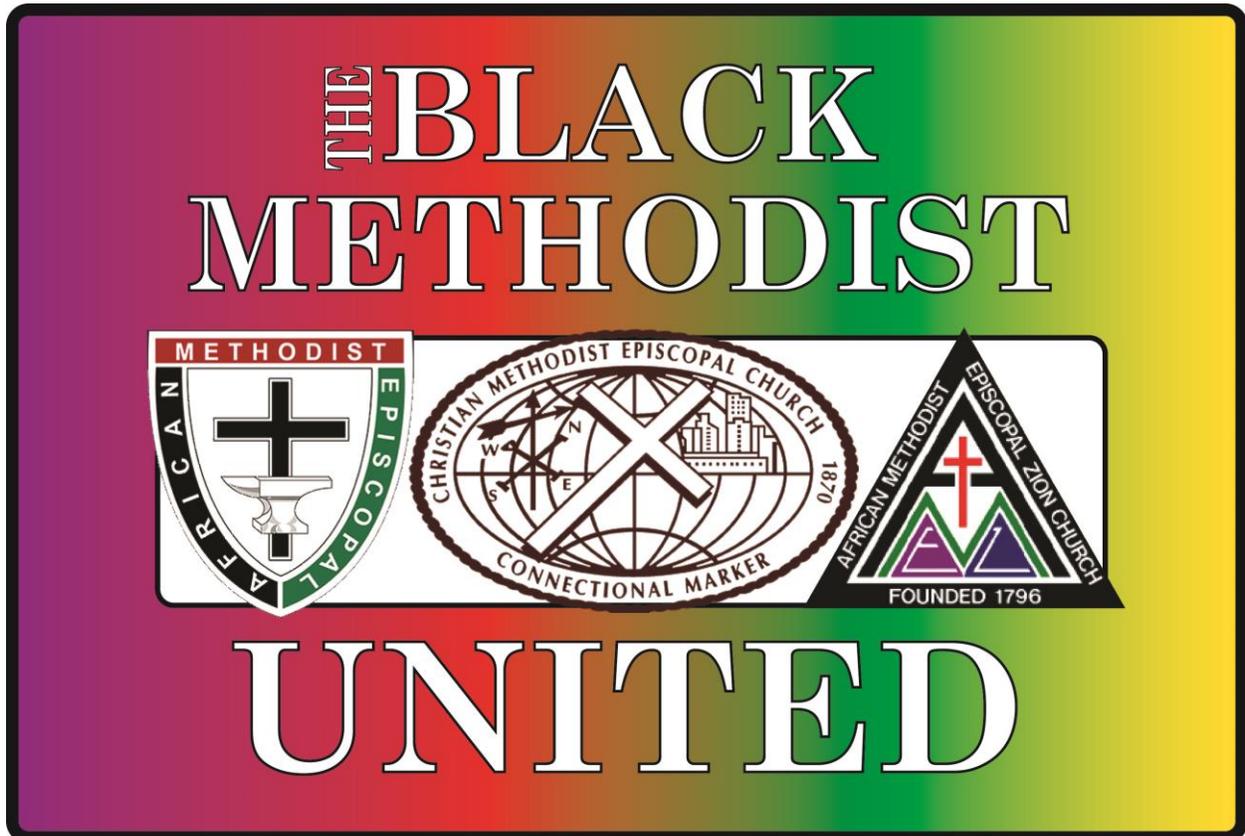


The Black Methodist United Social Action Guide



www.blackmethodistunited.org

"But let justice run down like water, and righteousness like a mighty stream."

Amos 5: 24

Introduction

The church is God's instrument of change in the world, as His Disciples we are commissioned to go into all the world and preach, teach and serve so that God's will is done on earth. God calls His church and His people not only to praise Him, but to serve Him. This Social Action Guide is intended to help churches at every level to organize to be effective in the work of the kingdom. Inspiration and motivation are good, but they must be accompanied by organization and structure, and organization and structure must serve a mission. The mission of the Social Action Commission is to work and serve that, "His kingdom comes on earth, as it is in heaven."

Our world and nation are at their worst and the world and the nation at its worst requires the church to be at its best. To be at its best the church must be in the world but not of the world. It must be prophetic as well as priestly, speak truth to power, and interact with political, corporate and other secular entities while always seeking God's will.

We have churches on almost every block in our communities, yet many of our communities are no better. Many of our people are hurting and hopeless a large number of our young people are angry because they lack opportunity. Racism is prevalent in every area of society, many of our schools fail to provide our children a good education, and these schools have become the feeder system for the correction system. Too many of our churches are strangers in the very communities where they are located because they do not minister or interact in the community. This explains why many of our churches aren't growing. This means the church must be more effective in seeking to fulfill its mission in the communities where it finds itself.

Prayerfully, this Guide will assist our churches as they seek to do God's will while worshipping, witnessing and promoting justice.

Organizing Social Action Commission

A Social Action Committee should be put in place in every Episcopal District, Annual Conference and local church.

I. Episcopal District

The Episcopal District Social Action Committee shall consist of a chairperson appointed by the bishop and the annual conference Social Action chairperson as well as conference missionary and lay presidents and other members appointed by the bishop. Young adults should be included on the committee.

The Episcopal District Social Action Committee should be organized with a vice-chair, secretary and financial secretary.

