

Civil Disobedience has a long history in the life of the United Methodist Church and its predecessor denominations.

A Theological Grounding for Civil Disobedience

The movement's bold strand of nonviolence (and we will surely teach that there were other, sometimes competing, strands) provides a chance and a challenge that cannot be left unmet. It allows us to go with our students as deeply as we choose toward the sources of that lifestyle, delving, for instance, into the experience and experiments of Gandhi and his movement, into the paths of the Buddha, working our way toward Jesus of Nazareth and his justice-obsessed brother and sister prophets of Israel, moving quietly, firmly into the river-deep meditations of Howard Thurman—perhaps even reading more of King than the worthy and well-worn 1963 March on Washington “I Have a Dream” speech. We must work our way into the depths of spirit which supplied the movement with so much of its early power.

Hope and History: Why We Must Share the Story of the Movement, Vincent Harding

The primary theological principles that motivate civil disobedience are:

- (1) Evangelical liberalism envisions an active role for Christians and the church in reforming social institutions.
- (2) The moral duty to disobey unjust laws.
- (3) An emphasis on love and equality.
- (4) The messianic suffering servant theology: Dr. Martin Luther King believed that Jesus' cross symbolized suffering and victory, and that Jesus suffered such a brutal death because he consistently lived a life of love.

This material is borrowed from the article:

“The Theology of Civil Disobedience: The First Amendment, Freedom Writers, and Passage of the Voting Rights Act,” By Jonathan C. Augustine. *Southern California Interdisciplinary Law Journal*, Vol. 21:255, 2012.

Policy

1. Elders, deacons, local pastors, certified lay ministers, and district superintendent assignees (hereafter, “clergypersons”) may participate in acts of civil disobedience.
2. For transparency and clarity, clergypersons should inform their DSEs prior to participating in an act or event of civil disobedience.
3. Those participating in acts of civil disobedience could be arrested as a result. Subject to the exceptions below, an arrest alone will result in no conference appointment/assignment repercussions.
4. Clergypersons will report an arrest as soon as possible to her or his respective DS.
5. The Safe Gatherings certification authority will review all arrests and convictions of clergypersons during acts of civil disobedience.
6. Violence in the performance of civil disobedience is not permitted. The safe gatherings certification authority will evaluate the circumstances and evidence surrounding any

conviction for a violent crime and may withhold or revoke the clergy person's safe gatherings certification.

7. Revocation of safe gatherings certification will result in the termination of a clergy person's appointment and transition to involuntary leave. Only safe-gatherings certified clergy persons are eligible for appointment in the Great Plains Conference.
8. The conviction of a clergy person for any violent crime in connection with civil disobedience, especially violence toward a law enforcement official or officer *during* arrest or at any other time, falls within the category of chargeable offenses (§ 2702.1). Due process will be followed.
9. All fines, legal expenses, and bail expenses will be the sole responsibility of the clergy person. Neither the Great Plains Conference nor a local congregation will be held responsible for expenses resulting from civil disobedience or protest by a clergy person.
10. Clergy persons awaiting trial on a charge of violence may be placed on suspension or leave until the court renders a verdict.