

Our Response to the 2016 Presidential Election

Holiday Help for Hopeful Conversations : *In times of division, turn toward the Social Principles for help*, by Rev. Neal Christie, General Board of Church and Society, November 12, 2016

As people of faith, how do we handle inevitable family tensions that come from differences of perspective and lived experience? Here are some suggestions:

Remember to take a deep breath.

Center yourself.

Don't lose the big picture. We have much to be thankful for.

Every family deals with conflicts. Remember that you are not alone.

The United Methodist Social Creed Litany says, "God embraces all hues of humanity, delights in diversity and difference, favors solidarity transforming strangers into friends. And so shall we."

If there are children at your gathering remember they are looking to you to model healthy communication.

In your holiday prayers acknowledge that even at the table there will be gratitude mixed with tension.

Recognize that our communities have been through a difficult time during these elections. Some are celebrating and some are grieving. Perhaps today there is tension in your own home. It might be helpful to acknowledge this truth. Express hope that this might be a time of love, respect and support for one another just as we are.

Name that there are important differences of opinion. The divides in our society often represent legitimate conflicts of values. Many believe that these values are not compatible with one another.

Healthy conversations involve both listening and speaking. Scripture calls us to speak the truth in love (Ephesians 4:15).

Avoid demeaning people who disagree with your perspective. All are beloved by God and made in God's image. Love is the centerpiece of our faith (1 John 4:19).

The United Methodist Social Principles say, "We affirm our unity in Jesus Christ while acknowledging differences in applying our faith in different cultural contexts as we live out the gospel. We stand united in declaring our faith that God's grace is available all, that nothing can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus."

Healthy conversation can lead to new insights and perspectives. The conversation is not about winning or losing but fostering understanding and growth.

At the 2016 General Conference The United Methodist Church affirmed a new Social Principle: "That no identity or culture has more legitimacy than any other. We call the Church to challenge any hierarchy of cultures or identities. Through relationships within and among cultures we are called to and have the responsibility of learning from each other and showing mutual respect for our differences and similarities as we experience the diversity of perspectives and viewpoints."

Cherish your time with your loved ones despite your differences or because of them. Jesus ate at the table with all people.

Lift up a hopeful vision. The United Methodist Social Principles say, "God's world is one world. We commit ourselves as a Church to the achievement of a world community that is a fellowship of persons who honestly love one another. We pledge ourselves to seek the meaning of the gospel in all issues that divide people and threaten the growth of world community."

Keep sharing your story and be willing to listen to the stories of others.

Advent comes right after Thanksgiving. Advent is a time to tell the story of God's love for the world through Jesus Christ. Tell your story of how God's love, mercy and justice has changed your life.

Editor's Note: This piece was written by Neal Christie and Clayton Childers with input from Emily Pickens-Jones and Jacey Johnson.

From Valerie Vogt at Servant Church:

Facebook group: SaferPersons. You are welcome to join if you are on FB.

From Methodist Federation for Social Action

Dear Justice Seekers,

For 109 years, MFSA has been a prophetic voice for justice-seeking people of faith in The United Methodist Church, in our nation and the world. We will continue to be that voice. We are a voice for peace with justice in Israel and Palestine. We are a voice working against racism and white privilege. We are a voice for reproductive health and justice. We are a voice for a healthy planet. We are a voice against colonialism, militarism, and misuse of power. We are a voice of inclusion for all God's children, regardless of their sexual orientation or gender identity. We are a voice that welcomes our migrant neighbor. But most importantly, we are a voice at the crossroads where these concerns for justice intersect.

We believe the recent decisions made by President-elect Trump with respect to leadership in his administration speak against the very foundation of our justice seeking faith. We are alarmed. We believe these individuals have not shown the necessary skills for leadership and whose past words and actions have not represented the values of civilized society. As justice-seeking people of faith, we stand opposed to not only one individual, but the emerging pattern that President-elect Trump is building a cabinet founded on white supremacy, fear, and bigotry.

MFSA calls our church to expand its understanding of the radical call of the Gospel to be an inclusive, justice-seeking, risk-taking Body of Christ. We live out our belief that to be faithful witnesses to the Gospel of Jesus Christ is to be involved in the transformation of the social order. Therefore, we call The United Methodist Church, the Council of Bishops, congregations, and its members to join us in taking active steps to publicly "resist evil, injustice, and oppression in whatever forms they present themselves."

