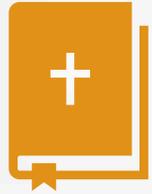


What does the Bible say?

For you were called to freedom, brothers and sisters; only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for self-indulgence, but through love become slaves to one another. For the whole law is summed up in a single commandment, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.”
(Galatians 5:13-14)

As servants of God, live as free people, yet do not use your freedom as a pretext for evil. **(1 Peter 2:16)**

Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. **(2 Corinthians 3:17)**



What does The United Methodist Church say?

Religious persecution has been common in the history of civilization. We urge policies and practices that ensure the right of every religious group to exercise its faith free from legal, political, or economic restrictions. We condemn all overt and covert forms of religious intolerance, being especially sensitive to their express and media stereotyping. We assert the right of all religions and their adherents to freedom from legal, economic, and social discrimination. **(Social Principles ¶162.B)**

Religious liberty continues to be denied and violated in many parts of the world. Concerns about religious persecution have been raised by almost every religious group, especially in places where one particular religion or belief is in a minority position... The United Methodist Church must continue to foster further cooperation among spiritual, religious, and ecumenical bodies for the protection of religious freedom and belief. It must enter into healthy dialogues with peoples of differing faiths and ideologies, including Native and indigenous peoples, in the search for the shared spiritual, social, and ethical principles that engender peace and justice... United Methodists must urge their governments and encourage civil society to enter into dialogues about racism and discrimination and resolve to address especially those concerns that have institutionalized religious bases. **(2016 Book of Resolutions, #6025, “Globalization and Its Impact on Human Dignity and Human Rights”)**



What do the facts say?

- As of 2014, 26% of the world's countries had anti-blasphemy laws or policies, and more than one-in-ten nations (13%) had laws or policies penalizing apostasy, the act of abandoning one's religious beliefs. The legal punishments for such actions vary from fines to death.¹
- In 2015, 7,100 Christians were killed for faith-related reasons, the most Christians killed in modern history.²
- Religious freedom, which is a human right as stated in the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights (Article 18), is under threat from both state and non-state actors including North Korea, Syria, Saudi Arabia, China, Da'esh (ISIS), and Boko Haram. The report reveals the intersection of religious persecution with other issues, such as gender-based violence, freedom of the press, and global migration and refugee crises.³
- Anti-Muslim hate groups increased in the United States by 197% between 2015 and 2016. In the week following the 2016 U.S. Presidential election, hundreds of hate acts were carried out against minorities, including Muslims and Jews.⁴



1 Pew Research, 2 CNN, 3 U.S. Department of State, 4 Southern Poverty Law Center

What do you say?

Take **ACTION** for justice...

Pray for the persecuted and for the persecutors. Prayer is one of the most common requests made by Christians who are persecuted for their faith. God enjoins us to pray for our friends as well as our adversaries.

Advocate for laws that protect the freedom of religion for all. Encourage your lawmakers to speak out against religious persecution, intolerance, and discrimination not just when it affects the majority group, but also when it hurts others. Encourage your lawmakers to oppose false applications of religious freedom – cases where religious freedom is used as a pretext for discrimination against other social groups.

Actively oppose a social climate of fear, mistrust, and stereotyping, and **encourage** a climate of welcome, respect, and support. In addition to recognizing International Religious Freedom Day on October 27, you can do “small acts of great love” by challenging stereotypical jokes and assumptions.



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