



Declaration for Freedom

Compelled by passion to reflect the holiness of God in relevant and fresh practices, the Wesleyan Holiness Consortium represents churches and leaders with a common heritage that informs our unified voice to the world. Casting off the limitations of restrictive rules as an expression of holiness, we embrace the divine call to wholeness and restorative living in reconciling all things to God. In response, the Holy Spirit brings freedom to the marginalized, oppressed, broken, and hurting, and justice to the injustices and selfish influence caused by sin, until all things are restored in God's reign. As a relevant and particular emphasis to the Wesleyan Holiness character within us, we speak to the contemporary scourge of human trafficking and slavery as one aspect of the freedom we seek for all people in reflecting God's holy nature. We therefore set forth this declaration, to guide and inform our future and call all people to action.

- Whereas we serve God – Father, Son and Holy Spirit – who out of holy love hears and responds to the cries of the afflicted;
- Whereas we are committed to our holiness Christian heritage forged in the story of freedom for those who are oppressed;
- Whereas the church is called to become a people who embody a more hopeful alternative to oppression and injustice;
- Whereas the holiness of God reflected in us compels us to advocate for just and hopeful practices in all areas of life;
- Whereas Christian justice requires a deep commitment to both personal and corporate confession and forgiveness as steps to more just action;
- Whereas acting justly involves compassionate care for those in our midst, as well as listening actively for and amplifying the cries of the oppressed, naming boldly and denouncing injustices, and working humbly against the powers that cause injustice;
- Whereas we affirm that the pursuit of God's justice and reconciliation is at the heart of God's holy nature being appropriated through us;

Therefore, the Wesleyan Holiness Consortium issues a call to respond faithfully to the prophetic imperative for justice that beckons every generation to act justly, love mercy, and walk humbly before our God, by entering in Christ-like ways into a movement for the abolition of modern slavery and trafficking.

We follow our Wesleyan Holiness Christian heritage that includes:

- God freeing people from slavery in Egypt, which inaugurated a trajectory of abolitionism that must continue today;
- The prophets' special concern for the widow, orphan, and stranger;
- Jesus Christ's anointing to preach good news to the poor, release to the captives, sight to the blind, and freedom for the oppressed; his example of raising up women and valuing children;
- The Holy Spirit who guided a persecuted primitive church to combine resources for the common good, and who awakens the image of God in all people;
- John Wesley's ministry that first started among the poor, and advocated on behalf of those impover-ished spiritually, physically, and in other ways; and
- Influencers of the historic holiness movement who risked position, reputation, and life while standing for the oppressed and marginalized in historic struggles for the emancipation of slaves, the rights of women and children, just economic systems, and transformational engagement of the church with cultural issues.

Built upon this heritage and call to holiness, we make the following affirmations:

- 1. We affirm that the pursuit of justice, reconciliation, and freedom is at the heart of God's holiness being reflected in people.** We commit ourselves and our ecclesial resources to working for the abolition of all forms of slavery, trafficking, and oppression, and to participate in intentional networks, conversations, and actions that provide hopeful alternatives.
- 2. We affirm that churches should faithfully respond to the impulse of God's holy love by working for God's reign to be ever more visible.** We are called to be faithful witnesses in thought, word, and deed, to the holy God who hears the cries of those who are oppressed, imprisoned, trafficked, and abused by economic, political, selfish, and evil systems and persons. God calls us to respond in humility with compassion and justice.
- 3. We affirm that acting justly involves the compassionate care for those in our immediate surroundings and also being able to name injustice, and denounce the powers that cause it.** Acting justly and loving mercy have often brought the people of God in conflict with the ruling powers and principalities of the day. God's justice calls us beyond equal treatment, tolerance of one another's differences, or simply reversing the role of oppressed and oppressor. By Jesus' example, we are called to a justice whereby we are willing to give ourselves up for the sake of another.
- 4. We affirm that Christian justice requires a deep commitment to both personal and corporate confession, repentance, and forgiveness as necessary steps.** We confess and mourn the church's complicity in the injustice to which it has contributed throughout history. We confess and mourn the church's complicity in the injustices to which we continue to contribute. We confess and mourn our sins of omission, when we fail to act in Christian ways in response to the injustice we see around us. We confess and mourn being caught up in the very oppression the church seeks to oppose.
- 5. We affirm that we must advocate for just and hopeful practices in all areas of life.** Reflecting the compassionate hope of Christ and love for all people, we identify with the conditions that bring dehumanizing circumstances. We will speak for those who are not heard, and come alongside the vulnerable by offering practices that bring redemption, restoration, healing, and freedom.
- 6. We affirm that we are called to become a people who embody a hopeful alternative to oppression and injustice.** We are called to reflect the holy God in holy lives, bringing justice in motive and practice to people, circumstances, systems, and nations. While we may not end all suffering, as the body of Christ we are compelled to bring the holiness of God in healing fashion to the redemptive enterprise of restoring all things.
- 7. We affirm that as a collaborative network we must think deeply, work holistically, and engage locally and globally.** Complex issues drive modern slavery; therefore, multiple solutions must be undertaken. These will proceed from the fabric of who we are in Christian community naturally flowing into what we do.

We therefore pledge:

1. To work separately and together, as individuals and institutions, consistent with our Wesleyan Holiness identity to serve with compassion and to prophetically challenge oppressive systems;
2. To support, encourage, resource, plan, and engage together in effective, wise, sustainable action;
3. To labor as a worshipping community, with Christ at the center, infused with the power of the Spirit as a movement of hope;
4. To think deeply, pray with expectation, and act with courage.

For this we live and labor until God's reign comes on earth as it is in heaven.

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