

Confirmation Lesson #22 - "The Social Principles of the UMC"

Lesson Preparation

Purpose: To give class members an understanding of and appreciation for the UMC's longstanding historic involvement in social concerns and issues and the current statement of Social Principles of our church.

Core Teaching: Since the very beginning with John Wesley, social concern and social action have been at the very heart of the Methodist movement and Highland Park UMC. Our current statement of Social Principles is only the latest in a long line of such statements. These statements and HPUMC's consistent involvement in the issues and concerns of our community and world are a central part of our faith.

Small Group Resources: **Set of "Family Feud" statements**, cut up and placed in an envelope. Be sure to check with the lead teacher to see if the number of topics is going to be reduced.

Preparation: **butcher paper, masking tape, markers** (for graffiti wall - make sure the graffiti wall is prepared and that we have plenty of markers available- 50 or so). **Headlines from newspapers** from the past week and news magazines. Have **popcorn scriptures** (17 slips from the curriculum) cut out and ready to hand out. Have copies of the **Social Creed** (from curriculum) for each class member.

Scripture: **Micah 6:6-8**

"With what shall I come before the LORD, and bow myself before God on high? Shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves a year old? Will the LORD be pleased with thousands of rams, with ten thousands of rivers of oil? Shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?" He has told you, O mortal, what is good; and what does the LORD require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?

1 John 3:17-18

How does God's love abide in anyone who has the world's goods and sees a brother or sister in need and yet refuses help? Little children, let us love, not in word or speech, but in truth and action.

1 John 4:20-21

Those who say, "I love God," and hate their brothers or sisters, are liars; for those who do not love a brother or sister whom they have seen, cannot love God whom they have not seen. The commandment we have from him is this: those who love God must love their brothers and sisters also.

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Introduction to Lesson: Discussion of the Graffiti Wall

The leader will take a couple of minutes to discuss the Graffiti Wall by having class members look at what is written for a moment or two, and then asking:

- 1) Which of the issues on the wall do you think are the **most important**?
- 2) Which **worry or concern you** the most?
- 3) Which ones are **not the church's** or an individual Christian's **business**?
- 4) Which ones **are the church's** or an individual Christian's **business**?

**"Popcorn" Reading of
Matthew 25-31-47:**

The leader will hand out 17 slips of paper to class members. These are included in your curriculum and will be read in order. Collectively they will be a reading of Matthew 25:31-47. The leader will then ask:

- 1) What do you **hear Jesus saying** to us?
- 2) What does this **say about what is the church's business** and what is not?

**Brief History of
Methodism's Concern with
Social Issues and Our
Social Creed**

The leader will give a *brief* overview of Methodism's historic concern about social problems and how we got our Social Principles and Social Creed. Reprinted below is from the Preface to the Social Principles of the UMC. **This is our resource** for this overview. This statement is taken from the United Methodist **Book of Discipline**:

Part III SOCIAL PRINCIPLES PREFACE

The United Methodist Church has a long history of concern for social justice. Its members have often taken forthright positions on controversial issues involving Christian principles. Early Methodists expressed their opposition to the slave trade, to smuggling, and to the cruel treatment of prisoners. . .

The Social Principles are a prayerful and thoughtful effort on the part of the General Conference to speak to the human issues in the contemporary world from a sound biblical and theological foundation as historically demonstrated in United Methodist traditions. They are intended to be instructive and persuasive in the best of the prophetic spirit. The Social Principles are a call to all members of The United Methodist Church to a prayerful, studied dialogue of faith and practice.

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Large Group

Set Up For Small Group **Family Feud**

Session: You will only have about 20 minutes in your small group before we bring the entire class back together for the game.

Share with the class that social issues and concerns are often - *by definition* - controversial. Today we are going to get a chance to explore some of the controversial topics that the United Methodist Church has taken positions on. You may agree with some of these positions and you may disagree with some. You'll spend your small group time reading and going over selected topics from our Social Principles. Then, we will have a little friendly "Family Feud" game between the guys and the girls based on what we have studied. Answer any questions, then dismiss the class to their small groups.

NOTE: due to time limitations, you may want to select a few of these topics (5-6) and have the small groups focus on them. If you do this, limit the Family Feud game cards to the topics you have chosen.

Prayer: Large group leader closes with prayer.

Dismiss to small group: Students follow small group leaders to their respective locations.

Small Group

Opening Prayer: Begin the small group session with a prayer. You may want to do a sentence completion prayer, a "build a prayer", or ask for a volunteer to pray. The main idea is for the youth themselves to pray. This is how they learn and how they become comfortable with prayer.

