

 Detroit Conference  
Board of Church & Society  
**MESSENGER**

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NO. 1

And what does the Lord require, but to do justice, and to love kindness, and  
to walk humbly with your God? *Micah 6:8*

**Register Now!**  
**For**  
**UN-Washington**  
**Youth Seminar**  
**April 6-13, 2007**

Once again, 10<sup>th</sup>, 11<sup>th</sup>, and 12<sup>th</sup> grade high school students have the opportunity to engage in the work of the General Bd of Global Ministries in New York City and the General Bd of Church & Society in Washington D.C. Over the past several years, this program has been a life-changing event for many young people and adults. Help a student in your congregation to attend.

Partial scholarships will be paid by the Detroit Conference Board of Church & Society. See the enclosed brochure to register; for information, call Mary Hicks-Good 313-821-8345

**There is still room for Clergy and Lay  
Adult Counselors who would like to  
accompany Students on the  
UN-Washington Seminar**

For information, call Mary Hicks-Good at  
(313) 821-8345

A Message from the Chair

Greetings in the name of Christ! I would like to take this opportunity to introduce myself as the new chairperson for the Board of Church and Society. As of July 1, I am serving as Pastor of the Marquette First UMC and previously served for 7 years as an Associate at Midland First. These last few months have been a time of new settings as I take over as Chair of this great board and start in a new appointment as well.



For the last five years, I served on the conference Board of Higher Education and from 1989-91 was a member of the Board of Church & Society.

I am a graduate of Eastern Michigan University and attended seminary at Duke University Divinity School.

I have a strong commitment to social justice and am excited to be a part of this board and to help us be a leading voice in the Conference. Our mandate comes from Jesus of course, who went to the poor and the outcast and the outsiders and included them in the realm of God where others would not. I also look to John Wesley and take to heart his statement that "There is no holiness but social holiness, no justice but social justice."

As we look at the work that is ahead of us, what is happening in our world and within United

Methodism, the task can seem overwhelming. However, we are created as a people with many gifts who together make up the body of Christ. I encourage everyone to find their passion and to work with that passion. Perhaps one of the issues highlighted in this edition of our Newsletter will touch your heart and move you to act. We will do our best help make that happen through our own gifts; together we will make a difference in this world in the name of Christ.

I am looking forward to our continued success and being open to the vision where God is leading us so that we can spread that word of social holiness.

Peace and Prayers

Steve

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## Four Justice Concerns

*Compiled by Jeanette Bartz from sources indicated*

### I. Health Care – A Justice Issue

The time seems to have come for a meaningful discussion about single payer health care insurance in the United States. With the continuing decline of corporate health benefits, the numbers of uninsured Americans promises to grow well beyond the 46 million people who are already without insured care. Employees losing their jobs and benefits are often replaced with workers who earn less and have little or no health insurance.

Anna Bernasek reports in a Dec. 31 story in the New York Times Business section that countries with single-payer systems have long records of spending less on health care than the United States does. According to the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development the United States spent an average of \$6,102 a person on it in 2004, while Canada spent \$3,165

a person, France \$3,159, Australia \$3,120 and Britain just \$2,508.

At the same time, life expectancy in the United States, a broad measure of health, was slightly lower and infant mortality was higher than it was in those countries. Administrative waste appears to be one of our problems.

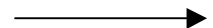
The introduction of H.R. 676 presents an opportunity to hold hearings on single payer insurance but **your legislator needs to know that you are concerned about the future of health care not only for yourself but for those who do not have it. Contact your U.S. Representative and Senator and tell him or her you'd like hearings to take place.**

See [www.healthcare-now.org](http://www.healthcare-now.org) for more information.

### II. Immigration Reform – a mandate for Disciples

The U.S. Congress has its work before it to reorder and develop a comprehensive Immigration Reform bill. The bill as presented early this year is seen by many people of faith as unworkable, enforcement-only legislation. Bill Mefford of the GBCS reported on the Kingdom Conference held at Asbury Theological Seminary last October, and told of the frustration students and faculty felt over how politicized the issue has become. At the same time, “migrant families suffer from fear and uncertainty and are driven into the shadows of a society unwilling to recognize their contributions or their essential humanity.”

Medford noted that the participants all pledged to continue to follow the mandates of Scripture—to welcome the stranger, to love the oppressed through challenging that which causes their suffering, and to advocate on behalf of the most vulnerable in our society. He ended his article with a question for us all, “Could anything less than this resemble the work of the Kingdom of God?”



Keep informed about the progress of the Immigration Reform bill at [www.umc-gbcs.org](http://www.umc-gbcs.org)

And in your neighborhood:  
Inquire about what immigrants are experiencing in your local community and work on ways your congregation can welcome and assist them.

Danilo Gutierrez, Latino Ministry Coordinator at Ypsilanti 1<sup>st</sup> UMC, spoke recently of the devastating effects on two families of the church that had members unexpectedly detained and deported. Often, family members left behind cannot even contact the detained member. In Washtenaw County last month, six roofing workers were also arrested; some have already been deported. In all these cases, their respective lawyers have handled the legal matters, but the church helped provide some sort of support – moral, pastoral or material support. These incidents are happening in your community too.

### III. Worker Justice

The struggle for fair wages and decent working conditions continues to be a concern for people of faith. Just last year, after a long struggle, the Coalition of Immokalee Workers (CIW) and Yum Brands (which is Taco Bell's parent company) reached an agreement to directly improve wages and working conditions for farm workers who pick tomatoes. Until then, workers earned 40 to 50 cents for every 32-pound bucket of tomatoes, a rate that has not risen significantly in nearly 30 years. Yum Brands executive took the concerns of religious people very seriously when several denominations, including United Methodists, voted to boycott Taco Bell until improvements were made. To its credit, the company responded to the workers' plea for fair treatment and better wages.

However, McDonald's has refused to work with the CIW to create similar changes for workers who pick tomatoes for its chain and workers continue to work for poverty wages. You can educate your congregation or group about farmworker conditions and the [Campaign for Fair Food](#). Contact [info@interfaithact.org](mailto:info@interfaithact.org) for a

free DVD to show, prayer and worship materials, and more. Learn more on the [Alliance for Food website](#).

For more updates on worker justice, see: [www.umc-gbcs.org](http://www.umc-gbcs.org) and [www.mfsaweb.org](http://www.mfsaweb.org)

### IV. Learning Peace with Justice

Set aside Saturday, March 31, 2007, to be inspired by two outstanding Christian prophets at the fifth annual :

KEEP MAKING PEACE GATHERING  
"Christians and Empire:  
Then and Now"  
Saturday, March 31, 2007  
Lansing Central UMC

Keynoters are **John Dominic Crossan**, one of the premier Jesus scholars of our time, and **Pamela Brubaker**, a Christian social ethicist, and an editor of Justice in a Global Economy: Strategies for Home, Community and World (2006).

This event is again sponsored by the Boards of Church & Society of Detroit Conference and West Michigan Conference. Registration forms will be available in the February and March issues of the the Michigan Christian Advocate.

Rev. Rich Peacock chairs the Keep Making Peace Committee.

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