

RESOLUTIONS

DISCONTINUANCE OF THE DRESDEN UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

Max Clayton, Hays District Superintendent

WHEREAS, the Dresden United Methodist Church, Dresden, Ks., located in Decatur County is in the Hays District of the Great Plains Conference of the United Methodist Church; was founded in 1890 and has had a faithful history of serving Jesus Christ and its community; and

WHEREAS, the Hays District Superintendent and the Dresden congregation engaged in prayer, reflection and discernment about their potential and future as a congregation; and

WHEREAS, the Charge Conference of the Dresden United Methodist Church voted on November 3, 2013 in favor of discontinuation of the church; and

WHEREAS, the Hays District Superintendent Max Clayton has recommended that the church be discontinued and the consent of the Hays District Board of Church Location, the Cabinet and Bishop Scott J. Jones presiding Bishop of the Kansas Area have been granted; and

WHEREAS, all proper Disciplinary requirements have been complied with;

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED by the Great Plains Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church.

1. That the Dresden United Methodist Church in Decatur County, Kansas is declared discontinued as June 30, 2014, with appreciation for its years of faithfulness and service.
2. That the membership of the Dresden United Methodist Church be determined by each member prior to discontinuance and any memberships not so designated be transferred to the Jennings United Methodist Church; and
3. That the title to the property and other assets of the Dresden United Methodist Church be transferred to the Great Plains Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church; and
4. That the Board of Trustees of the Annual Conference is hereby authorized and directed to hold, sell, lease, or dispose of such assets upon such terms as they deem adequate and to incur any reasonable expenses in connection therewith.

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5. That the records and papers of the Dresden United Methodist Church be deposited for permanent safekeeping with the Commission on Archives and History.

DISCONTINUANCE OF EMMANUEL UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

WHEREAS the Emmanuel United Methodist Church, Alta Vista, Ks., located in Wabaunsee County, has had a long and faithful history of service to Jesus Christ, having been established on September 15, 1880 as the Emmanuel Methodist Episcopal church by German settlers in the area, and

WHEREAS the Church Conference of the Emmanuel United Methodist Church voted on Sunday, April 6, 2014, to discontinue the church effective June 29, 2014, and

WHEREAS the last worship service will be held on Sunday, April 30, at 6:00 p.m., and

WHEREAS the District Superintendent has recommended discontinuance of the Emmanuel United Methodist Church and transfer of its membership to other United Methodist Churches as requested, and

WHEREAS the consent to discontinue has been granted by Bishop Scott Jones, the Great Plains Conference District Superintendents, and the Flint Hills District Board of Church location and Building, and all proper Disciplinary requirements have been followed;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Great Plains Annual Conference concur with the decision of the Emmanuel United Methodist Church conference to discontinue.

“And be it further resolved that all the church property, upon closing, be handled in accordance with The Book of Discipline, upon recommendation of the congregation and with approval of the Flint Hills District Superintendent and Flint Hills District board of church location and building and in consultation with the Board of Trustees of the Great Plains Annual Conference.”

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ESTABLISHING THE GREAT PLAINS CONFERENCE PUBLIC EDUCATION PARTNERSHIP**Financial implications:** Yes

Rationale: United Methodists in Kansas and Nebraska have historically supported public education knowing that strong public schools are crucial to the health and vitality of our communities and churches. While support for education fits within our mission, we acknowledge that public educators often work with little community support.

Whereas, public schools have faced budget cuts and other challenges in recent years, forcing educators to do more with less, and

Whereas, improving the educational environment for Kansas and Nebraska children, will support other efforts to reduce poverty and improve social and physical well-being for all students, and

Whereas, children living in poverty, special-needs children and homeless children face additional struggles navigating their way through school systems, and

Whereas, public school students frequently lack the mentoring and support they need to mature into healthy, well-adjusted young adults who are equipped to contribute to the work force or to have successful college careers.

Therefore be it resolved:

That the Great Plains United Methodist Conference create an initiative to strengthen public education in Nebraska and Kansas, beginning July 15, 2014, and continuing through July 15, 2016 (and beyond).

Therefore be it further resolved that all United Methodist churches in the Great Plains Conference be invited to join the “Great Plains Public Education Partnership,” which invites the church’s commitment to:

1. Strengthen an existing or establish a “hands-on” partnership with a local public school or schools;
2. Encourage and equip members to contact their state legislators to advocate for public education; and
3. Attend a conference-sponsored regional event supporting public education.

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Therefore be it further resolved that the annual conference confirm the steering committee appointed by Bishop Scott Jones, with representatives from both Nebraska and Kansas, to guide this area-wide initiative. The steering committee is comprised of two members of the Mercy and Justice Team, professional educators, conference staff and others with needed expertise and interest.