Preparing for the "Family Feud" Game: Hand out copies of the selected articles to your group members and have the members read them one at a time. After each is read, ask:

- 1) What is **the topic** this statement covers?
- 2) **What position** does the United Methodist Church take on this topic?
- 3) Do you **agree or disagree** with this position? Why do you believe the way you do?
- 4) What **might we be asked** on this topic during Family Feud?

Joys & Concerns: Ask students to share any Joys & Concerns for the week.

Lord's Prayer: Lead the small group in the Lord's Prayer.

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Family Feud Game: Call the class back together. Have the guys sit on one side and the girls sit on the other. Explain how the game will be played. Give them the following explanation. Use the 12 game cards (or the correct reduced number) below to play the game.

Welcome to "Friendly Family Feud", also known as the "battle of the guys and girls". Here is the way the game will be played. We will start with the girls. They will elect and send 4 representatives up to the front. I will read out a topic and give you the choices. The girls have 30 seconds to agree as a team on what they think the correct answer is. If they are correct they get 100 points. If they are incorrect, I will turn to the boys and give them a chance to answer. If they get the correct answer, they will get 50 points. I will then turn to the boys and repeat the process. We'll go back and forth until all of the topics are covered or time runs out. WARNING: some of the topics may be tricky - there may even be more than one correct answer. And one last thing. When the points are awarded for the correct answer, you will be ASKED IF YOU KNOW THE REASON for this position as stated in the social principles. If you give the correct reason to this question, you get twice the points (either 200 or 100).

Announcements/Birthdays: The leader will lift up the opportunities for mission we have and will focus on our spring break mission trip in March, our summer mission trip, working at VBS, and our other confirmation mission opportunities:

Sing "Sanctuary": Have the class form a circle and link arms (right over left) before singing.

The Social Creed: Close by handing out copies of the Social Creed and having the class read it out loud together.

UMYF Benediction: We'll gather in our closing circle and close by reciting our Social Creed and the UMYF Benediction.

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Family Feud Card #1

According to the Social Principles, our position on tobacco is that:

- A. tobacco should be taxed heavily.
- B. total abstinence is the best policy.
- C. smoking should be outlawed in public places.
- D. chewing is less harmful than smoking

"B" and "C" are correct answers. Tobacco can cause addiction, which can impair our relationship with God and with our fellow man. And the best way to avoid an addiction is total abstinence.

Family Feud Card #2

According to the Social Principles, prayer in public schools should be:

- A. mandatory.
- B. prohibited
- C. not required
- D. encouraged

"C" is the right answer.

Family Feud Card #3

According to the Social Principles, sexual education should teach:

- A. techniques of birth control.
- B. that birth control is morally wrong.
- C. faithfulness in marriage and abstinence in singleness.
- D. how difficult it is to be a teenage parent.

"C" is the right answer.

Family Feud Card #4

According to the Social Principles, our position on remarriage after divorce is that:

- A. Remarriage is never OK.
- B. Remarriage is OK only if the divorce was because of adultery.
- C. Divorce is regrettable, but remarriage is OK.
- D. Divorce is OK.

"C" is the right answer. The ideal is "one man and one woman for life". But sometimes we don't live up to that ideal.

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Family Feud Card #5

According to the Social Principles, abortion is not acceptable:

- A. under any circumstances.
- B. unless there was rape or incest, or the mother's life is endangered.
- C. as a means of birth control or gender selection.
- D. in the third trimester.

"C" is the right answer.

Family Feud Card #6

According to the Social Principles, homosexuality is:

- A. punishable by death
- B. acceptable within a committed relationship.
- C. incompatible with Christian teaching.
- D. unacceptable within the membership of the church.
- E. Homosexuals are persons of sacred worth deserving the ministry of the church.

"C" and "E" are both right.

Family Feud Card #7

According to the Social Principles, capital punishment is permissible:

- A. for murder.
- B. for violent crimes.
- C. under no circumstances.
- D. only if requested by the convict.

"C" is the right answer.

Family Feud Card #8

According to the Social Principles, our position on personal firearms is that:

- A. rifles and shotguns are OK, but handguns are not.
- B. all guns should be registered.
- C. all guns should be outlawed.
- D. none of the above.

"D" is the right answer. We don't have a position on personal firearms.

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Family Feud Card #9

According to the Social Principles, gambling is:

- A. permissible if it's a state lottery.
- B. a menace to society.
- C. permissible on church premises.
- D. none of the above.

"B" is the right answer.

Family Feud Card #10

In the Social Principles, why do we have a position on slavery?

