



World Methodist Council

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FOR INFORMATION

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WMC Pastoral Letter

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A Pastoral Letter to the Worldwide Methodist and Wesleyan Family On the Fortieth Anniversary of the World Methodist Social Affirmation (1986–2026)

Grace and peace to you in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

As we gather in San Salvador, El Salvador, for the meeting of the World Methodist Council and the commemoration of the fortieth anniversary of the World Methodist Social Affirmation (Nairobi, 1986), we give thanks for the faithful witness of those who came before us. Under the theme “Justice, Peace, and Joy” (Romans 14:17), we draw on that legacy as we seek to renew and rearticulate the social and public witness of Methodists and Wesleyans for a new generation and a changing world.

Guided by Scripture, we confess that God is love (1 John 4:16); that we are called to do justice, love kindness, and walk humbly with God (Micah 6:8); that the kingdom of God is righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit (Romans 14:17); that love of God and love of neighbor are inseparable dimensions of Christian discipleship (Matthew 22:37–39); and that Christ came so that all may have life, and have it abundantly (John 10:10). These convictions continue to animate the social holiness of Methodists and Wesleyans and to inspire our witness in the public life of the world God loves.

This Letter is complemented by the World Methodist Council Pastoral Statement marking the Fortieth Anniversary of the World Methodist Social Affirmation. While this Letter offers a pastoral word to the worldwide Methodist and Wesleyan family, the Pastoral Statement more fully develops the theological affirmations, ethical commitments, and public witness that have emerged from our common discernment.

Many of the economic, ecological, political, technological, humanitarian, and social concerns confronting the world today form an interconnected polycrisis, with effects felt across communities, nations, and generations, among people of all ages, genders, and abilities. The world is marked by extraordinary advances in knowledge, communication, technology, and cooperation, yet it remains burdened by poverty, inequality, conflict, forced migration, ecological degradation, discrimination, and widening insecurity. The hopes embodied in

many national and international commitments to peace, human rights, sustainable development, and flourishing remain only partially fulfilled.

This anniversary invites us to renew a distinctly Wesleyan witness grounded in the conviction that there is no holiness apart from social holiness. Faith is never confined to private belief. The gospel of Jesus Christ calls us into relationships of justice, reconciliation, compassion, and hope. It invites us to participate in God's mission of healing and transformation in the world God loves. Human dignity is God's gift; human rights are humanity's protections of that gift. This conviction remains at the heart of our common witness.

We affirm an economy of life that places human dignity above profit and advances the common good. Economic systems should be judged not only by what they produce but also by whether they protect human dignity, broaden participation, reduce vulnerability, and enable people and communities to flourish. We acknowledge the ongoing effects of poverty, debt, exclusion, colonialism, slavery, racism, and unequal development patterns. We therefore encourage efforts toward reparative justice, equitable participation, and economic arrangements that serve life rather than exploitation.

We also embrace an eco-social vision that recognizes the inseparable relationship between peoples and the planet. Environmental degradation, biodiversity loss, climate disruption, and unsustainable patterns of production and consumption threaten both human communities and creation. The burdens of these crises often fall on those least responsible for causing them. We give thanks to Indigenous peoples and local communities whose wisdom and practices illuminate pathways toward sustainable, life-giving relationships with the earth.

We call particular attention to the realities of migration, displacement, and human trafficking. Migrants, refugees, asylum seekers, stateless persons, and all uprooted peoples are human beings first. Their dignity does not depend on nationality, legal status, or documentation. We affirm that all human rights are migrant rights. We support efforts to address the root causes of forced migration while protecting those on the move. Consistent with a principle advanced by migrant communities themselves, we affirm that nothing about migrants should be decided without their participation.

We reaffirm the church's vocation to peacebuilding. Peace is more than the absence of war, and security is more than the protection of states. Peace is rooted in justice, participation, accountability, reconciliation, and right relationship. Genuine security concerns the flourishing of peoples and communities. In a world marked by conflict, violence, and polarization, the church is called not only to pray for peace but also to engage in the difficult work of truth-telling, reconciliation, restoration, and transforming the conditions that give rise to conflict. At the table of peace, there must be both bread and justice.

We reaffirm the inseparable link between human dignity and human rights. Every person bears the image of God. Human dignity is inherent, universal, and inviolable. Human rights

are humanity's effort to recognize, protect, and uphold that dignity in every sphere of life. We therefore support efforts to strengthen participation, protect civic space, and resist racism, xenophobia, antisemitism, Islamophobia, sexism, ableism, and other forms of discrimination that deny the dignity of persons and peoples.

We recognize the growing importance of communications and digital justice. Technologies have expanded opportunities for learning, participation, and connection, yet they also raise profound ethical questions about truth, accountability, power, inclusion, privacy, and public life. Artificial intelligence and other emerging technologies must be evaluated by their effects on human dignity, human rights, participation, and flourishing. Digital space has become civic space. The moral commitments that guide our public life must also guide our digital life.

