

Let your Faith inform your Vote.

We ask that you vote your conscience with prayer and reflection, however, we thought it would be helpful to understand The United Methodist Church's position on many of the issues facing us in the upcoming election.

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We are John Wesley's sons and daughters and we, too, need to speak to our culture. We need to clearly understand that The United Methodist Church has spoken on issues that are being debated throughout the state of Maryland and beyond.

United Methodists have prayed, studied, participated in holy conferencing, and debated to discern what The United Methodist Church must teach to its people and say to the world. Maryland's voters need to hear not the loudest voice, nor another slick commercial to help them discern how to vote. No, they deserve to hear what The United Methodist Church has decided together.

There are three ballot issues before our state on November 6. As you discern how you will vote on these issues, it's important to allow your faith to be a part of your decision-making process. But what's most important is that you vote and participate in the political landscape that shapes our culture. Below is information about the teachings of our church for you to consider as you prayerfully discern how you will cast your ballot.

Question 4

Referendum Petition

Public Institutions of Higher Education – Tuition Rates

Establishes that individuals, including undocumented immigrants, are eligible to pay in-state tuition rates at community colleges in Maryland, provided the student meets certain conditions relating to attendance and graduation from a Maryland high school, filing of income taxes, intent to apply for permanent residency, and registration with the selective service system (if required); makes such students eligible to pay in-state tuition rates at a four-year public college or university if the student has first completed 60 credit hours or graduated from a community college in Maryland; provides that students qualifying for in-state tuition rates by this method will not be counted as in-state students for purposes of counting undergraduate enrollment; and extends the time in which honorably discharged veterans may qualify for in-state tuition rates.

The United Methodist Church, in its Social Principles in the 2008 Book of Resolutions states:

¶ 162 H) *Rights of Immigrants* — "We recognize, embrace, and affirm all persons, regardless of country of origin, as members of the family of God. We affirm the right of all persons to equal opportunities for employment, access to housing, health care, education, and freedom from social discrimination. We urge the Church and society to recognize the gifts, contributions, and struggles of those who are immigrants and to advocate for justice for all."

Question 6

Referendum Petition

Civil Marriage Protection Act

Establishes that Maryland's civil marriage laws allow gay and lesbian couples to obtain a civil marriage license, provided they are not otherwise prohibited from marrying; protects clergy from having to perform any particular marriage ceremony in violation of their religious beliefs; affirms that each religious faith has exclusive control over its own theological doctrine regarding who may marry within

that faith; and provides that religious organizations and certain related entities are not required to provide goods, services, or benefits to an individual related to the celebration or promotion of marriage in violation of their religious beliefs.

The United Methodist Church, in its 2008 Book of Discipline, states:

¶ 161 B) *Marriage*— "We affirm the sanctity of the marriage covenant that is expressed in love, mutual support, personal commitment, and shared fidelity between a man and a woman. We believe that God's blessing rests upon such marriage, whether or not there are children of the union.

"We reject social norms that assume different standards for women than for men in marriage. We support laws in civil society that define marriage as the union of one man and one woman."

¶ 341.6 — Ceremonies that celebrate homosexual unions shall not be conducted by our ministers and shall not be conducted in our churches.

The Social Creed of The United Methodist Church states:

"We affirm the family and work to strengthen its relationships. We affirm the sanctity of marriage and shared fidelity between a man and a woman. We recognize divorce as regrettable and intend to minister to the members of divorced families. We affirm the integrity of single persons. We recognize that sexuality is a good gift of God and that sex between a man and woman is only to be clearly affirmed in the marriage bond."

Question 7

Gaming Expansion Referendum

Gaming Expansion

Do you favor the expansion of commercial gaming in the State of Maryland for the primary purpose of raising revenue for education to authorize video lottery operation licensees to operate "table games" as defined by law; to increase from 15,000 to 16,500 the maximum number of video lottery terminals that may be operated in the State; and to increase from 5 to 6 the maximum number of video lottery operation licenses that may be awarded in the State and allow a video lottery facility to operate in Prince George's County?

The United Methodist Church, in its 2008 Book of Resolutions, states:

"When asked which commandment is first of all, Jesus answered, 'Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God, the Lord is one; you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength' (Mark 12:29-30 NRSV). Gambling feeds on human greed and invites persons to place their trust in possessions rather than in God. It represents a form of idolatry that contradicts the first commandment. Jesus said: 'The second is this, You shall love your neighbor as yourself' (Mark 12:31b NRSV). In relating with compassion to our sisters and brothers, we are called to resist those practices and systems that exploit them and leave them impoverished and demeaned. The apostle Paul wrote in 1 Timothy 6:9-10a: 'People who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge men into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil.'

"Gambling, as a means of acquiring material gain by chance and at the neighbor's expense, is a menace to personal character and social morality. Gambling fosters greed and stimulates the fatalistic faith in chance. Organized and commercial gambling is a threat to business, breeds crime and poverty, and is destructive to the interests of good government. It encourages the belief that work is unimportant, that money can solve all our problems, and that greed is the norm for

achievement. It serves as a "regressive tax" on those with lower income. In summary, gambling is bad economics; gambling is bad public policy; and gambling does not improve the quality of life.

The church's position is stated in the denomination's Social Principles (§ 163G of the 2008 Book of Discipline):

- "Gambling is a menace to society, deadly to the best interests of moral, social, economic, and spiritual life, and destructive of good government. As an act of faith and concern, Christians should abstain from gambling and should strive to minister to those victimized by the practice.
- "Where gambling has become addictive, the Church will encourage such individuals to receive therapeutic assistance so that the individual's energies may be redirected into positive and constructive ends.
- "The Church should promote standards and personal lifestyles that would make unnecessary and undesirable the resort to commercial gambling—including public lotteries—as a recreation, as an escape, or as a means of producing public revenue or funds for support of charities or government.
- "The Church's prophetic call is to promote standards of justice and advocacy that would make it unnecessary and undesirable to resort to commercial gambling—including public lotteries, casinos, raffles, Internet gambling, gambling with an emerging wireless technology and other games of chance—as a recreation, as an escape, or as a means of producing public revenue or funds for support of charities or government."

In practice, this means that United Methodist churches should not raise funds through methods such as raffles, lotteries, bingo or drawings for door prizes or through games of chance such as bingo.

Why is the Church getting involved in politics?

Since the days of John Wesley, Methodists have had a strong belief in social justice, mission and outreach ministries. In our 2004 *Book of Resolutions*, we state,

"Taking an active stance in society is nothing new for followers of John Wesley. He set the example for us to combine personal and social piety. Ever since predecessor churches to United Methodism flourished in the United States, we have been known as a denomination involved with people's lives, with political and social struggles, having local to international mission implications. Such involvement is an expression of the personal change we experience in our baptism and conversion.

"The United Methodist Church believes God's love for the world is an active and engaged love, a love seeking justice and liberty. We cannot just be observers. So we care enough about people's lives to risk interpreting God's love, to take a stand, to call each of us into a response, no matter how controversial or complex. The church helps us think and act out a faith perspective, not just responding to all the other "mind-makers-up" that exist in our society."