,000, plus funds secured from other sources by the New York Annual Conference Commission on Religion and Race.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the NY Annual Conference shall submit a resolution for consideration of the 2008 General Conference of the UMC with the intent to require all active United Methodist clergy in the U.S. to participate in anti-racism training by the time of 2016 General Conference.

Signed and submitted by members of the COMPASS Classes of 2008 and 2009: Dale Ashby, InKoo Chung, John Collins, Kristen Dunn, Sara Giron-Ortiz, Roy Grubbs, Elizabeth Jones, Darlene Kelley, Dale Ellen Krazmien, Chermain Lashley, Cynthia Major, Anthony Mecca, Woo Young Park, Iwy Patel-Yatri, Emily Peck-McClain, David Piscatelli, Jim Van Schaick, Guerscheon Saint Ange, Jeffry Wells. And by members of the Conference Commission on Religion and Race: Les Johnson, Inday Day; Taka Ishii (representative to General Council on Religion and Race); Jaewon Kim, P.J. Leopold; Luisa Martinez (representative to General Commission on Religion and Race)

PETITION GC #2007-305

CIVIL RIGHTS REGARDLESS OF SEXUAL ORIENTATION

WHEREAS THE United Methodist Church supports “Equal rights regardless of sexual orientation” in ¶162 H. in the Book of Discipline,

WHEREAS several States in the United States of America recognize legal civil unions between same-sex couples;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that paragraph 162H be amended as follows:

162. H) Equal Rights Regardless of Sexual Orientation—Certain basic human rights and civil liberties are due all persons. We are committed to supporting those rights and liberties for homosexual persons. We see a clear issue of simple justice in protecting their rightful claims where they have shared material resources, pensions, guardian relationships, mutual powers of attorney, civil unions and other such lawful
claims typically attendant to contractual relationships that involve shared contributions, responsibilities, and liabilities, and equal protection before the law….

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that the New York Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church send this petition to the 2008 General Conference to amend ¶162 H. in the *Book of Discipline*, in compliance with deadlines and submission requirements for consideration at the 2008 General Conference of the United Methodist Church.

Submitted by the Methodist Federation for Social Action and Endorsed by the NYAC Board of Church and Society. Elizabeth Braddon, John Carr, R. Randy Day, Carolyn Hardin Engelhardt, Betsy Ingram, Taka Ishii

**PETITION GC #2007-306**

**ON BEING A CONNECTIONAL CHURCH AND TRANSFERRING MEMBERS**

**WHEREAS**, in Decision 1032, the Judicial Council of The United Methodist Church permitted a pastor to refuse to receive by certificate of transfer a member of another church, and

**WHEREAS**, the *Discipline* requires no confession of faith from members of other denominations bearing a certificate of transfer (see ¶225), and

**WHEREAS**, the only requirements in the *Discipline* for an effective transfer of membership from another denomination to The United Methodist Church are 1) “a proper certificate of transfer,” and 2) “affirming [a] willingness to be loyal to The United Methodist Church,” and

**WHEREAS**, a connectional church needs to have standard procedures for admitting new members into the denomination, and needs to be free of the personal tastes and biases of individual pastors,

**THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED**, that ¶225 be amended by replacing the word “may” with the word “shall” in the first sentence, so that it will read, “A member in good standing in any Christian denomination who has been baptized and who desires to unite with The United Methodist Church shall be received as either a baptized or a professing member by a proper certificate of transfer from that person’s former church, or by a declaration of Christian faith, and upon affirming willingness to be loyal to The United Methodist Church (see ¶¶214-217).”

PETITION GC #2007-310

GLOBAL WARMING

WHEREAS, “The earth is the Lord’s and everything in it” (Psalm 24:2). “To the Lord your God belong the heavens, even the highest heavens, the earth and everything in it” (Deuteronomy 10:14), and we worship and honor the Creator and seek to cherish and care for the creation.

WHEREAS, religious organizations such as the Evangelical Environmental Network, the National Council of Churches Eco-Justice Working Group, and the United Methodist General Board of Church and Society view global climate change as one of the greatest threats to God’s Creation.

WHEREAS, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change declared in early 2007 that global warming was “unequivocal” and that human activity was “very likely” to blame for heat waves, extreme storms and droughts, as well as ocean warming and wind patterns.

