

A STATEMENT BY THE COUNCIL OF BISHOPS

The statement below was adopted and issued by the Council of Bishops of the Methodist Church, meeting in Detroit, Michigan, November 13, 1963. Following the statement is the response made to the Bishops by a group of concerned persons who had gone to Detroit to express concern for the cause of racial justice and church renewal, plus a critique of the statement, and a concrete recommendation by one of the members of the Behold editorial board.

The Methodist Church stands for the equal rights of all racial, cultural, and religious groups. We confess with deep penitence that our performance as a church has not kept pace with our profession. The right to choose a place of residence, to enter a school, to secure employment, to vote or to join a church, should in no way be limited by a person's race or culture.

The Methodist Church must build and demonstrate within its own organization and program a fellowship without racial barriers. The church must also work to change those community patterns in which racial segregation appears, including education, housing, voting, employment and the use of public facilities. To insist that restaurants, schools, business establishments, and hotels provide equal accommodations for all peoples without regard to race or color, but to exempt the church from the same requirements is to be guilty of absurdity as well as sin.

We urge our pastors upon whom rests the responsibility of receiving persons into the church, to receive all who are qualified and who desire to be received without regard to race, color, or national origin, and we individually and collectively pledge them our support as they do so. The Methodist Church is an inclusive church.

We decry, on legal as well as Christian grounds, the denial to any person of any color or race the right of membership or the right to worship in any Methodist Church. Further, to move to arrest any persons attempting to worship is to us an outrage.

We call upon all Methodist institutions, where such has not been done, to bring their racial policies and practices in line with the Christian principles of racial inclusiveness to which we are committed.

We affirm the legality and right of those minorities who are oppressed anywhere in the world, to protest, to assemble in public, and to agitate "for the redress

of grievances," provided this is done in an orderly way. A public march as a vast petition for attention and justice is in line with the principles on which this nation was founded. The recent march in Washington provided a spectacular and well-directed move of this kind.

We note with satisfaction the increasing appreciation in our land and over the world of a growing spirit of justice and good will which in time will enable our people, both as churchmen and as citizens, to resolve unbrotherly tensions. Much has been accomplished and much more will be accomplished as the months go by. Constructive, if unnoticed, work has been going on over our whole land and our church has been among the foremost in calling for brotherhood and justice, and for an end to long entrenched evil. We rejoice that in community after community, city after city, state after state, good will and good laws have moved ahead with men and women of good intent working well together.

We call upon all of our pastors and members, and the people of our land and of all lands, to so speak and so live as to deepen by word and deed the brotherhood of man and make this a reality instead of a hope.

TO THE COUNCIL OF BISHOPS
Brethren in Christ:

1EK56.44f

We wish to express to you our appreciation and support of the statement which you have issued, for where there is effective and forthright moral leadership at the top, those who work for an inclusive church and an open society are greatly strengthened, the undecided or timid are encouraged to take a positive position, and those who support a segregated church and society are impeded in their efforts to threaten, intimidate and inflame their fellow Christians. It is precisely this quality of forthright and unequivocal leadership which only the Council of bishops can supply, and which until now has not been forthcom-