

**RESOLUTION -- THE POOR PEOPLE'S CAMPAIGN:
A NATIONAL CALL FOR MORAL REVIVAL**

1 WHEREAS hurt, fear, uncertainty, and deprivation are among insidious afflictions common to

2 poor people of all colors and "races" in the United States of America;

3 And WHEREAS Scripture affirms that such afflictions are a true injustice in the eyes of God and

4 Jesus Christ;

5 And WHEREAS Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. proposed a poor people's campaign in the months

6 before his death on April 4, 1968 to help remedy those afflictions;

7 And WHEREAS a fusion-coalition of racial, social, economic, and other justice advocates has

8 come together to create a campaign with three primary goals: 1) organize justice-advocate

9 volunteers in each of twenty-five specific states, including Michigan; 2) train the volunteers,

10 during the fall of 2017, in order to work together on coordinated advocacy; and 3) mobilize

11 many more people beginning in April, 2018 -- the approximate 50th anniversary of Dr. King's

12 death -- for a sustained campaign of activism to include marches, sit-ins, needs-assessment for

13 local communities, and developing and sharing effective means to achieve a loving and just

14 community;

15 Therefore BE IT RESOLVED that the Michigan Conference of the United Church of Christ

16 formally **endorse** the initial and longer-term goals of The Poor People's Campaign: A National

17 Call for Moral Revival;

18 AND BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED that the Michigan Conference, by and through the Prophetic

19 Integrity Mission Area Team, the Dream of Justice Initiative, and the Associations, encourage

20 laity, clergy, local churches, and Associations to **organize and train** with, and take an **active part**

21 in the "new poor people's campaign" in honor of Dr. King's undying vision of justice.

22 Submitted for consideration by: Space for Grace UCC, and founder Pastor/Chaplin Pj Anderson,
23 DMin; Rev. Kerry Taylor-Snyder; Rev. Deborah Dean-Ware; and The Justice and Peace Team of
24 Edgewood UCC. Prepared and drafted by The Dream Of Justice Initiative, Michigan Conference
25 UCC, by Rebecca Mase, Frank Dennis, Brian Menlen, Mary Browning, Walt Kemnitz, Jr., July 31,
26 2017.

**BIBLICAL/THEOLOGICAL RATIONALE -- THE POOR PEOPLE'S CAMPAIGN:
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CREATION: From the very beginning, "When God began to create," (Genesis.1:1 - CEB), the Bible reminds us that, "God created humanity in God's own image, in the divine image God created them, male and female God created them." (Genesis 1:27). We, humanity, are one.

PROPHETS: Thus, the prophets called for humanity to "[h]ear the Lord's word [and] God's teaching." (Isaiah 1:10.) "[L]earn to do good. Seek justice: help the oppressed; help the orphan; plead for the widow." (Isaiah 1:17.)

"The Lord proclaims: Do what is just and right; rescue the oppressed from the power of the oppressor. Don't exploit or mistreat the refugee, the orphan, and the widow." (Jeremiah 22:3.) Indeed, "Didn't your father * * * do what was just and right? Then it went well for him! He defended the rights of the poor and needy; then it went well. Isn't that what it means to know me? declares the Lord." (Jeremiah 22.15-16.)

God aches if we "crush the head of the poor into the dust of the earth, and push the afflicted out of the way." (Amos 2:7.)

Thus, "He has told you, human one, what is good and what the Lord requires from you: to do justice, embrace faithful love, and walk humbly with your God." (Micah 6:8.)

JESUS CHRIST: Near the beginning of his ministry, our Savior clearly set-forth his own God-given mission while invoking the prophet Isaiah:

"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me. He has sent me to preach good news to the poor, to proclaim release to the prisoners and recovery of sight to the blind, to liberate the oppressed[.]" (Luke 4:18.)

Jesus gave to humanity good news; release; recovery of health; liberation. Justice: care for the poor, and help for the oppressed.

THE GREATEST COMMANDMENT -- LOVE: In his final return to Jerusalem, near the end of his earthly ministry, Jesus gave humanity the guiding principle for our lives: Love.

"You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your being, and with all your mind.' This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: 'You must love your neighbor as you love yourself.' All the Law and the Prophets depend on these two commands." (Matthew 22:37-40.)