WHEREAS, children, the elderly, and the poor suffer the most from events like heat waves, droughts, and floods.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that The United Methodist Church, through the General Board of Church and Society, or other assigned general agency,

- Create a plan for evaluating the current status of contributions to global warming throughout the United Methodist connection by churches, institutions, and staff;
- Create specific recommendations for reduction of contributions to global warming such as: solar panels or other renewable energies, meetings by conference call rather than driving, insulating buildings, etc.
- Create a conference based reward system for substantive changes;
- Create a nationwide reward and publicity plan for substantive changes;
- Develop an ecumenical effort to support changes, which reduce global warming.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that UMDF consider loans to local churches for global warming reduction programs;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that, at the close of the 2007 New York Annual Conference session, the above resolution be prepared and submitted to comply with deadlines and submission requirements for consideration by the 2008 General Conference of the United Methodist Church.
PETITION GC #2007-318

ON INDIVIDUAL RESPONSIBILITY FOR PROFESSING THE FAITH

WHEREAS, at the reunion of three Methodist denominations in 1939, their criteria for “admission into the Church” were consolidated within a single Book of Discipline for The Methodist Church, and

WHEREAS, the 1939 Book of Discipline made admission into The Methodist Church contingent on the pastor’s satisfaction “as to the genuineness of [candidates’] faith, their acceptance of the baptismal and membership vows, and their knowledge of and willingness to keep the rules and regulations of The Methodist Church” (¶133), which language was retained in each Discipline until 1952, and

WHEREAS, previous Disciplines had required the approval of laity for admission of new members (as, for example, the 1936 Book of Discipline of the Methodist Episcopal Church, ¶111.3, naming the “Official Board or Board of Stewards” as responsible parties), but the reunited denomination took away the right of laity to vote on new members, and

WHEREAS, the pastor’s responsibility to assess the genuineness of the faith of candidates for membership was written out of the Discipline by the 1952 General Conference, while a test for genuineness of faith was still required (“When [candidates] shall have given proof of the genuineness of their faith in Christ and of their desire to assume the obligations and become faithful members of The Methodist Church, and after the rite of baptism has been administered to those who have not been previously baptized, [the pastor] shall bring them before the congregation, administer the vows {¶¶1914-15} and receive them into the fellowship of the Church, and duly enroll them as members.” ¶107 of the 1952 Book of Discipline), which language was retained in each Discipline until 1968, and

WHEREAS, with the formation of The United Methodist Church in 1968, all reference to proofs of the genuineness of faith of candidates for admission into membership of the Church were replaced by the initiative and observable actions of those candidates (viz., “When [candidates for membership] shall have confessed their faith in Christ and have made known their desire to assume the obligations and become faithful members of The United Methodist Church, after the completion of a reasonable period of training, and after the Sacrament of Baptism has been administered to those who have not been previously baptized, [the pastor] shall bring them before the congregation, administer the vows, receive them into the fellowship of the Church, and duly enroll them as full members” ¶115.1 of the 1968
Book of Discipline), which language was retained in each Discipline until major changes were proposed at the 1996 General Conference, and

WHEREAS, the 1996 Book of Discipline, in legislation subsequently nullified, did not restore any tests of genuineness of faith, but continued to make the voluntary confession of faith, without evaluation, the only test of membership (“Becoming a professing member requires the answer of faith of the baptized person made visible in a service of Profession of Christian Faith and confirmation using the vows of the baptismal covenant. … Using Services of the Baptismal Covenant, youth will profess their faith, commit themselves to a life of discipleship, and be confirmed. … Youth and adults who have not been baptized and who are seeking to be saved from their sins and profess Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior are proper candidates for baptism in The United Methodist Church. … After the completion of the period of nurture and instruction, the sponsor(s) and pastor shall bring them before the congregation and administer the Services of Baptismal Covenant in which persons are baptized, confirmed, and received into the Church.” ¶222.1 of the 1996 Book of Discipline), and

WHEREAS, confusion ensued when the Judicial Council declared the 1996 changes in membership legislation unconstitutional, and no paragraph on admission to “full membership” or “professing membership” was included in the 2000 Book of Discipline, and

