

**A RESOLUTION
PALMA CEIA UNITED METHODIST CHURCH**

TITLE: A Statement of Commitment to Justice for All People and a Call to Action for Palma Ceia United Methodist Church

SUBJECT: Equal Opportunity for all persons

SUMMITTED BY: B. John Masters, Jr.

REFERENCES: United Methodist Church Book of Discipline ¶161 and ¶162

DATE: August 18, 2008

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS: There are no direct financial implications arising to Palma Ceia United Methodist Church associated with this resolution.

1 **Inasmuch** as Palma Ceia United Methodist Church has always been a church providing
2 open hearts, open minds and open doors, it is appropriate that Palma Ceia United
3 Methodist Church adopt a public statement of that commitment consistent with Biblical
4 teaching and the Discipline of the United Methodist Church. This includes a call to action
5 to put into practice our belief that people are free and secure only when all of society
6 creates a social climate which believes in equal protection of and equal opportunity for all
7 people. Especially as Methodists, “We believe we have a responsibility to innovate,
8 sponsor, and evaluate new forms of community that will encourage development of the
9 fullest potential in individuals...”¹ As Plato said, “Justice will only exist where those not
10 affected by injustice are filled with the same amount of indignation as those affected.”

11 **Whereas**, Christians have been called from the earliest days of Old Testament teaching
12 to be Just to all, as in Micah 6:8 when the Prophet tells the people, “He hath showed thee,

¹ United Methodist Church Book of Discipline ¶161

13 O man, what *is* good; and what doth the LORD require of thee, but to do justly, and to
14 love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?," and;

15 **Whereas**, the Father of Methodism, John Wesley, wrote in his, "Explanatory Notes on
16 The Bible," for this verse, "He - God hath already told you in his word, with what you
17 ought to come before him. To do justly - To render to every one their due, superiors,
18 equals, inferiors, to be equal to all, and oppress none, in body, goods or name; in all your
19 dealings with men carry a chancery in your own breasts, and do according to equity. To
20 love mercy - To be kind, merciful and compassionate to all, not using severity towards
21 any. Walk humbly with thy God - Keep up a constant fellowship with God, by humble,
22 holy faith," and;

23 **Whereas**, as described in John Gill's Exposition of The Entire Bible, "to do justice" or
24 "judgment"; means to exercise public judgment and justice, as a king, among his
25 subjects; to do private and personal justice between man and man; to hurt no man's
26 person, property, and character, and;

27 **Whereas**, Justice is doing what is right. It is living by the Golden Rule and making
28 decisions that are good for everyone. It is building relationships in the marketplace, the
29 neighborhood or the family upon goodness, truth, mercy and compassion. It is living
30 above the culture's values. Justice is the recognition, according to Tom Ehrlich, that life
31 matters, how we treat others matters and the choices we make here and now matter. Our
32 decisions reveal our character and make the world better or worse. Pursuing justice
33 makes it better, and;

34 **Whereas**, Justice is also making sure that everyone has a seat at the table, a tenant of
35 Methodism from its earliest roots as the first item of the 1908 Social Creed of the
36 Methodist Episcopal Church says, “For equal rights and complete justice for all men in
37 all stations of life,” and;

38 **Whereas**, in the 22nd Chapter of the Book of Matthew. Jesus was challenged by the
39 Pharisee’s to define the Greatest Commandment. In verse 34 he responded, “Love the
40 Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.” 38
41 “This is the first and greatest commandment.” But Jesus didn’t stop there. Without
42 hesitation, he went on to say in verse 39, “And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbor
43 as yourself.’” and;

44 **Whereas**, in the New Testament, Paul says, “in Christ there is neither Jew nor Greek,
45 slave or free, male or female, God has enough love for all!,” and;

46 **Whereas**, John Wesley wrote in his comment on Acts 2:45: "It was a natural fruit of that
47 love wherewith each member of the community loved every other as his own soul. And if
48 the whole Christian Church had continued in this spirit, this usage must have continued
49 through all ages," and;

50 **Whereas**, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. reminded us, “When evil men shout ugly words of
51 hatred, good men must commit themselves to the glories of love. Where evil men would
52 seek to perpetuate an unjust status quo, good men must seek to bring into being a real
53 order of justice;” and;

54 **Whereas**, Florida United Methodist Bishop Timothy Whitaker has written, “When the
55 risen Jesus commissioned the disciples, he told them to go and make disciples of all
56 nations. When we hear the word “nations” we think of the nation-state. However the
57 nation-state is a modern concept. In the first century nations were ethnic groups. ... The
58 Great Commission envisions a church made of all ethnic peoples, with their distinctive
59 languages and cultures, united in one faith. To embrace a mission to all ethnic people is
60 an evangelical imperative, and;”²

61 **Whereas**, Florida United Methodist Bishop, Timothy Whitaker, has written in a
62 statement, “In service, we let the light of Jesus Christ shine in history. Christ not only
63 wants our faith in him, but also our service to others in his name. That is why he told us,
64 ‘*You are the light of the world. A city built on a hill cannot be hid*’ (Matthew 5:14). In
65 our service to the world we work to eliminate extreme poverty, to overcome racism, to
66 establish justice, to care for the earth and to advocate for peaceable policies by all
67 nations...”, and;