- A. because we haven't gotten around to deleting it.
- B. because we're proud of our history.
- C. because slavery still exists in some parts of the world.
- D. none of the above.

"C" is the right answer. Slavery still exists, in one form or another, in several parts of the world.

Family Feud Card #11

According to the Social Principles, war is:

- A. a valid expression of national sovereignty.
- B. acceptable when our cause is righteous.
- C. incompatible with the teachings of Christ.
- D. a crime against humanity.

"C" is the right answer.

Family Feud Card #11

According to the Social Principles, our position on alcohol is that:

- A. moderation is the best policy.
- B. abstinence is the best policy.
- C. beer and wine are OK, but hard liquor is not.
- D. wine is OK, but not at Communion.

"B" is the right answer. The most reliable way to avoid problems with alcohol is to totally abstain.

'Pop Corn' Reading Of Matthew 25:31-47

— — — — —

#1

A reading from the gospel of Matthew, chapter 25, verses 31-47.
Hear the word of the Lord.

— — — — —

#2

³¹ "When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him,
then he will sit on the throne of his glory.

— — — — —

#3

³² All the nations will be gathered before him,
and he will separate people one from another
as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats,

— — — — —

#4

³³ and he will put the sheep at his right hand
and the goats at the left.

— — — — —

#5

³⁴ Then the king will say to those at his right hand,
'Come, you that are blessed by my Father,
inherit the kingdom prepared for you
from the foundation of the world;

— — — — —

#6

³⁵ for I was hungry and you gave me food,
I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink,
I was a stranger and you welcomed me,

— — — — —

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#7

³⁶ I was naked and you gave me clothing,
I was sick and you took care of me,
I was in prison and you visited me.'

— — — — — — — — — — — — — — — —

#8

³⁷ Then the righteous will answer him,
'Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry and gave you food,
or thirsty and gave you something to drink?'

— — — — — — — — — — — — — — — —

#9

³⁸ And when was it that we saw you a stranger and welcomed you,
or naked and gave you clothing?'

— — — — — — — — — — — — — — — —

#10

³⁹ And when was it that we saw you sick
or in prison and visited you?'

— — — — — — — — — — — — — — — —

#11

⁴⁰ And the king will answer them,
'Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these
who are members of my family, you did it to me.'

— — — — — — — — — — — — — — — —

#12

⁴¹ Then he will say to those at his left hand,
'You that are accursed,
depart from me into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels;

— — — — — — — — — — — — — — — —

#13

⁴² for I was hungry and you gave me no food,
I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink,

— — — — — — — — — — — — — — — —

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#14

⁴³ I was a stranger and you did not welcome me,
naked and you did not give me clothing, sick
and in prison and you did not visit me.'

— — — — —

#15

⁴⁴ Then they also will answer,
'Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry or thirsty
or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison,
and did not take care of you?'

— — — — —

#16

⁴⁵ Then he will answer them,
'Truly I tell you, just as you did not do it to one of the least of these,
you did not do it to me.'

— — — — —

#17

And these will go away into eternal punishment,
but the righteous into eternal life."

The United Methodist Book Of Discipline
Part III
SOCIAL PRINCIPLES
(Topics For Friendly Family Feud)

Divorce.

Where marriage partners, even after thoughtful consideration and counsel, are estranged beyond reconciliation, we recognize divorce as regrettable but recognize the right of divorced persons to remarry. We express our deep concern for the care and nurture of the children of divorced and/or remarried persons. We encourage that either or both of the divorced parents be considered for custody of the minor children of the marriage. We encourage an active, accepting, and enabling commitment of the church and our society to minister to the members of divorced and remarried families.

Human Sexuality

We recognize that sexuality is God's good gift to all persons. We believe persons may be fully human only when that gift is acknowledged and affirmed by themselves, the Church, and society. We call all persons to the disciplined, responsible fulfillment of themselves, others, and society in the stewardship of this gift. We also recognize our limited understanding of this complex gift and encourage the medical, theological, and social science disciplines to combine in a determined effort to understand human sexuality more completely. We call the Church to take the leadership role in bringing together these disciplines to address this most complex issue. Further, within the context of our understanding of this gift of God, we recognize that God challenges us to find responsible, committed, and loving forms of expression.

Although all persons are sexual beings whether or not they are married, sexual relations are only clearly affirmed in the marriage bond. Sex may become exploitative within as well as outside marriage. We reject all sexual expressions which damage or destroy the humanity God has given us as birthright, and we affirm only that sexual expression which enhances that same humanity, in the midst of diverse opinion as to what constitutes that enhancement.