WHEREAS, the 2004 General Conference restored most of the language of the 1996 General Conference (see especially ¶216, which substantially repeats ¶222 of the printed 1996 Discipline), and

WHEREAS, every Discipline from 1952 (in The Methodist Church) to 2000 includes legislation which empower a district superintendent or a pastor to assess the genuineness of faith of a new member of a new church (for example, ¶259.6 of the 2000 Book of Discipline: “When the district superintendent or designated elder is satisfied as to the genuineness of [candidates’] faith and purpose, they shall be received into the membership of the church.”), but the 2004 General Conference amended that paragraph to take away that power (¶260.6: “People desiring to become professing members by transfer or on profession of their faith in Christ shall be given opportunity to present themselves for membership. Any who have not been baptized shall receive the sacrament of baptism, profess their faith and be received as members. Other baptized people are to be received as baptized members.”), and

WHEREAS, the clear movement of the Holy Spirit in seventy years of conferencing has led The United Methodist Church to transfer from pastors and congregations to candidates the responsibility for determining the readiness of candidates to join the Church, and
WHEREAS, the Judicial Council, by Decision 1032, has unilaterally restored to pastors the power to assess the readiness of candidates for admission to the Church, while not restoring that same power to laity,

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that ¶216.1 be amended by inserting at the end of the introductory paragraph, after the words “using the vows of the Baptismal Covenant,” these sentences: “It is the responsibility of every baptized person to determine the right time to make a profession of faith, and it is the responsibility of pastors and congregations to receive that profession when offered. As first steps in faith can be halting, the community of faith must provide nurture and instruction to test, clarify, and help ripen faith, but as long as the baptized member is at least 10 years old, it is the baptized member’s decision when to become a professing member. No pastor or congregation may refuse to receive as a professing member a baptized youth or adult who wants to join the Church.”


PETITION GC #2007-319

REMOVE REQUIREMENT OF CHARGE CONFERENCE APPROVAL FOR LICENSED LOCAL PASTORS IN BOOK OF DISCIPLINE ¶312.1

WHEREAS, ¶316.6 of The Book of Discipline states that, “The membership of licensed local pastors under full-time and part-time appointment is in the annual conference,” and

WHEREAS, a licensed local pastor is no longer a member of a local church when made a member of the annual conference, and

WHEREAS, a licensed local pastor must be a certified candidate for ordained ministry, and

WHEREAS, a licensed local pastor, like all certified candidates, must receive “the annual recommendation of his or her charge conference” (¶312.1) in order to continue as a certified candidate, and

WHEREAS, some might interpret “his or her charge conference” to refer to the charge conference where the licensed local pastor was formerly a lay member, while others might interpret this to refer to the charge conference where the licensed local pastor is serving, and

WHEREAS, in the former case, the licensed local pastor may be many years removed from that charge conference, which might know nothing of the former professing member’s recent growth, while in the latter case, the charge conference would have the power to unmake the Bishop’s appointment by refusing to recommend their pastor for recertification,
THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that General Conference amend ¶312.1 by changing the period to a comma and adding “except if the candidate is under appointment as a licensed local pastor,” so that it would read, “1. The candidate has received the annual recommendation of his or her charge conference, except if the candidate is under appointment as a licensed local pastor.”

Submitted By: Westley Villazon, Ray Lange, Timothy J. Riss, Arturo Maine, Dolores Henderson and 17 more members of the Conference.

PETITION GC #2007-322

COMMITTED UNIONS

WHEREAS, the Constitution of the United Methodist Church “acknowledges that all persons are of sacred worth. All persons without regard to race, color, national origin, status or economic condition, shall be eligible to attend its worship services, participate in its programs, receive the sacraments, upon baptism be admitted as baptized members, and upon taking vows declaring the Christian Faith, become professing members of any local church in the connection” [¶4. Article IV]; and

WHEREAS, the Constitution takes precedence over all legislative pronouncements contained in the Book of Discipline; and the Discipline does not limit membership or participation of laity based on relationship status, whether single or coupled, or based on sexual orientation status; and

WHEREAS, the Book of Discipline states, “We also understand the family as encompassing a wider range of options than that of the two-generational unit of parents and children…” [¶161A], and

