

## THE BOARD OF CHURCH AND SOCIETY

The Board of Church and Society continues to serve The United Methodist Church in South Carolina both as an advocacy arm and as a resource for local churches in coping with the many issues confronting them in their communities. Our task is to confront and change the obstacles that impede our efforts to make disciples for Christ for the transformation of the world.

Because quality education for the children of our state has been a major focus of this Board for some time, we have continued to keep education as one of our primary areas of advocacy for this year. In order for our citizens to be prepared to cope with the demands of the modern world, we believe a quality education should be available for everyone. We, therefore, support Goodbye Minimally Adequate, and we have applied for and received a grant to assist them in their efforts to communicate this need to the citizens of South Carolina. An inadequate education is a significant obstacle to fulfilling our mission of making disciples for Christ.

We also have an ongoing concern about the issue of payday lending and the destruction that it causes in the lives of the already struggling poor in our state. Engaging in ministry with the poor is one of the four areas of focus for the United Methodist Church, and the conditions which payday lending encourages are a definite obstacle in this ministry. We, therefore, continue to work with the United Methodist Women and other organizations to change the lending policies of our state. Current lending practices take advantage of our poorest citizens in order to benefit wealthier individuals. In order to address our church's area of focus on poverty, we must change the practices that perpetuate poverty.

In addition to these areas of advocacy, the Board has recently begun to address the issue of human trafficking. To that purpose, we have presented a resolution to this Annual Conference to address our concerns. Human slavery for whatever reason is unacceptable for any one of God's children. The church will have to face this objectification of human beings in order to bring Christ to both those who are buying and selling God's children and the individuals who are being used in such a manner.

In order to be the best possible resource for churches in the South Carolina Conference, the Board brought Rev. Clayton Childers, Director of Annual Conference Relations for the General Board of Church and Society, to provide training for its members. Members of the Board have now been trained to conduct workshops for local churches. In addition, Rev. Mike Vandiver, the Peace with Justice Coordinator, and Dr. Mary Lynn Polk, Chair of Board, along with 77 other chairs and coordinators from 48 conferences participated in an intense training session prior to attending the Quadrennial Training session in Jacksonville at the end of January.

There is much work to be done for God's people in the state of South Carolina, and the current economic climate makes that work even more challenging. The Board of Church and Society, however, is striving to address these tasks, and we look forward to continued work with local churches and other Boards and organizations to fulfill our mission of making disciples for Jesus for the transformation of the world.

*Mary Lynn C. Polk, Chair*