We further affirm gender justice, intergenerational justice, and health justice as essential dimensions of human flourishing. Human flourishing cannot be realized where women and girls are denied dignity, participation, leadership, protection, or access to justice. Nor can it flourish when the voices and agency of young people are ignored. Future generations must be considered in the decisions made today. Nor can human flourishing be realized where persons with disabilities are denied full inclusion, participation, dignity, and agency in the life of the church and society. We also recognize the ongoing impoverishment of health in many communities, where poverty, inequality, conflict, exclusion, and ecological degradation undermine well-being.

We are especially mindful of the concerns many young people express today. Across diverse contexts, young people face uncertainty about their future, diminished opportunities, isolation, anxiety, mental health challenges, and a growing sense of exclusion from decisions that shape their lives. We believe young people are not merely heirs of the future but active participants in the present. We encourage churches to become communities of belonging, accompaniment, hope, and purpose, where young people are welcomed, listened to, empowered, and supported in exercising their gifts in service to God's mission and the common good. We also encourage intergenerational communities in which wisdom and experience are shared across generations, and in which younger and older persons alike participate in shaping our common future.

As Methodists and Wesleyans, we continue to affirm seeing the world as our parish. In an age of profound interdependence, many of humanity's challenges transcend national boundaries and increasingly manifest as an interconnected polycrisis that requires cooperation among peoples, communities, institutions, nations, and regional and global bodies. We therefore affirm a peoples-centered, ethical, and transformative multilateralism rooted in human dignity, justice, accountability, sustainability, participation, and the common good. No nation can address today's interconnected challenges alone; cooperation among peoples, communities, nations, and international institutions remains essential to the pursuit of peace, justice, sustainability, and human flourishing. Such cooperation should strengthen participation at every level of public life and encourage shared responsibility for

our common future, alongside the ongoing contributions of ecumenical and interfaith engagement.

Throughout our discernment, several themes emerged repeatedly. We are called to build an infrastructure of welcome and hospitality that fosters belonging, accompaniment, and care. We are called to strengthen an architecture of solidarity and protection that safeguards dignity and rights through accountable institutions and public commitments. We are also called to participate in the healing of bodies—both biological bodies and the body politic.

As followers of Jesus Christ, our calling is both pastoral and prophetic. We are called to accompany those who suffer, comfort those who mourn, welcome those who feel excluded, and strengthen those whose hope has grown faint. At the same time, we are called to speak truthfully about the conditions that diminish human dignity, perpetuate injustice, deepen inequality, fuel violence, restrict participation, and harm creation. Faithful discipleship requires both compassionate accompaniment and courageous witness as we participate in God's work of reconciliation, healing, and renewal.

Therefore, on this fortieth anniversary of the World Methodist Social Affirmation, we renew our commitment to uphold human dignity, defend human rights, seek justice, strengthen peacebuilding, promote communications and digital justice, affirm gender justice, disability justice, intergenerational justice, and health justice, expand participation, protect civic space, resist all forms of discrimination and exclusion, welcome the stranger, and contribute to God's healing of the nations and the flourishing of all.

This anniversary calls not only for remembrance but also for renewal. Gathering in San Salvador under the theme "Justice, Peace, and Joy," we recommit ourselves to bearing faithful witness to God's reign amid the circumstances of our time. We commend the accompanying World Methodist Council Pastoral Statement to churches, congregations, institutions, and individuals for prayer, study, teaching, and faithful action.

As we go forward together, may we abide in the love of God; may we seek to do justice, love kindness, and walk humbly with God; may we love God with all our heart and love our neighbors as ourselves; and may we join Christ's work so that all may have life, and have it abundantly. In this spirit, we renew our calling as Methodists and Wesleyans to participate in God's healing of the nations, to strengthen an infrastructure of welcome and hospitality, to build an architecture of solidarity and protection, and to bear faithful witness to God's justice, peace, and love in our time.

As Charles Wesley reminded us:

4. *Thy mind throughout my life be shown,
While listening to the sufferer's cry,
The widow's and the orphan's groan,
On mercy's wings I swiftly fly,
The poor and helpless to relieve,
My life, my all, for them to give.*

5. *Thus may I show the Spirit within,
Which purges me from every stain,
Unspotted from the world and sin,
My faith's integrity maintain;
The truth of my religion prove,
By perfect purity and love.*

(Jesus, the Divine Gift I Know, Charles Wesley, 1762)

May God's grace continue to sustain us. May Christ strengthen us in faithful discipleship. May the Holy Spirit guide us as we seek justice, pursue peace, protect dignity, and bear witness to God's love among all peoples and throughout the whole creation. For the world remains God's creation. And, in the words of John Wesley, we see the world as our parish.

San Salvador, El Salvador

August 15, 2026