WHEREAS, the Bible challenges divisions among Christians: “For in the one Spirit we were all baptized into one body.” [1 Corinthians 12:13a] “There is no longer Jew or Greek, slave or free, male or female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.” [Galatians]

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that, the following changes be made to ¶161C of the Book of Discipline:

We affirm the sanctity of the marriage covenant and committed union that is expressed in love, mutual support, personal commitment, and shared fidelity between two adult persons a man and a woman. We believe that God’s blessing rests upon such covenants and commitments, whether or not there are children of the union. We reject social norms that assume different standards for women than for men in marriage and committed union. We support laws in civil society that define marriage as the union of two adult persons one man and one woman.
and, amending ¶161G of the Book of Discipline as follows:

Although all persons are sexual beings whether or not they are in relationships married, we believe sexual relations are only clearly affirmed in the bond of marriage or committed union the marriage bond.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that, at the close of the 2007 New York Annual Conference session, proposed language, in the above described paragraphs, be prepared and submitted by the Annual Conference Secretary to comply with deadlines and submission requirements for consideration by the 2008 General Conference of the United Methodist Church amending ¶161C and ¶161G of the Book of Discipline.

Submitted by the Methodist Federation for Social Action. Elizabeth Braddon, John Carr, Carolyn Hardin Engelhardt, Edward C. Horne, Taka Ishii, Kevin M Nelson, David A. Stevens

PETITION GC #2007- 324

ON THE INSTITUTE ON RELIGION AND DEMOCRACY

WHEREAS, the Institute of Religion and Democracy (IRD) claims that it is “an ecumenical alliance of U.S. Christians working to reform their churches’ social witness, in accord with biblical and historic teachings, thereby contributing to the renewal of democratic society at home and abroad,” and it was “founded in 1981 to promote reform of America’s mainline churches, with a special focus on their political activities.” And,

WHEREAS, according to Right Web, a program of the International Relations Center, the IRD’s mission to renew democratic society at home and abroad has in practice involved advocating U.S. military interventionism and global supremacy and attacking Christians who do not support their mission:

The IRD has evoked religion and morality to promote militant anticommunism and the conservative variety of internationalism advanced by the neoconservatives...For more than two decades the IRD has advocated U.S. military interventionism...The IRD was a leading advocate of U.S. military aid and intervention in Central America and the Caribbean during the Reagan administrations, and it routinely challenged the patriotism and the belief systems of Christians who didn’t share its militarist and interventionist spirit. When the IRD wasn’t criticizing the Protestant denominations for being soft on Communism, it was charging that they were anti-Semitic and anti-Israeli...In addition to the Protestant denominations, the IRD considers the National Council of Churches (NCC) and its counterpart World Council of Churches to be instruments of liberalism and secularism...Its mission of “reforming the Church’s social and political witness, and building and strengthening democracy and
religious liberty at home and abroad” has closely followed the evolving neoconservative foreign policy agenda—from militant anticommunism to post-Cold War U.S. global supremacy…

And,

WHEREAS, IRD’s “special focus” on the “political activities” of the mainline denominations, including the UMC,\textsuperscript{v} is designed to effectively eliminate the UMC’s social witness and UMAction’s agenda would:

\begin{itemize}
  \item end all giving to organizations unless they share UMAction’s understanding of the UMC’s faith commitment,\textsuperscript{vi}
  \item abolish the General Board of Church and Society (GBCS), and
  \item re-write the UMC’s Constitution to remove the authority of General Conference to write and revise the Social Principles or to speak prophetically on social issues unless the majority of UM laity have already reached consensus on those issues, thereby precluding the UMC from speaking prophetically.\textsuperscript{vii}
\end{itemize}

And,

WHEREAS, the UMC’s social witness is an integral characteristic of the UMC, growing out of John Wesley’s historic focus on social holiness as expressed through his understanding that the essentials of Christianity begin with the Royal Law,\textsuperscript{viii} Jesus’ commandment to love our neighbors as ourselves, which is reflected in both the Old and New Testaments (Leviticus 19:18; Matthew 19:19; Matthew 22:39; Mark 12:31; Luke 10:27; Romans 13:9; Galatians 5:14; James 2:8). And,