We deplore all forms of the commercialization and exploitation of sex with their consequent cheapening and degradation of human personality. We call for strict enforcement of laws prohibiting the sexual exploitation or use of children by adults. We call for the establishment of adequate protective services, guidance, and counseling opportunities for children thus abused. We insist that all persons, regardless of age, gender, marital status, or sexual orientation, are entitled to have their human and civil rights ensured.

We recognize the continuing need for full, positive, and factual sex education opportunities for children, youth, and adults. The Church offers a unique opportunity to give quality guidance/education in this area.

Homosexual persons no less than heterosexual persons are individuals of sacred worth. All

persons need the ministry and guidance of the Church in their struggles for human fulfillment, as well as the spiritual and emotional care of a fellowship which enables reconciling relationships with God, with others, and with self. Although we do not condone the practice of homosexuality and consider this practice incompatible with Christian teaching, we affirm that God's grace is available to all. We commit ourselves to be in ministry for and with all persons.

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Abortion

-The beginning of life and the ending of life are the God-given boundaries of human existence. While individuals have always had some degree of control over when they would die, they now have the awesome power to determine when and even whether new individuals will be born. Our belief in the sanctity of unborn human life makes us reluctant to approve abortion. But we are equally bound to respect the sacredness of the life and well-being of the mother, for whom devastating damage may result from an unacceptable pregnancy. In continuity with past Christian teaching, we recognize tragic conflicts of life with life that may justify abortion, and in such cases support the legal option of abortion under proper medical procedures. We cannot affirm abortion as an acceptable means of birth control, and we unconditionally reject it as a means of gender selection. We call all Christians to a searching and prayerful inquiry into the sorts of conditions that may warrant abortion. We call for the Church to provide nurturing ministries to those persons who terminate a pregnancy. We encourage the Church to provide nurturing ministries to those who give birth. Governmental laws and regulations do not provide all the guidance required by the informed Christian conscience. Therefore, a decision concerning abortion should be made only after thoughtful and prayerful consideration by the parties involved, with medical, pastoral, and other appropriate counsel.

Rights of Children.

Once considered the property of their parents, children are now acknowledged to be full human beings in their own right, but beings to whom adults and society in general have special obligations. Thus, we support the development of school systems and innovative methods of education designed to assist every child toward complete fulfillment as an individual person of worth. All children have the right to quality education, including a full sexual education appropriate to their stage of development that utilizes the best educational techniques and insights. Christian parents and guardians and the Church have the responsibility to ensure that children receive sexual education consistent with Christian morality, including faithfulness in marriage and abstinence in singleness. Moreover, children have the rights to food, shelter, clothing, health care, and emotional well-being as do adults, and these rights we affirm as theirs regardless of actions or inactions of their parents or guardians. In particular, children must be protected from economic, physical, and sexual exploitation and abuse.

Alcohol and Other Drugs

-We affirm our long-standing support of abstinence from alcohol as a faithful witness to God's liberating and redeeming love for persons. We support abstinence from the use of any illegal drugs. Since the use of alcohol and illegal drugs is a major factor in crime, disease, death, and family dysfunction, we support educational programs encouraging abstinence from such use. Millions of living human beings are testimony to the beneficial consequences of therapeutic drug use, and millions of others are testimony to the detrimental consequences of drug misuse. We encourage wise policies relating to the availability of potentially beneficial or potentially damaging prescription and over-the-counter drugs; we urge that complete information about their use and misuse be readily available to both doctor and patient. We support the strict administration of laws regulating the sale and distribution of all opiates. We support regulations that protect society from users of drugs of any kind where it can be shown that a clear and present social danger exists. Drug-dependent persons and their family members are individuals of infinite human worth deserving of treatment, rehabilitation, and ongoing life-changing recovery. Misuse should be viewed as a symptom of underlying disorders for which remedies should be sought.

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Tobacco

-We affirm our historic tradition of high standards of personal discipline and social responsibility. In light of the overwhelming evidence that tobacco smoking and the use of smokeless tobacco are hazardous to the health of persons of all ages, we recommend total abstinence from the use of tobacco. We urge that our educational and communication resources be utilized to support and encourage such abstinence. Further, we recognize the harmful effects of passive smoke and support the restriction of smoking in public areas and workplaces

Gambling

.-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 love, 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. Community standards and personal life styles should be such as 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.

Basic Freedoms.

