

Whereas, our baptismal vows call us to resist every form of evil, injustice, and oppression; and

Whereas, Jesus declares “The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because The Spirit has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. The Lord has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free.” (Luke 4); and

Whereas, Isaiah 58 calls us to “loose the bonds of injustice, to undo the straps of the yoke, to let the oppressed go free, and to break every yoke!”; and

Whereas, John Wesley called Slavery “an execrable villainy” and called us to banish it from under the sun. (*Thoughts Upon Slavery* (1771); and

Whereas, the 2016 Book of Resolutions (paragraph 164 A) “The Church regards the institution of slavery as an infamous and atrocious evil;” and

Whereas, in the constitution of the State of Tennessee, Article 1 Section 33 states “That slavery and involuntary servitude, except as a punishment for crime, whereof the party shall have been duly convicted, are forever prohibited in this state”; and

Whereas, this language provides a caveat allowing slavery in the state of Tennessee, potentially allowing slavery for State prisoners; and

Whereas, in the State of Tennessee, the Legislature has overwhelmingly passed and the Governor has signed a resolution to abolish slavery in the State Constitution. This resolution will be on the November 8th ballot in the State of Tennessee, appearing as Amendment Number 3. The ballot measure would remove language from the Tennessee Constitution that allows the use of slavery and involuntary servitude as criminal punishments. The ballot measure would replace the language with the statement, "Slavery and involuntary servitude are forever prohibited." The ballot measure would also state that the language does not prohibit an inmate from working when the inmate has been duly convicted of a crime;

THEREFORE, the Tennessee Western Kentucky Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church endorses ballot measure three to amend the Tennessee Constitution to end slavery. We call on all TWK churches to remind their members of our vows to resist all forms of evil, injustice and oppression and as they inform and educate their congregations about the upcoming resolution.

Submitted by Eric A. Patton, Lay delegate Belmont UMC,= and Paul Purdue, Clergy Delegate Belmont UMC