WHEREAS, the IRD’s agenda is being advanced this year through their numerous sample annual conference resolutions which, amongst other things, include calls to:

\begin{itemize}
  \item cut the General Board of Church and Society’s funding by at least 25% in the next quadrennium;
  \item affirm using assent to the doctrinal standards as a criteria for membership;
  \item reduce the General Conference representation of the Western Jurisdiction; and
  \item cut funding to the National Council of Churches.\textsuperscript{ix}
\end{itemize}

And,

WHEREAS, in an internal document prepared in 2000 after General Conference, the IRD described why they see the United Methodist Church (UMC) and other mainline denominations as useful tools to advance their agenda and detailed their “special attention” to the UMC; this focus is a result of what they perceive as the disproportionate influence these denominations have over U.S. society.\textsuperscript{x} In this same document, the IRD stated:

The mainline churches, the bulwark of the Religious Left, have been a powerful influence in American life throughout the 20\textsuperscript{th} Century…For nearly the last 20 years, the IRD has worked to discredit and diminish the Religious Left’s influence and we have experienced significant successes in our efforts.…In the largest
mainline church, the United Methodist Church [sic], conservatives are gaining ground…The Good News movement, the United Methodist wing of the Institute on Religion and Democracy, and many of its bishops and tall-steeple pastors have taken over the church’s governing body…Our growing outreach over the last five years…was significantly responsible for perhaps the most productive General Conference in 40 years [in 2000]. UMAction helped to defeat pro-gay initiatives by margins of 2-1 or more. Our initiative to…overturn the church’s official pacifism stance to a stance that acknowledges Christian approval of the resort to force in some circumstances [was also successful]…Delegates to the General Conference also voted to reappoint the composition of future General Conferences so that declining (and liberal) regions of the church such as the northeast and west coast will receive fewer delegates. Growing (and more conservative) regions such as the southeast and overseas churches will receive more delegates. This will help ensure that conservative trends on sexuality and a whole range of issues will continue at future General Conferences.

And,

WHEREAS, UMAction claims that it “defends traditional Christian beliefs and practices in the spirit of the father of Methodism, John Wesley”[xi] but, in contrast with Wesley’s teachings, seeks to greatly increase the emphasis placed on doctrine in the UMC, through its stated agenda to:

• require UMC members to affirm not just the membership vows but the entirety of the Doctrinal Standards as listed in the Discipline;xii
• make the Council of Bishops responsible for enforcing and upholding these Doctrinal Standards;
• require all general agency staff to affirm the Nicene Creed, the Apostles Creed, and the Athanasian Creed, regardless of the relevance to their job responsibilities and in spite of their skills and qualifications; and
• require all UM seminary faculty to affirm the same, raising doctrine above skill and competence in the criteria for selecting persons to educate our church leaders and teach them critical thinking skills.xiii And,  

WHEREAS, John Wesley himself demonstrated in his sermon, “The Way to the Kingdom,” that this agenda is at odds with his thoughts and thus does not line up with “the spirit of the father of Methodism, John Wesley”:

...although true religion naturally leads to every good word and work, yet the real nature thereof lies deeper still, even in the ‘the hidden nature of the heart’. I say of the heart. For neither does religion consist in orthodoxy or right opinions; which, although they are not properly outward things, are not in the heart, but the understanding. A man may be orthodox in every point; he may not only espouse right opinions, but zealously defend them against all opposers; he may think justly concerning the incarnation of our Lord, concerning the ever-blessed Trinity, and every other doctrine contained in the oracles of God. He
may assent to all the three creeds—that called the Apostles’, the Nicene, and the Athanasian—and yet ‘tis possible he may have no religion at all, no more than a Jew, Turk, or pagan. He may be almost as orthodox as the devil (though indeed not altogether; for every man errrs in something, WHEREAS we can’t well conceive him to hold any erroneous opinion) and may all the while be as a great a stranger as he to the religion of the heart.xiv

And,

WHEREAS, in that same sermon, Wesley continues to expound on this in following paragraphs, including defining his understanding of true religion to include righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. Wesley defines righteousness as made up of “the two grand branches thereof,” the two greatest commandments: “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy mind, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength” and “thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.”xv