We hold governments responsible for the protection of the rights of the people to free and fair elections and to the freedoms of speech, religion, assembly, and communications media, and petition for redress of grievances without fear of reprisal; to the right to privacy; and to the guarantee of the rights to adequate food, clothing, shelter, education, and health care. The form and the leaders of all governments should be determined by exercise of the right to vote guaranteed to all adult citizens. We also strongly reject domestic surveillance and intimidation of political opponents by governments in power, and all other misuses of elective or appointive offices. The use of detention and imprisonment for the harassment and elimination of political opponents or other dissidents violates fundamental human rights. Furthermore, the mistreatment or torture of persons by governments for any purpose violates Christian teaching and must be condemned and/or opposed by Christians and churches wherever and whenever it occurs.

The Church regards the institution of slavery as an infamous evil. All forms of enslavement are totally prohibited and shall in no way be tolerated by the Church.

Education

.-We believe responsibility for education of the young rests with the family, the Church, and the government. In our society this function can best be fulfilled through public policies which ensure access for all persons to free public elementary and secondary schools and to post-secondary schools of their choice. Persons in our society should not be precluded by financial barriers from access to church-related and other independent institutions of higher education. We affirm the right of public and independent colleges and universities to exist, and we endorse public policies which ensure access and choice and which do not create unconstitutional entanglements between Church and state. The state should not use its authority to inculcate particular religious beliefs (including atheism) nor should it require prayer or worship in the public schools, but should leave students free to practice their own religious convictions.

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Criminal Justice

-To protect all citizens from those who would encroach upon personal and property rights, it is the duty of governments to establish police forces, courts, and facilities for the confinement, punishment, and rehabilitation of offenders. We support governmental measures designed to reduce and eliminate crime, consistent with respect for the basic freedom of persons. We reject all misuse of these necessary mechanisms, including their use for the purpose of persecuting or intimidating those whose race, appearance, life-style, economic condition, or beliefs differ from those in authority, and we reject all careless, callous, or discriminatory enforcement of law. We further support measures designed to remove the social conditions that lead to crime, and we encourage continued positive interaction between law enforcement officials and members of the community at large. In the love of Christ who came to save those who are lost and vulnerable, we urge the creation of genuinely new systems for the care and support of the victims of crime, and for rehabilitation that will restore, preserve, and nurture the humanity of the imprisoned. For the same reason, we oppose capital punishment and urge its elimination from all criminal code

Military Service.

Though coercion, violence, and war are presently the ultimate sanctions in international relations, we reject them as incompatible with the gospel and spirit of Christ. We therefore urge the establishment of the rule of law in international affairs as a means of elimination of war, violence, and coercion in these affairs.

We reject national policies of enforced military service as incompatible with the gospel. We acknowledge the agonizing tension created by the demand for military service by national governments. We urge all young adults to seek the counsel of the Church as they reach a conscientious decision concerning the nature of their responsibility as citizens. Pastors are called upon to be available for counseling with all young adults who face conscription, including those who conscientiously refuse to cooperate with a system of conscription.

We support and extend the ministry of the Church to those persons who conscientiously oppose all war, or any particular war, and who therefore refuse to serve in the armed forces or to cooperate with systems of military conscription. We also support and extend the Church's ministry to those persons who conscientiously choose to serve in the armed forces or to accept alternative service.

War and Peace.

We believe war is incompatible with the teachings and example of Christ. We therefore reject war as an instrument of national foreign policy and insist that the first moral duty of all nations is to resolve by peaceful means every dispute that arises between or among them; that human values must outweigh military claims as governments determine their priorities; that the militarization of society must be challenged and stopped; that the manufacture, sale, and deployment of armaments must be reduced and controlled; and that the production, possession, or use of nuclear weapons be condemned.

Our Social Creed

We believe in God, Creator of the world; and in Jesus Christ the Redeemer of creation. We believe in the Holy Spirit, through whom we acknowledge God's gifts, and we repent of our sin in misusing these gifts to idolatrous ends.

We affirm the natural world as God's handiwork and dedicate ourselves to its preservation, enhancement, and faithful use by humankind.

We joyfully receive, for ourselves and others, the blessings of community, sexuality, marriage, and the family.

We commit ourselves to the rights of men, women, children, youth, young adults, the aging, and those with handicapping conditions; to improvement of the quality of life; and to the rights and dignity of racial, ethnic, and religious minorities.

We believe in the right and duty of persons to work for the glory of God and the good of themselves and others, and in the protection of their welfare in so doing; in the rights to property as a trust from God, collective bargaining, and responsible consumption; and in the elimination of economic and social distress.

We dedicate ourselves to peace throughout the world, to the rule of justice and law among nations, and to individual freedom for all people of the world.

We believe in the present and final triumph of God's Word in human affairs, and gladly accept our commission to manifest the life of the gospel in the world. Amen.