Experiences of injustice do not happen in a vacuum, and therefore it is imperative to: develop the most effective strategies to create space for understanding privilege; organize in an intersectional framework led by marginalized communities; and build effective systems of resistance and cooperation to take action for justice. We invite you to join us in this work.

We invite United Methodist leadership including our bishops, clergy, and lay leaders to join us in signing the "Faith Leaders Call on Republican officials to reject Mr. Trump's Cabinet of Bigotry" letter distributed by Faith in Public Life. You can find the link here: <https://goo.gl/J9zXSx>

We call on all Justice-Seeking People of Faith to join us by:

- Contacting your legislators to express as a justice seeking person of faith your concern that the leadership of our nation must reflect justice for all people.
- Speaking and working against the narrative that privileged communities are being oppressed when they are asked to acknowledge the ways their privilege perpetuates bias and injustice.
- Committing to create opportunities for education and advocacy to publicly and actively resist white supremacy, white privilege, and implicit bias in your communities.

If you are so moved, we invite you to support the work of the Methodist Federation for Social Action, so we can continue to be a voice for justice for all people.

Seeking Justice Together,
The Staff and Board of Directors
Methodist Federation for Social Action

[Download a PDF of this statement here](#)

From [Faithful America](#).

Events are moving very quickly, and we need more resources to immediately begin organizing Christians to:

- **Show solidarity with immigrants and refugees**, whom Trump has threatened with surveillance and violence. The message needs to be clear: Christians will put their bodies and their churches in the way of these attacks.
- **Demand that church hierarchs break their silence** and condemn the rising tide of hatred and authoritarianism. Fear of appearing too partisan can no longer be an excuse for ignoring God's clear commandments to defend the most vulnerable.
- **Build support for courageous pastors and churches** who are already confronting violence and providing sanctuary. Those who are stepping forward need to see just how many Christians from across the country have their backs.

From Slate writers and other staffers offer their suggestions for what voters can do with their post-election anxieties.

If you are worried about reproductive rights: Support an abortion clinic by donating money, volunteering, or escorting women to clinic.

If you want more women in government: Support Emily's List and other groups working to get more women and minorities into office.

If you're concerned about the climate: Change your eating, drinking, and energy consumption habits to live more sustainably.

If you are a non-Muslim who's worried about Islamophobia: Fight misinformation by reading the Quran and learning more about Islam.

Muslims have been here before. We've become a very resilient minority group in the wake of 9/11 and America's never-ending war on terror. Our biggest enemy right now is misinformation, so reading an English translation of the Quran is a good start to understanding your Muslim neighbors. I recommend [the Quran translated by the Institute of Islamic Knowledge](#) in Houston. I also recommend Moustafa Bayoumi's [How Does It Feel to Be a Problem?: Being Young and Arab in America](#), a collection of short stories on the lives of Arab Americans living in Brooklyn, New York. —Aymann Ismail

If you're worried about the freedom of the press: Pay for journalism.

Buy a subscription for yourself and/or for a Trump supporter.....It costs money to publish good journalism that runs counter to the interests of powerful people and institutions. Ask *Gawker*. —Jeff Friedrich

If you are worried about bridging cultural divides: Volunteer with Big Brothers Big Sisters.

If you are worried about income inequality and our schools: Support nonprofit education programs.

Support local nonprofits that directly provide education and programming for kids at high-need schools. (I'm part of a board for [an organization](#) that educates kids in performing arts after school, and their school attendance and graduation rates are impressive.) There also may be opportunities to volunteer your time or fundraise for these programs—you can [find some through Charity Navigator](#) or by Googling nonprofit expos being held in your community. —Aisha Harris

If you are concerned about immigration: Volunteer for and donate to organizations that support immigrants. (Texas Impact, iACT, etc.)

If you care about hunger and poverty: Donate to a food bank.

If you are worried about the future of liberal governance: Run for local office.

A 12-Step Program for Responding to President-Elect Trump
by Nicholas Kristof

Traumatized by the election results, many Americans are asking: *What now?* Here are steps that any of us can take that can make a difference at the margins. Onward!

1. I WILL accept that my side lost, but I won't acquiesce in injustice and I will gird for battle on issues I care about. I will [call or write](#) my member of Congress and express my opposition to mass deportation, to cutting 22 million people off health insurance, to nominations of people

who are unqualified or bigoted, to reduced access to contraception and cancer screenings. Better yet, I'll attend my representative's town meeting and put him or her on the spot.