68 **Whereas**, The Book of Discipline of the United Methodist Church ¶161 states, “The
69 community provides the potential for nurturing human beings into the fullness of their
70 humanity. We believe we have a responsibility to innovate, sponsor, and evaluate new
71 forms of community that will encourage development of the fullest potential in
72 individuals. Primary for us is the gospel understanding that all persons are important-
73 because they are human beings created by God and loved through and by Jesus Christ
74 and not because they have merited significance. We therefore support social climates in

² The United Methodist Church Monitor: A Newsletter of the General Commission on Religion and Race, No. 64, Fall 2005, “A Bishop’s View”, P5

75 which human communities are maintained and strengthened for the sake of all persons
76 and their growth. We also encourage all individuals to be sensitive to others by using
77 appropriate language when referring to all persons. Language of a derogatory nature
78 (with regard to race, nationality, ethnic background, gender, sexuality, and physical
79 differences) does not reflect value for one another and contradicts the gospel of Jesus
80 Christ;” and;

81 **Whereas**, The Book of Discipline of the United Methodist Church ¶162 states, “The
82 rights and privileges a society bestows upon or withholds from those who comprise it
83 indicate the relative esteem in which that society holds particular persons and groups of
84 persons. We affirm all persons as equally valuable in the sight of God. We therefore work
85 toward societies in which each person's value is recognized, maintained, and
86 strengthened. We support the basic rights of all persons to equal access to housing,
87 education, communication, employment, medical care, legal redress for grievances, and
88 physical protection. We deplore acts of hate or violence against groups or persons based
89 on race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, religious affiliation, or economic status;”

90 **Whereas**, the United Methodist Church has adopted the saying, Open Hearts, Open
91 Minds, Open Doors, and;

92 **Whereas**, the website of Palma Ceia United Methodist Church states, “We have Open
93 Minds, Open Hearts, and Open Doors. I think you will find us a warm, welcoming and
94 accepting church.” and;

95 **Whereas**, Palma Ceia United Methodist Church and its members view our place in the
96 Tampa Bay area and the larger world as witnessing to Jesus Christ’s message of love for
97 and acceptance of all people, and;

98 **Whereas**, The people of Palma Ceia United Methodist Church have a history of
99 acceptance of and outreach to all people, and a desire to encourage others to love one
100 another in the spirit of the Gospel Message of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ;

101 **Now therefore be it resolved:** The People of Palma Ceia United Methodist Church
102 adopt the following statement of non-discrimination:

103 The people of Palma Ceia United Methodist Church are called to share
104 God’s love as we minister with and to all persons in the community where
105 the church is located and beyond, providing worship, nurture, fellowship,
106 and service. Our welcome knows no boundaries of age, race, ethnicity,
107 culture, gender, sexual orientation, economic condition, physical or mental
108 ability. We embrace and seek to preserve the beautiful, amazing diversity
109 of God’s creation. We cooperate in ministry with other local churches and
110 groups of God’s people as we participate in the worldwide mission of
111 Christ.

112 And will publish said statement as a public statement of Open Hearts, Open Minds, Open
113 Doors to our community and beyond in all places and publications as appropriate, and;

114 The statement will be added in a reasonable time to the website on the page which
115 includes the current statement of openness, and may be placed at other places as

116 appropriate on all official Church printed and electronic materials where such a statement
117 would be expected and advance the purpose of inclusion of all in the message of Jesus
118 Christ.

119 **Be it further resolved**, we require that organizations seeking and/or receiving material
120 support from Palma Ceia United Methodist Church through our time, talents, resources
121 and use of facilities will be required to have a statement of non-discrimination that will
122 include at least all categories stated in the Statement of Non-Discrimination, to include
123 age, race, ethnicity, culture, gender, sexual orientation, economic condition, physical or
124 mental ability, and;

125 An exception is granted for organizations that are a sub-division of a national
126 organization, and as such do not have the authority at the local level to proscribe a
127 different non-discrimination statement than that published by the national organization,
128 and must demonstrate said restriction. However, the Chairperson of the Administrative
129 Board or The Pastor or his/her designee shall be required to address a letter to the
130 appropriate governing authority of said organization providing the non-discrimination
131 statement of Palma Ceia United Methodist Church and expressing our desire that all
132 organizations utilizing the support and resources of Palma Ceia United Church maintain a
133 published non-discrimination statement that includes, in pertinent part, all classes
134 recognized in the non-discrimination statement of Palma Ceia United Methodist Church,
135 and;

136 It will be assumed that other United Methodist Churches adhere to the non-discrimination
137 statements set forth in the Social Principles of the United Methodist Church, and;

138 **Be it further resolved**, Palma Ceia United Methodist Church will, whenever reasonably
139 possible, seek to acquire products, services, sponsorships, etc. only from organizations
140 which have a published non-discrimination statement which equivalently protects all
141 classes listed in the non-discrimination statement of Palma Ceia United Methodist
142 Church, and;

143 This requirement shall not be seen as requiring Palma Ceia United Methodist Church to
144 end or otherwise interrupt any existing contracts and/or agreements for the provision of
145 services or products that existed prior to passage of this resolution.

146 **Effective Date:** The requirements of this resolution shall be effective immediately on
147 passage by the Administrative Board of Palma Ceia United Methodist Church, and any
148 required notices under the exception clause shall be sent within a reasonable time after
149 passage, but not more than sixty (60) days from passage. Inclusion of the Non-
150 Discrimination Statement in printed materials, where appropriate, is required only in new
151 supplies of the printed materials after existing supplies are exhausted.