And,

WHEREAS, Wesley taught in his sermon, “Catholic Spirit,” that what matters, what is essential, is that our hearts are right; that we love God with all our heart, soul, mind and strength; that we love our neighbors as ourselves. And as long as we are in agreement on these things, “although a difference in opinions or modes of worship may prevent an entire external union, yet need it prevent our union in affection?”xvi Though we cannot think alike, may we not love alike? May we not be of one heart, though we are not of one opinion? Without all doubt, we may. Herein all the children of God may unite, notwithstanding these smaller differences. These remaining as they are, they may forward one another in love and in good works.xvii And,

WHEREAS, Wesley further explained, “If it be, give me thine hand.’ I do not mean, ‘Be of my opinion.’” “I do not mean, ‘Embrace my modes of worship,’ or ‘I will embrace yours.’” “I mean, first, love me.” “I mean, secondly, commend me to God in all thy prayers; wrestle with him in my behalf, that he would speedily correct what he sees amiss and supply what is wanting in me.” “I mean, thirdly, provoke me to love and to good works.” “I mean, lastly, love me not in word only, but in deed and in truth.”xviii And,

WHEREAS, in seeking to advance their agenda, the IRD and its UMAction Committee have used hardball tactics,xix including

• using controversial issues, including homosexuality, as wedge issues;
• seeking to drive out persons they do not agree with, including calls for liberals to leave the church;xx
• misrepresenting their distorted, inflammatory, sensationalized, and sometimes deceptive commentaries as factual news accounts of issues and events in the Church in a way intended to mislead and manipulate their audience;
• using such a piece, written by Mark Tooley, to attack the 2006 session of the New York Annual Conference and characterize it as “more like a MoveOn.org rally than a church convention;”\textsuperscript{xii} and,  

\textbf{WHEREAS}, the IRD and its \textit{UMAction} Committee, led by Director Mark Tooley, are not related to the UMC and are not accountable to the UMC or its members through General Conference or a representational and elected Board of Directors—a charge (unaccountability) they often throw at denominational leaders who are democratically elected and who \textit{are} accountable to various constituents and Boards of Directors.\textsuperscript{xxii} and,  

\textbf{THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED}, that we condemn the hardball, deceptive and divisive tactics of the Institute on Religion and Democracy and its \textit{UMAction} Committee.

\textbf{THEREFORE, BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED}, that we call for the following actions:

• Good News/RENEW and The Confessing Movement to cease their partnership with the IRD
• all caucus groups not to use the same kinds of hardball tactics exhibited by the IRD
• all United Methodists not to support the IRD and to reject the agenda it works to impose on the UMC and the tactics it uses to advance them.
• the IRD to disband its \textit{UMAction} committee and cease its efforts to impose its agenda on the UMC.
• all parts of the UMC to engage religion of the heart, in accordance with Wesley’s teachings and the example of Christ, and join hands together so that we may move forward together in love and in good works.

\textbf{THEREFORE, BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED}, that, in order to facilitate this joining of hands, we call on all parts of the Church to engage in study and dialogue on Wesleyan theology, specifically in regards to Wesley’s understanding of what is true religion (and what is not)—religion of the heart with the Royal Law at its center—and how it applies to the needs of the world, as expressed in his concept of “practical Christianity.” In such dialogue, it is hoped that the Church will return to what is essential and most important about our faith and about living as disciples of Christ. It is further hoped that through this, organizations such as the IRD that seek to divide us will fail in their efforts, and we will better learn to love each other and to see Christ in each other, enabling us to then join our hands so that we may indeed move forward together in love and good works.

\textbf{THEREFORE, BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED}, that at the close of the 2007 New York Annual Conference session, the above resolution be prepared and submitted by the Annual Conference secretary to comply with deadlines and submission requirements for consideration by the 2008 General Conference of The United Methodist Church.

i See “Purpose Statement,” http://www.ird-renew.org/site/pp.asp?c=fvKVLfMVlsG&b=356299; in contrast, the mission of the UMC is to “make disciples of Jesus Christ” (see ¶120, Book of Discipline of the United Methodist Church 2004).


iii See http://rightweb.irc-online.org/about.php; Right Web, founded in 2003, is a program of the International Relations Center (IRC) that tracks the work of those, in and outside of government, who have been instrumental in shaping or supporting U.S. policies in the global war on terror.

