

BOARD OF CHURCH AND SOCIETY

Introductory Comments:

The purpose of the Board of Church and Society is to encourage and empower the people of the United Methodist Church to live faithfully wherever they are—in the church and in the world. Our issues are the issues of the news, the schools, and the workplaces because this is where people's lives are lived out. By being involved in these issues, the Board of Church and Society plays a critical role in helping the UMC be a denomination that relates to the real lives of God's people.

Highlights and Accomplishments of the Past Year:

The Board of Church and Society's annual focus for 2006 was "education, advocacy, and legislation." Lamenting several years of dormancy, the BCS worked diligently to bring relevant and meaningful dialogue back to the Annual Conference floor in June 2006. Through the Board's actions we directly encouraged lay and clergy delegates to consider relevant issues such as universal health care and restorative justice, and in doing so, also take important steps toward discussing heart-felt issues in a respectful manner. These issues-- health, emotional and physical well-being, and the inclusion of all people-- were central to Jesus' ministry and are equally fundamental to our Conference.

Because of our voice at Annual Conference, three people contacted our Board to receive grants to participate in a national conference, titled "Wesleyan Peace for the 21st Century" in September 2006. One individual had never attended a nation-wide UM program previously. She returned to her local church energized for new ministry in the areas of peace and justice-- feeling better connected to the larger UMC. We have also made more efforts to connect with the youth of the Conference, including a BCS information table at Youth Convo.

The Board is proud of its partnership with the Wisconsin Council of Churches by providing financial support in the publications of *Hunger on Our Doorstep* and a comprehensive resource packet on the death penalty advisory referendum called the *Educational Resource Packet for Wisconsin Congregations*. These outstanding materials were sent to all of our United Methodist churches, with several congregations implementing the study. These educational guides could not have been produced on our own as a Conference. The Board's priorities of advocacy and education have been an excellent match with the WCC's work, and as a Conference, we greatly benefit from this partnership.

Finally, the Board has offered a series of non-violence workshops. These workshops have been held in local UM churches and have addressed the critical issues of making peace an action verb, not simply a noun. We are particularly proud of the up-coming bullying workshop designed for youth and adults. In light of recent tragedies in local school districts, educating and empowering our youth for peace is essential.

Plans for the Coming Year:

In 2008 the Board has decided to make its focus the "Social Creed." 2008 will be the centennial celebration of the Methodist Church's decision to adhere to a creed that speaks to social and civic righteousness. As it is the Board's mandate to analyze the issues that confront individuals and our society, we look forward to educating the Conference through plans and programs that will encourage the making of a more humane and peaceful world. As we educate on the history, development, and future of the Social Creed (now Social Principles) we feel that individuals as well as the body of our Conference will benefit from a re-examination of social holiness. Jesus Christ lived and died in public—a message for all of us Christians to consider and live by.

Amanda Stein, Chairperson