2. I WILL try to do small things in my own life, recognizing that they are inadequate but at least a start: I will [sign up](#) on the Council on American-Islamic Relations website, volunteering to fight Islamophobia. I'll call a local mosque to offer support, or join an interfaith event. I will sign up for an "[accompany my neighbor](#)" list if one exists for my area, to be an escort for anyone who is now in fear.

3. I WILL avoid demonizing people who don't agree with me about this election, recognizing that it's as wrong to stereotype Trump supporters as anybody else. I will avoid Hitler metaphors, recognizing that they stop conversations and rarely persuade. I'll remind myself that no side has a monopoly on truth and that many Trump supporters are good people who want the best for the country. The left already has gotten into trouble for condescending to working-class people, and insulting all Trump supporters as racists simply magnifies that problem. Have you changed anything in your daily life since the election? For example, have you tried to understand opposing points of view, donated to a group, or contacted your member of Congress? Your answer may be included in a follow up post.

4. I'LL DO my part to support the society I'd like to see. I'll eat [Chobani](#) yogurt because its owner has been subjected to racist attacks for his willingness to hire and promote refugees. Likewise, I will give blood and [register for organ donation](#) — for at least they'll make me feel better. As will a tub of Chobani.

5. I WILL support groups like the [Southern Poverty Law Center](#) that fight hate groups, and back [the center's petition](#) calling on Donald Trump to disavow bigotry. Depending on my interests, I'll support an immigration rights group, the A.C.L.U. or Planned Parenthood. And I'll subscribe to a newspaper as one way of resisting efforts to squelch the news media or preside over a post-fact landscape — and also to encourage journalists to be watchdogs, not lap dogs.

6. I WILL support refugees, one of the most demonized groups in the world. The International Rescue Committee's work for refugees can for the first time [be supported](#) through donations to The New York Times Neediest Cases Fund. In many cities in America and abroad, volunteer can help refugees through [this I.R.C. portal](#). More refugee resettlement agencies are [here](#).

7. I WON'T let it slide if a friend makes degrading comments about a minority or women. Even if it's over Thanksgiving dinner, I'll push back and say something like: "Come on! You really think that?!" Similarly, I may not be able to prevent a sexual predator from reaching the White House, but at events I attend, I may be able to prevent a sexual predator from assaulting a drunken partygoer.

8. I WILL resist dwelling in an echo chamber. I will follow smart people on Twitter or Facebook with whom I disagree. I will also try to enlarge my social circle to include people with different views, recognizing that diversity is a wonderful thing — and that if I know only Clinton supporters, then I don't have a clue about America.

9. I WILL do what I can in my own life to make sure that the needy aren't forgotten in the next four years amid paroxysms of tax cuts for the wealthy. I can support [Reach Out and Read](#), an outstanding program that helps at-risk kids learn to read: A \$20 donation covers one child for a year, or one can serve as a reader. Or I can be a Big Brother or Big Sister or help through [iMentor](#).

10. I WILL understand that progress may unfold at the state or local level, and I will engage there. It's encouraging that voters in four states passed minimum wage measures, and in three states approved gun safety measures, while other states and localities are wrestling with climate change. And, of course, a starting point is to get my friends to vote.

11. I WILL take on sexism and misogyny, which in forms like [domestic violence](#), sexual assault and sex trafficking affect women and girls across the country. Even today, Republicans and Democrats should be able to work together to get funding for women's shelters or to prosecute pimps.

12. I WILL not lose hope. I will keep reminding myself that politics zigs and zags, and that I can do more than shout in the wind. I can fight for my values even between elections, and even at the micro level I can mitigate the damage to my neighbors and attempt to heal a social fabric that has been rent.

From Jim Wallis, *Sojourners*

1. We will go deeper in faith.

Our times require a moral compass. We must replace certainty with reflection. Go from simply belief to actual practice. Seek both courage and humility. Read, study, and live the words of Jesus. Replace white identity with faith identity. Replace nativist religion with multiethnic and international faith. As the prophet Micah said, "do justice, love kindness, and walk humbly with your God."

2. We will lift up truth.

Sojourners will always replace fear with facts when it comes to public discussions about immigrants, refugees, Muslims, racial diversity, and national security. Multiracial truth-telling about race in America is urgently needed as we move to a new demographic future where America will no longer be a white majority nation. Sojourners will always lift up the voices of these communities so that they can share their own stories.