iv See IRD’s profile at http://rightweb.irc-online.org/profile/1496.

v This includes committees dedicated to advancing the IRD’s agenda in the UMC, the Episcopal Church, and the Presbyterian Church USA.

vi This would preclude the UMC’s ability to partner with most other organizations on projects that promote our shared goals. For example, if this proposal were enacted the UMC would not be permitted to contribute funding to the hugely successful Nothing But Nets campaign that is working to stem malaria in Africa that we jointly created because the lead organization, the UN Foundation, does not share the beliefs of the UMC.

vii See items 3, 9, 10, 11 “UM Action Reform Agenda: A Reform Agenda For United Methodists,” http://www.ird-renew.org/site/pp.asp?c=fvKVLfMVlsG&b=358125. They propose that the Social Principles be deleted and re-written “in a process involving local churches;” the current process is that local church members of the Annual Conference elect persons to carry out this duty at General Conference.


x See, “The Institute on Religion and Democracy: REFORMING AMERICA’S CHURCHES PROJECT 2001-2004,” http://www.theocracywatch.org/internal_document_ird.html, which compares the low percentage of Christians that are members of the mainline denominations (“just under 10% of America’s total church membership”) to their comparative wealth and “remarkably high numbers of leaders in politics, business and culture” including “over one-third of the members of the U.S. Senate.” “In short, despite their fallen membership numbers of recent decades, these denominations are still flagship churches that directly or indirectly influence millions of Americans.”


xii See The Book of Discipline 2004, ¶103, which includes over 40 articles of religion and rules; John Wesley’s standard sermons, of which there are dozens and dozens, often even with contradictory theological statements reflecting the development of his theology over time; and Wesley’s Explanatory Notes Upon the New Testament, which as it happens, is not currently in print or reasonably accessible.


xv Ibid.
Elsewhere in this sermon, Wesley elaborated further on the matter of differing opinions, "Every wise man, therefore, will allow others the same liberty of thinking which he desires they should allow him; and will no more insist on their embracing his opinions, than he would have them to insist on his embracing theirs. He bears with those who differ from him, and only asks him with whom he desires to unite in love that single question, "Is thy heart right, as my heart is with thy heart?"


Ibid.


See “Officers, Board of Directors, and Board of Advisors,” http://www.ird-renew.org/site/pp.asp?c=fvKVLfMVIsG&b=356301, retrieved March 29, 2007. Of the primary three mainline denominations that the IRD has directed its attention towards, the UMC is first among them. Nevertheless, none of their officers and only three members of their 18 member Board are United Methodist. Two of the three primary founders, however, are neo-conservative Catholics; about 1/3 of their Board is also often described as neo-conservative Catholics.

PETITION GC #2007-326

PETITION IN SUPPORT OF OPEN MEMBERSHIP

WHEREAS, 2004 Book of Discipline of the United Methodist Church ¶161g says: “that God’s grace is available to all, and we will seek to live together in Christian community. We implore families and churches not to reject or condemn lesbian and gay members and friends. We commit ourselves to be in ministry for and with all persons,” and,

WHEREAS, Article IV of the Constitution of the United Methodist Church declares: “The United Methodist Church acknowledges that all persons are of sacred worth. All persons without regard to race, color, national origin, status, or economic condition, shall be eligible to attend its worship services, participate in its programs, received the sacraments, upon baptism be admitted as baptized members, and upon taking the vows declaring the Christian faith, become professing members in any local church in the connection.” and,

WHEREAS, the Council of Bishops declared in November, 2005, that “homosexuality is not a barrier [for membership];
THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Church Council of First & Summerfield United Methodist Church of the Connecticut District petitions to New York Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church to declare that it believes Judicial Council decision to be in error.

THEREFORE BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the New York Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church ask that the following sentence be added to paragraphs 214 and 225 in the Book of Discipline: “Membership in the United Methodist Church shall not be denied by the pastor on the basis of race, gender, sexual orientation, ability, disability, national origin or economic status.”

Date: Adopted at the Meeting of the Church Council, February 18, 2007. First & Summerfield United Methodist Church, New Haven, CT.