CONSOLIDATION OF AREA DISASTER RESPONSE FUNDS

Steve Burnett, Disaster Response Team Chair

Rationale: United Methodists in the Kansas East, Kansas Area, and Nebraska Conferences received contributions that were designated to assist persons suffering from disasters within each of the conferences' geographical areas. This resolution is to consolidate the separate Area Disaster Response Funds into one fund for the purpose of assisting persons from disasters across Kansas and Nebraska without regard to the prior geographical boundaries.

Whereas, the contributions made to each fund were made with the intent to help people in need who have been impacted by a disaster, and

Whereas, our Annual Conference area boundaries have been adopted and implemented as of January, 1, 2014, and

Whereas, use of these funds should not be constrained to boundaries that no longer exist and should be available for use where most needed.

Therefore be it further resolved that the Great Plains United Methodists annual conference confirm consolidating the Kansas East, Kansas Area, and Nebraska Area Disaster Response Funds into one Great Plains Area Disaster Response Fund for use in Kansas and Nebraska.

INCORPORATION OF LOCAL CHURCHES

Purpose: To strongly recommend that each local church become an incorporated legal entity and take the steps necessary to continue the incorporation in good standing.

Rationale:

Whereas, Paragraph 2529.1 of The Book of Discipline permits the Charge Conference of a local church to direct the Board of Trustees to incorporate the local church, and

Whereas, the Kansas East Annual Conference adopted a policy, which was set forth in the Standing Rules of that Conference, providing that “[a]ll local United Methodist Churches must be incorporated and maintain their good standing”, and

Whereas, the incorporation of a local church creates a distinct legal entity separate from its officers, trustees, and members, with the capacity to own property and enter into contracts and agreements in its own name, and

Whereas, incorporation of a local church limits the liability of church members and individuals who act on behalf of the church, and

Whereas, incorporation of a local church helps to make clear the identities of those persons who have the authority to act on behalf of the church in transactions with third parties, and

Whereas, incorporation of a local church provides continuity in operation, ownership and management of property, and continuity of the institution of the local church beyond the individuals involved in its operation at any one time, and

Whereas, incorporation of a local church may provide a foundation for businesslike functioning and favorable insurability of the church, and

Whereas, the cost of incorporating and maintaining a corporation in good standing is relatively inexpensive for the protection offered, and

Whereas, incorporation of local churches assists the Annual Conference in ensuring that the governing documents of each local church act to further the mission of the Annual Conference, the United Methodist denomination, and are consistent with and properly include The Book of Discipline, and

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Whereas, the three co-Chancellors of the Annual Conference have unanimously recommended that all local churches be incorporated, and

Whereas, the Conference Board of Trustees urges the Annual Conference to adopt a resolution strongly recommending that all local churches be incorporated,

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that it is strongly recommended that all local churches become incorporated as separate legal entities and take all necessary acts to maintain such legal status in good standing.

CHRISTIANS RESPOND TO GUN VIOLENCE

Rationale: United Methodists across the Great Plains Conference are deeply concerned about the suffering and human loss caused by the reliance on violence to solve conflicts and the unrestricted availability of fire arms. As faithful Christians we take action.

Whereas: “Violence and, more particularly, violence to children and youths is a primary concern for United Methodists. We recognize and deplore violence which kills and injures children and youths. In the name of Christ, who came “and proclaimed peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near” (Ephesians 2:17) and challenged all his disciples to be peacemakers (Matthew 5:9), we call upon the church to affirm its faith through vigorous efforts to curb and eliminate gun violence.” (Resolution #3426 Gun Violence, Adopted 2000, Revised and Readopted in 2008)

Whereas: One in three people in the U.S. know someone who has been shot. On average, 32 Americans are murdered with guns every day and 140 are treated for a gun assault in an emergency room. Every day on average, 51 people kill themselves with a firearm, and 45 people are shot or killed in an accident with a gun. The U.S. firearm homicide rate is 20 times higher than the combined rates of 22 countries that are our peers in wealth and population. A gun in the home is 22 times more likely to be used to kill or injure in a domestic homicide, suicide, or unintentional shooting than to be used in self-defense. (Source: Brady Campaign to Prevent Gun Violence);

Whereas: In the fourteen months since the mass shooting in Newtown, CT (2012), there have been at least 44 school shootings including fatal and nonfatal assaults, suicides, and unintentional shootings — an average of more than three a month. In the first six weeks of 2014 alone, there were 13 school shootings including one eight-day period in which there were four shootings in K-12 schools. (Source: Moms Demand Action for Gun Sense in America and Mayors Against Illegal Guns);

