

2017 Journal of the Florida Annual Conference – Part III

Black Lives Matter: A Movement for All United Methodists

Whereas, the Florida Conference of the United Methodist Church, which represents an annual conference within the connexional body of the United Methodist Church and a progressive movement for wholeness in a fragmented world, prioritizes becoming a pro-reconciling and anti-racist church body that recognizes the systemic and symptomatic pathologies present and ongoing in the United States since slavery, resulting in the fact that Black men are killed by police officers four (4) times more than any other race and represent a disproportionate portion of the prison population by mass incarceration in the United States; and

Whereas, during this past quadrennium (2012 -2016) the church has been reminded of this reality by police officers killings of unarmed Black men: Michael Brown in Ferguson, Missouri; Eric Garner in Staten Island, New York; Tamir Rice in Cleveland, Ohio, Samuel DuBose in Cincinnati, Ohio, and Walter Scott in North Charleston, South Carolina; among others across the country; and

Whereas, the Florida Conference of the United Methodist Church, acknowledges that this issue is not only domestic but has become a global concern which has precipitated protest marches and demonstrations in other countries such as, Paris, France; London, England; Tokyo, Japan and Toronto, Canada; and

Whereas, the Florida Conference of the United Methodist Church, in its pursuit to embody the Christian unity, endowed and empowered by the Holy Spirit, believes that God has called us to be a faithful, growing body of believers that demonstrate authentic community, deep Christian values, and a passion for justice (Amos 5:24; Micah 6:8); and

Whereas, the Florida Conference of the United Methodist Church would be obedient to Jesus, who said, “This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you” (John 15:12) by declaring that Black Lives Matter: A Movement for All Methodists seeks to give value to the lives of Black men while acknowledging and remembering the murders of so many more lives that are threatened by the xenophobic rhetoric, racial and religious profiling; and

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Florida Conference of the United Methodist Church, will support Black Lives Matter: A Movement for All Methodists by sharing awareness; supporting and encouraging our congregations to be safe spaces and sanctuary for peaceful protesters, participate in and host sacred conversations and dialogue on race relations and inclusion, and be spiritual allies in prayer, for God to enable the pursuit of justice through those who take a stand and lift their voices for justice; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Florida Conference of the United Methodist Church, immutably joined together in the woven cord of humanity, will not ignore this opportunity to embrace the new generation of peaceful protesters, non-violent demonstrators and young leaders who come from all races creating today’s cross-cultural movement, who are victimized, socially conscious and committed to change, enabling the world to become a better place for all to live; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED the Florida Conference of the United Methodist Church will live into our mission imperative to *“make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world by proclaiming the good news of God’s grace and by exemplifying Jesus’ command to love God and neighbor, thus seeking the fulfillment of God’s reign and realm in the world”* (United Methodist Book of Discipline 2012, paragraph 121).

FINALLY, BE IT RESOLVED this resolution will have no financial impact on the Florida Conference of the United Methodist Church’s budget.

Respectfully submitted,

Reverend Harold DeSantis Lewis, Sr.

Reverend Mary L. Mitchell, CCORR

Reverend Rini Hernandez, District Superintendent

Reverend Sarah Miller, Social Justice Committee

Reverend Clarke-Campbell Evans, Director of the Office of Missional Engagement

Reverend Dr. Sharon Austin, Director of Conference Connexional Ministries

Reverend Dr. Geraldine McClellan, Chairperson of Florida Caucus of BMCR

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Respectfully supported by,
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