PETITION GC #2007-401

ON MANDATORY RETIREMENT OF BISHOPS

WHEREAS, the Social Principles of The United Methodist Church declare, “We support social policies that integrate the aging into the life of the total community, including sufficient incomes, increased and nondiscriminatory employment opportunities, educational and service opportunities ….” (¶162E), and

WHEREAS, the Discipline arbitrarily limits the employment opportunities of clergy (including bishops) who are over 70 years of age (¶359.1 and ¶409.1), and

WHEREAS, the General Conference of 2000 abolished any upper age limit on members of the Judicial Council (compare ¶2602 of the 1996 Book of Discipline with ¶2602 of the 2000 Discipline), and

WHEREAS, people are living longer and are healthier and more productive in their seventies and eighties than in any previous generation, and

WHEREAS, our church will be deemed hypocritical, prejudiced, and discriminatory as long as retirement is mandatory for any reason other than the performance or character of a clergyperson,

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that ¶409.1 be deleted.

PETITION GC #2007-403

NON-DISCRIMINATION AGAINST LAITY

WHEREAS the United Methodist Church acknowledges, in Article IV of the Constitution, that all persons are of sacred worth;

WHEREAS people of diverse sexual orientations and identities are members and leaders among the laity of the United Methodist Church;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the following changes be made to ¶4. Article IV of the Constitution in the Book of Discipline of the United Methodist Church: Inclusiveness of the Church—The United Methodist Church is a part of the church universal, which is one Body in Christ. The United Methodist Church acknowledges that all persons are of sacred worth. All persons without regard to race, color, national origin, status, sexual orientation and identity, or economic condition, shall be eligible to attend its worship services, participate in its programs, receive the sacraments, upon baptism be admitted as baptized lay members and upon declaring the Christian faith, become professing lay members in any local church in the connection….

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that, at the close of the 2007 New York Annual Conference session, the above resolution be prepared and submitted by the Annual Conference to comply with deadlines and submission requirements for consideration by the 2008 General Conference of the United Methodist Church.

Submitted by the Methodist Federation for Social Action and Endorsed by the NYAC Board of Church and Society. Hermon Darden, Jaewon Kim, Jorge Lockward, Kevin M. Nelson, Robert G Hunsinger, Edward C. Home

PETITION GC #2007- BERMUDA

PETITION ON BERMUDA

WHEREAS the General Board of Global Ministries, at its spring meeting in April 2002, formally recognized and welcomed Marsden First as a mission church of the General Board of Global Ministries of the United Methodist Church and at its spring meeting in April 2006 recognized Centenary as a mission church of the General Board of Global Ministries of the United Methodist Church; and

WHEREAS the Marsden and Centenary Churches of Bermuda have been assigned by the Northeastern Jurisdiction College of Bishops to be under the appointment authority of the Bishop of the Baltimore Washington Annual Conference; and

WHEREAS the Marsden and Centenary Churches of Bermuda after five years under the guidance of leaders from the General Board of Global Ministries and the
Baltimore Washington Conference have fully explored and voted (Marsden First on February 1, 2001 and Centenary on May 6, 2003) to join the United Methodist Church and requested to continue to be a part of the Baltimore Washington Conference; and

WHEREAS the Baltimore Washington Conference has been appointing pastors, superintending the congregations and integrated the congregations into the life of the Baltimore Washington Conference; and

WHEREAS the General Board of Global Ministries and the Baltimore Washington Conference have recognized the churches as United Methodist congregations; and

WHEREAS Para. 39 Article III of the 2004 Book of Discipline of the United Methodist Church grants that “boundaries of a jurisdictional conference may be effected by the General Conference upon consent of a majority of the annual conferences of each of the jurisdictional conferences involved;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Baltimore Washington Conference of the Northeastern Jurisdiction consents to the inclusion of Bermuda within the boundaries of the Northeastern Jurisdiction of the United Methodist Church; and

FURTHER BE IT RESOLVED that the Baltimore Washington Conference agrees to Petition General Conference 2008 to effect the inclusion of Bermuda by amending Section VII, Boundaries Para. 37 Article I line 3 following the word “Northeastern” to include the word “Bermuda”.

This resolution was approved by the Baltimore Washington Conference on May 2007.

This resolution was endorsed by the New York Annual Conference at its June 6-9, 2007 session. The Baltimore Washington Conference was informed shortly thereafter in writing.