The Episcopal District Social Action Committee shall stay abreast of social action/social justice issues within the Episcopal District at large and recommend appropriate action or positions to the bishop and Episcopal District for it to act on. In the interim of Episcopal District meetings the Social Action Committee shall seek the advice and counsel of the bishop. It should provide updates on the Episcopal District webpage, newsletter and report at Episcopal District meetings. The Committee should make itself familiar with political leadership within the District, news media and other important and relevant entities including government, education, finance and others necessary. When necessary the Social Action Committee should issue press releases, meet with individuals or organizations on issues and propose action to the Episcopal District. The Social Action Committee through social media, newsletters and other outlets should keep local churches abreast of issues and its work.

2. Annual Conference

In each annual conference of the Episcopal District there should be appointed a Social Action Committee. The chairman of the committee shall be appointed by the bishop and the committee's composition should include the conference missionary, lay presidents and other members appointed by the bishop. Young adults should be included on the committee. The committee should be organized with a vice-chair and financial secretary.

The Annual Conference Social Action Committee shall stay abreast of social action/justice issues within the geographical bounds of the conference and recommend appropriate action or positions to the bishop and annual conference to act on. In the interim of the annual conference meeting, the Committee shall consult with the bishop and act in conjunction with his/her counsel. The Committee should make itself known to the state's political leadership, news media and other important and relevant entities including government, education, finance and attend or

organize meetings when appropriate or necessary. Additionally the Conference Social Action Committee should interact and work with state Council of Churches and other ecumenical organizations. The Social Action Committee should issue press releases, meet with individuals or organizations on issues and propose positions and actions to the annual conference. Additionally the Social Action Commission shall make a report to the annual conference.

3. Local Church

Every local church should have a Social Action Committee. The local church Social Action Committee shall be appointed by the pastor and shall consist of the president of the women's missionary society and lay president and other members appointed by the pastor. Chairman of the Committee shall be appointed by the pastor. The Committee shall have a vice-chairperson and a financial secretary chosen by the Committee.

The local church Social Action Committee shall stay abreast of issues and events in the local community. It should make itself known to county and municipal officials, school, police and other officials and departments. They should attend county, city council and school board meetings and other meetings where policy and decisions are made that impact the community and its people. The local church Social Action Committee should keep the pastor and congregation aware and informed of issues in the community and make recommendations for the church to take action. It should also interact with other churches and faith entities in the community and seek to work together on important community issues. When necessary the local Social Action Committee should report and seek the input and counsel of the Episcopal or Annual Conference Social Action committees.

Importance of Social Action Committee

It is biblically and theologically sound for the church to be committed and involved in issues of social action/justice. In fact the black church was founded for sociological and theological reasons. Black Christians believed that discrimination and racism was sinful and ungodly, because of this they started their own churches where they could worship and serve God freely, the AME, AMEZ and CME churches are prime examples. The legacy of the black church is that it has been the voice of those who have no one to speak for them and to fight for those who have no one to fight for them. Nothing for the advancement of blacks in this nation has occurred without the leadership and participation of the black church.

The black church's leadership and participation in social justice issues is more important now than it has ever been. With all that is happening to and in the black community the black church must be engaged. Racism is prevalent in every area of American life, our children are not

receiving a quality education which denies them opportunities for good jobs and a bright future, drugs and guns are destroying our communities and people's lives, legislation which is biased against blacks requiring mandatory prison sentences, economic injustice which increases poverty and denies a living wage to many in our community and a host of other issues require the church to be socially active and to seek justice.

It must also be active because over the last 30 years the failure of the black church to be as socially active as it once was, has created a void that other groups have tried to fill which has in too many instances been detrimental to our community. Unfortunately some of them now look upon the church as part of the problem rather than solution and even ask, "Where have you been?" This is particularly so among many black young adults. We must be sure to involve young adults in the work of social action.

Additionally the church's involvement in social action sends a message to the community that the church cares, that it is committed to making life better. This will make the people feel better about the church and lead to church growth. People will join the church if they sense that it cares.

Local Church Committee

The most important area of social action work is at the local church level. This is so because it is in the local communities where people are most impacted by decisions of government, school boards and other entities, and where the most impact can be made by local citizens. It is important that churches and people stay abreast of what is going on in their communities. It is no justifiable excuse to say, "I or we didn't know." We ought to know, we ought to be aware of what is happening where we live and to our people, especially our children. Even worse is to know and not act. The sad and bitter lesson of Ferguson, MO. was that they knew and didn't act. They tolerated racism, abuse and oppression for years. It took the killing of a young black brother for them to act. Ferguson, MO.'s are replicated all across America. Every local church ought to have a social action committee.

Local social action committees do not and should not seek to act alone. Pastors in their ministerial alliances should encourage every pastor to appoint a social action committee. There are some issues that these committees can work on together, especially education issues. Social action committees can rotate attendance at city council, schoolboard and other meetings. From time to time social action committees can hold town hall meetings so that local officials can meet with residents to discuss issues and answer questions.

Social Action committees can also conduct voter registration drives and ensure that eligible voters get to the polls. These committees must be non-partisan in their activities, but can make

a major impact in voter turnout. They can also sponsor debates between candidates and other events to increase voter education and participation.

Appointing Members

At whatever level it is important that the best people possible be appointed to the social action committee. Members of the social action committee should not be appointed on the basis of friendship, but effectiveness. They should be people of faith who have a commitment to social justice. Who stay aware of what is happening in government, education, law enforcement and the community, people who are active and consistent in their local churches and are team players.