

**HAYES BARTON UMC'S
BIBLICAL JUSTICE ACTION TEAM**

Dedicated to social justice study and action
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**Biblical Justice Action
Team
Voting Rights
Subcommittee**

How many times have you heard someone say, "Oh, that's just politics" in response to something done by politicians? You may have even said it yourself! At times it

seems we are less concerned with **means and ends** when politics are involved.

Leading up to the 2020 elections, the BJAT Voting Rights Subcommittee provided information to help all people exercise their right to vote. Moving into 2021, our focus shifts to **redistricting**.

Voting on the surface seems so fundamental – a basic constitutional right. You just sign up and go to the polls – right? Basically yes, but what may affect the potential power of your vote?

Every American citizen lives in congressional and legislative districts. It is important to know how these districts are created. The US Constitution stipulates that congressional representatives be apportioned to the states based on population. Currently there are 13 congressional representatives apportioned to NC, and there are 170 state legislative districts.

In North Carolina, the state legislature establishes the congressional districts as well as the state legislative districts. District lines are redrawn every 10 years following completion of the United States census, which is the process known as **redistricting**.

This all seems quite straightforward, but here is where means and ends come in with something called Gerrymandering. Gerrymandering has a long history. The term is named for Elbridge Gerry, a signer of the Declaration of Independence, who as governor of Massachusetts approved a redistricting plan favorable to one party over the other.

Fast forward to current times we find political parties use the opportunity to redistrict as a **means** to hold greater influence and power. The **end** for some citizens is that access to influence is lost or diminished. This most often affects those who are marginalized or represent minority groups.

We believe that the best way to bring about change for the common good is to ensure that citizens' voices are heard. Proper representation in our government is key. Redistricting, if done right, achieves that result.

Whether we like it or not we are all part of and influenced by our political systems. The United Methodist Church is not silent on the matter. The UMC Social Principles 2020 state:

Our involvement in political systems is rooted in the Gospel imperative to love our neighbors, to do justice, and to care for the vulnerable. As United Methodists, we acknowledge that love requires responsible political action and engagement aimed at the betterment of society and the promotion of the common good. We acknowledge that such political engagement demands humility and mindfulness of our own complicity in perpetuating injustice. It also necessitates compassion, prayer, and a willingness to discern God's guidance. ~ UNC Social Principles 2020

So, what roles do we have as a congregation whose members represent all political parties and have differences of opinion on political matters? We would like to offer the following as a place to start.

1. Remember who we are as Christians. The tenants of our faith call us to act with honesty, integrity, and fairness in all aspects of our lives.
2. Educate ourselves about issues such as redistricting that most often affect those who are among the least.
3. Learn how to advocate for change as you feel led. This can range from speaking to your representatives to writing letters.

“We understand as a general principle that every person is created in the image of God and is therefore of equal standing in society. Recognizing the inherent dignity of every person, United Methodists are committed to upholding human rights for all, including their social and political rights.” UMC Social Principles