Whereas: Americans Support Universal Background Checks: Nine out of 10 Americans agree that we should have universal background checks, including three out of four NRA members; Since the Brady Law was initially passed, about 2 million attempts to purchase firearms have been blocked due to a background check. About half of these blocked attempts were by felons; Our current background check system only applies to about 60% of gun sales, leaving 40% (online sales, purchases at gun shows, etc.) without a background check. (Source: Brady Campaign to Prevent Gun Violence);

Whereas: 2013 was an unprecedented year for gun safety in America. Despite the lack of motion in Congress, legislators in state houses across the country introduced a record number of bills to strengthen gun laws. Even states with historically weak gun laws, like Florida, Missouri, and Texas, took action towards sensible gun legislation. In fact, at the end of 2013, twenty-one states enacted new laws to curb gun violence in their communities, with eight of these states passing major reforms. (Source: Law Center to Prevent Gun Violence)

Whereas: By word and example Jesus embraced nonviolence as a way of life. He took up a cross rather than a sword. He embraced the practice of hospitality and a creative love of one's enemies. In his sermon to disciples and followers he proclaimed "blessed are the peace-makers." (Matthew 5:9).

Therefore be it resolved that the Great Plains Conference of the United Methodist Church lift up a vision of "a more excellent way" by calling on appropriate bodies within the church to:

Recall and adhere to Resolution #3426 from the Book of Resolutions which states, "reflecting that the traditional role of The United Methodist Church has been one of safety and sanctuary, every United Methodist Church is officially declared a weapon-free zone." (see also Paragraph 162, Social Principles)

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Therefore be it further resolved that the Great Plains Conference of the United Methodist Church:

Join United Methodist Women and the General Board of Church & Society in supporting the efforts of Faiths United to Prevent Gun Violence (www.faithsagainstgunviolence.org) and share information from Faiths United with congregations for study and action. Faiths United supports legislation to accomplish the following:

- Every person who buys a gun should pass a criminal background check;
- High capacity weapons and ammunition magazines should not be available to civilians; and
- Gun trafficking should be a federal crime;

Therefore be it further resolved that the Great Plains Conference of the United Methodist Church:

Direct the Secretary of the Annual Conference to send this resolution to all members of the Nebraska and Kansas congressional delegations.

Therefore be it further resolved that the Great Plains Conference of the United Methodist Church:

Encourage all Great Plains Congregations to participate in the National Gun Violence Prevention Sabbath Weekend.

Implemented by: The Great Plains Conference Cabinet, the Mercy and Justice Team, and the Communications Department.

COMPASSIONATE IMMIGRATION REFORM

Rationale: Our current immigration laws are broken. They cause great suffering for many people and tear families apart. Scripture challenges us numerous times to welcome the stranger and our Social Principles say that “we recognize, embrace, and affirm all persons, regardless of country of origin, as members of the family of God.” (United Methodist Book of Discipline, III. The Social Community ¶162 H Rights of Immigrants)

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“And when a stranger sojourns with you in your land, do not oppress him/her. Let the stranger ... be to you as the native-born, and you shall love him/her as yourself.” Lev. 19:33, 34

Whereas, we recognize that the reality of today’s migration is mainly a consequence of economic powers in place between nations that create more inequalities abroad and in our own land and force individuals to look for ways to survive. And,

Whereas, the present system has created great suffering with heartbreaking consequences; many people have died tragically trying to cross the border, children and families have been separated due to deportation, and several Hispanic/Latino congregations have been decimated. And,

Whereas, we rejoice that the political climate in our nation has changed, opening the space for a just and humane reform of the immigration laws of our country. And,

Whereas, as persons of faith we recognize this moment as a call to do the moral and right actions that will recognize the human and civil rights of our immigrant brothers and sisters, allowing them to come out of the shadows into a life of peace and hope. And,

Whereas, this is a call to radical hospitality based on the recognition of essential relatedness acknowledging that faithfulness of the church is measured by how we treat and advocate for the most vulnerable in our societies. And,

Whereas, while we are encouraged by the many voices calling for comprehensive immigration reform we remain concerned that there are proposals that do not include all the actions needed to create a just and humane reform of our immigration laws.

Therefore be it resolved that we call on every United Methodist in the Great Plains Annual Conference to openly and devotedly advocate before the US Congress for changes that will reunify families, protect separated children, provide a path for citizenship, protect the rights of all workers including the undocumented, and recognize the gifts and the contributions that immigrants are making to our nation.