3. We will reject White Nationalism.

We will name racism and xenophobia as sins against our neighbors and against the God who made us all in God's image. We all must move the nation forward and not backward. Affirm diversity as a gift, blessing, and great opportunity for our nation — and reject the language of threats. Inclusion means full participation

4. We will love our neighbors by protecting them from hate speech and attacks.

We will act in support of people who belong to groups who are afraid because they have been targeted, especially standing with parents who are worried about the safety of their children of color. We all must watch, report, and confront hate speech and behavior — against *all* ethnic and religious groups, women, LGBTQ people, immigrants, and all marginalized groups — and surround people being attacked with supportive community. White supremacist groups who are celebrating the results of this election need to be identified, isolated, and prosecuted.

5. *We will welcome the stranger, as our Scriptures instruct.*

We will block, interfere, and obstruct the mass deportations of immigrants who are law-abiding and hard-working members of our communities. We all must accompany, advocate for, and invite immigrants and their families into our faith families and congregations when they become vulnerable. We will provide opportunities to call on local elected officials and law enforcement officers not to participate in rounding up immigrants — in the name of public safety and family protection — and, if necessary, force federal enforcement police to arrest immigrant families in our churches, instead of at their homes alone.

6. *We will expose and oppose racial profiling in policing.*

We will reach out to our local police departments to make that commitment clear from the faith community. If the Justice Department and the White House no longer hold police departments accountable to obey the law in relationship to people of color, we all must take on that role in our religious communities. Local ecumenical and interfaith clergy councils should meet with sheriffs and police chiefs in local communities for an open dialogue with them. We will offer resources to study together the important report of the Presidential Commission on 21st Century Policing, and help work with them to implement it. We must make it clear that local faith communities promise to watch and monitor the relationship of our police to our communities.

7. *We will defend religious liberty.*

We will defy the defamation and banning of Muslims. We all must embrace Muslims as fellow Americans and protect them from the fears of attack, protect mosques with congregational solidarity, and protect national security with our Muslim fellow citizens. We must also resist anti-Semitism as part of the White Nationalism on the rise. If the registration of Muslims is called for, as has been suggested, Christians and Jews will join the registration lines.

8. *We will work to end the misogyny that enables rape culture.*

We will make every effort to replace misogyny with mutual respect. The language against women that was used in this presidential campaign must be completely rejected. We will name sexual assault for what it is: a sin and a crime. It must be exposed and resisted on every level of our society. Gender fairness and equality must be a fundamental principle in our workplaces, schools, and political systems.

9. *We will protest with our best values.*

We will defend constitutional values and workplace fairness, and fight for climate justice and environmental protection as we serve as stewards of our land. Whether in our streets, our schools or our workplaces — we will provide resources and opportunities to protest with dignity, discipline, and non-violence, not with hate for hate. We will respect the Constitution and our democratic processes and expect the same from this new administration. But if those procedures are violated, we must not be silent.

10. *We will listen.*

The nation is more divided and polarized than most of us can remember at any time in our lifetimes. So we will listen to you and we can all listen to each other if we desire healing — and we all should. Our congregations must become safe and sacred spaces for hearing each other's stories, pains, fears, and hopes — as people who want many of the same things for our families and children. Our educational institutions should also be such safe spaces for dialogue, learning the meaning of the diversity and pluralism that is America's best future.

Other Sources:

Instead of exchanging Christmas gifts with the adults in your family, make donations to progressive organizations in honor of your relatives.

If you have investments, divest of the companies who were strong Trump supporters.

Participate in local protests/events.

- Women's March on Austin, Tues Jan 21, noon – 6p, State Capitol. This is a sister event to the Women's March on Washington taking place in D.C. It will be held here in Austin for those in the state that cannot, for whatever reason, make it to D.C.

March from (Location to be determined) to the Capitol of Texas to show our strength, power and courage in a peaceful march. Daughters and granddaughters welcome as well as like-minded men, sons, grandsons. Invite your friends, family and co-workers. Spread the word! Let the world know we women stand with all women! No woman is free unless all women are free.

We've got a moment here. Let's not let it go to waste! We're not a protest against anything or anyone. We're marching FOR social justice, FOR kindness, FOR equality of opportunity, FOR love.

This is an INCLUSIVE march, and EVERYONE who supports women's rights is welcome.