

1 ***Amend and readopt Resolution # 3391. Call to the Churches for the Renewal of Rural***

2 **Ministries as follows:**

3 **3391. Call to the Churches for the Renewal of Rural Ministries**

4 For 70 years the religious community has joined together through Agricultural Missions,  
5 Inc. as one way of supporting and accompanying rural communities around the world in their  
6 efforts to end poverty and injustice. For many years now rural communities in the United States  
7 and across the world have faced daunting new challenges in the wake of increasing globalization  
8 of food systems and promotion of policies that favor corporations over family farms.

9 Using global and regional trade agreements, corporations are controlling decisions that  
10 profoundly affect the lives of rural people. Trade regulations and treaties, both current and under  
11 negotiation, such as the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA), have conferred on  
12 corporations the right to supersede national farm policies in any nation, to demand access to local  
13 markets, and to purchase and own local water distribution systems and other essential services.

14 The market-based model of economic development fostered by the World Trade  
15 Organization, the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund and imposed through  
16 international trade agreements, such as the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA),  
17 has resulted in and/or hastened the:

- 18 1. displacement of people from the land and the decline in the culture of the family farm;
- 19 2. belief among rural residents, particularly the youth, that there is no future in agriculture,  
20 leading to the impoverishment and eventual death of many rural communities;
- 21 3. increasing rates of farmer suicides and farm worker exploitation, as well as violence in  
22 the family and the community, substance abuse and related problems; and

23 4. violation of the integrity of God's creation as typified by the pollution of the air, land, and  
24 water and disruption of the ecology and climate on a global scale.

25 It is essential that the churches stand with those who work the land in their struggles and  
26 witness to their work. As churches, we need to provide material and moral support and raise our  
27 voices, lest by our silence the structures of power assume our consent to the injustices being  
28 committed against rural peoples and communities. We bear witness that alternatives that are just  
29 and sustainable are being developed, despite enormous odds, by the shared efforts of rural  
30 communities in many countries and regions. The Church needs to renew and expand  
31 relationships with these communities and struggles and make common cause with them.

32 The Church possesses the lenses of the gospel and has the responsibility to bring moral and  
33 ethical scrutiny to social and economic policy. The Church must play a critical and essential role  
34 in evaluating economic policies for consistency with the Scripture and the Christian principles of  
35 justice.

36 Therefore, we call The United Methodist Church to respond as worshiping congregations  
37 and as institutions responsible for providing moral guidance and prophetic vision to society at  
38 large and to impoverished people, in particular:

39 1. At the congregational level, pastors must be better equipped to address the despair  
40 affecting rural people, by working closely with local organizers and grassroots  
41 organizations.

42 2. At the institutional level, The United Methodist Church should:

- 43           a. work with universities in the United States in rural areas and reclaim land- grant  
44           colleges, including historically black and Indian tribal colleges, to promote the  
45           interests of small-scale farmers instead of agribusinesses;
- 46           b. consider setting up an ecumenical fund to assist small farmers threatened with  
47           bankruptcy to keep their farms and assist them in engaging in sustainable farming  
48           practices;
- 49           c. promote a culture and economy of sufficiency, conservation, and thrift for  
50           corporate and individual lifestyles as best models of stewardship of God's  
51           creation;
- 52           d. advocate a process of public audits to call to accountability agribusinesses, banks  
53           and other financial institutions (including the international financial institutions),  
54           and transnational corporations and call on them to remedy the negative impact of  
55           their policies and activities on rural communities;
- 56           e. strengthen its partnership with farm and rural community-based organizations and  
57           networks to educate and engage members on critical policy issues, including  
58           agricultural subsidies, food and trade policies, economic justice, and the integrity  
59           of creation;
- 60           f. accompany farm workers in their struggles to secure healthy living conditions;  
61           ~~decent~~ **and living** wages, **obtain and maintain** the right to organize, and to  
62           support rural grassroots organizations that work with them in these endeavors;  
63           and

- 64                   g. develop concrete programs to demonstrate its solidarity with and accompaniment  
65                   of small-scale, minority, and indigenous producers to secure their rights to their  
66                   land and the fullness of life promised by Jesus Christ.

67    ***Rationale:***

68    *We need to continue to uplift rural communities around the world as they continue to fight*  
69    *against poverty and injustice.*

70    ***Date:*** May 4, 2015

71    ***Submitted by:*** United Methodist Rural Advocates