Therefore be it further resolved that the Great Plains Annual Conference join the Interagency Task Force on Immigration of The United Methodist Church who is calling all United Methodists in our nation to join in prayer and in acts of advocacy until a just and humane reform of our system of immigration is achieved that includes the following principles:

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- 1) Stop all deportations, keeping families together, with the exception of deportations based on criminal activity, while Congress acts on a comprehensive reform.
- 2) Ask state governments to care for and protect children who have been separated from their parents by immigration raids and deportations until they are once again reunited with their parents.
- 3) Request Congress to adopt the DREAM Act (Development, Relief, and Education for Alien Minors) in its entirety.
- 4) Solicit that all DACA (Deferred Action for Childhoods Arrivals) be included in the Affordable Health Care Act.
- 5) Persuade the Federal Government to continue to challenge the legality of the State anti-immigration laws.
- 6) Advocate that any immigration reform includes a path to full citizenship.
- 7) Denounce any incident of racial profiling that takes place anywhere in our nation.
- 8) Protect all workers from exploitation and unfair competition.

**TO SUPPORT GLOBAL MATERNAL AND CHILD HEALTH
THROUGH THE HEALTHY FAMILIES, HEALTHY PLANET PROJECT**

Financial Implications: None

Rationale: We are called as people of The United Methodist Church and Great Plains Annual Conference to bring health and wholeness to all God's people. This resolution expresses this call by taking action in support of increasing international funding for international family planning, and maternal and child health service.

Whereas, Jesus said, "I am come that they might have life, and have it abundantly" (John 10:10)

Whereas, maternal mortality claims the lives of more than 287,000 women each year, most of whom live in the developing world;¹

Whereas, more than 4 million infants die within the first month of being born;²

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Whereas, a woman is much more likely to have a healthy pregnancy and give birth to a healthy baby if she delays pregnancy at least two years after the birth of her previous child;³

Whereas, more than 222 million women worldwide would like to avoid a pregnancy but lack a family planning method,⁴ resulting in more than 70 million unintended pregnancies each year;⁵

Whereas, the UMC Resolution “Maternal Health: The Church’s Role” states: “Women, who are crying out for not only their own survival but also the survival of their families and communities, deserve access to services and care that empower their personal decision-making. As a global church, we are called to eradicate systems of oppression and marginalization that inhibit women’s health and well-being.”

Therefore be it resolved:

- that the Great Plains Annual Conference endorses the “Healthy Families, Healthy Planet” initiative, a project of the General Board of Church & Society to educate and mobilize United Methodists on maternal health and the importance of international family planning;

- that the Boards of the Great Plains Annual Conference work together for the purposes of creating awareness, education, and advocacy for the well-being of women, infants, and children worldwide;

- that the Great Plains Annual Conference Mercy and Justice Team, with the help of the General Board of Church and Society, provide leadership and coordination for this effort;

Therefore be it further resolved: that we call upon United Methodist leaders, pastors, and laypersons in the Great Plains Annual Conference to contact their members of Congress to urge them to increase funding for international family planning in U.S. foreign assistance in order to reduce maternal and infant mortality.

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PROPOSAL FOR ESTABLISHMENT OF THE INVESTMENT COMMITTEE OF THE GREAT PLAINS ANNUAL CONFERENCE (“CONFERENCE”)

Financial Implications: None

Rationale: The formalization of an investment committee to guide, direct and report on the investment of Conference funds and reserves (except for pension retirement funds).

Reasons:

Whereas, the Book of Discipline (§612.1) directs the Council on Finance and Administration to develop, maintain, and administer a comprehensive and coordinated plan of fiscal and administrative policies, procedures, and management services for the annual conference;

Whereas, the Book of Discipline (§613.5) specifies that the Council on Finance and Administration shall develop policies governing the investment of conference funds (except for pension funds as provided in §1508);

Whereas, the Book of Discipline (§612.5.b) specifies that the Council on Finance and Administration may establish committees and task forces and define their duties and authority as it deems necessary for fulfilling its purpose and responsibilities;

Recommendations:

Therefore, be it resolved, the Council on Finance and Administration recommends the formalization of the Investment Committee (“Committee”) of the Great Plains Annual Conference;

Therefore, be it further resolved, the Committee shall define and develop responsibilities governing the investment of Conference funds and reserves (except for pension funds);

Therefore, be it further resolved, the Committee shall be comprised of voting representative to be named by the Council on Finance and Administration, the Board of Pension and Health Benefits, the Board of Trustees, and the Great Plains New Church Development;

Therefore, be it further resolved, the Committee shall develop reporting procedures to the Council on Finance and Administration, the Board of Pension and Health Benefits, the Board of Trustees, and the Great Plains New Church Development.