Jesus further admonished humanity, in a parable: "I assure you that when you have [cared] for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you have done it for me." (Matthew 25:40.)

EPISTLES: The Apostle Paul has called us, in order that we follow the words of Christ, to "renew the thinking in your mind by the Spirit and clothe yourself with the new person created according to God's image in justice and true holiness." (Ephesians 4:23-25.) Thus, "Each of you must tell the truth to your neighbor because we are parts of each other in the same body. [And, all] should go to work, using their hands to do good so that they will have something to share with whoever is in need." (Ephesians 4:28.)

WE, HUMANITY: Thus, we, humanity, are one. We are called by God and Jesus to embrace the poor and oppressed in faithful love. We are called by the Spirit "to work [and] to share with whoever is in need." We, the individuals constituting the Michigan Conference, United Church of Christ, are called to campaign for the poor and the oppressed.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- 1.) In what ways can we as a congregation express our concern for the poor?
- 2.) In what ways can we as a congregation care for ourselves so that we have the vitality to care for the poor?
- 3.) How is caring for the poor -- "our neighbor" -- the same, and as important, as caring for ourselves?

**SUPPORTIVE STATEMENT -- THE POOR PEOPLE'S CAMPAIGN:
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In 2013, the Michigan Conference passed a resolution entitled "Proclaim Release to the Captives" ("Proclaim resolution") informed and motivated by Michelle Alexander's important book, *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness*. Through the Proclaim resolution, the Michigan Conference acknowledged the grave harm caused to people of color by the so-called "War on Drugs" -- created and maintained to augment the equally unjust Criminal Justice system in the United States of America.

The Conference shared the Proclaim resolution with the other conferences, and more than a half dozen Conferences passed similar resolutions. Following this, General Synod 2015, delegates passed two resolutions: one calling for the dismantling of the Discriminatory Mass Incarceration System; the other for the Dismantling of The New Jim Crow.

In the years since the Michigan Conference passed the Proclaim resolution, the Conference's Dream of Justice group has presented at local churches, and at Association and various other Conference gatherings -- working to: "educate the people and congregations "; and "support all activities" directed to "achieve racial justice." Most of the Dream of Justice presentations were made to mostly white UCC people -- loving and caring people. Many are living, knowingly or not, in "white privilege."

Three common questions/responses/critiques received during presentations are to the effect: 1.) "why can't **they** pull themselves up by their own boot-straps"; 2.) "the parents must do a better job parenting"; and 3.) "**Don't all lives matter?**"

Of course, ALL LIVES MATTER. But, "no lives matter unless and until Black lives matter - understanding and, more important, internalizing this is what it means to live into the Beloved Community, to be truly members of one another." Rev. Alex Vishio.

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. knew Black Lives Matter. He also believed all lives matter. Just months before his death, Dr. King announced his "poor people's campaign." The plight of the poor and oppressed was not limited to Black Americans, he said. But, Dr. King's poor people's campaign died with him.

Now, a fusion-coalition led by clergy including, Rev. Dr. Rev. William Barber, has created a new Poor People's Campaign. At General Synod 2017, Rev. Barber called on the United Church of Christ to help launch the campaign thus joining poor white, black and brown people to fight an economic system that seeks to keep them from understanding their common humanity.

Barber describe[s] a racialized code language used to pit poor whites against blacks, whom they believe are getting benefits they don't deserve. "This is a race problem and a class problem. We need the fire of Pentecost to illuminate the reality."

*"It's going to take some of our predominantly white denominations to say some of this stuff. You may need to have your next convention on the steps of the legislature. We need to get the church out into the streets where it belongs. We have to * * * link up."*

Barber urged the [UCC] to think about more than a strategy. "We need a long-term plan for a moral agenda that will not just change this next election but will change this entire century."

*"What if we didn't just curse the darkness? What if we could organize in 25 states for 40 days?" [July 2, 2017, UCC on-line, *Keeping You Informed*, by Micki Carter]*

So, yes, Black Lives STILL Matter. And, yes, ALL lives do matter. The Michigan Conference can help by endorsing the Poor People's Campaign and by taking concrete steps to promote it. ---- 9.12.17