

The GBCS United Nations and International Affairs Ministry

**An Invitation to Global Learning, Transborder Organizing,
and Transnational Advocacy
Through the
GBCS Certified Advocate Development Program**

A Presentation by Rev. Dr. Liberato Bautista
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CHURCH & SOCIETY

The United Methodist Church

Living **FAITH** Seeking **JUSTICE** Pursuing **PEACE**

I. Framing the UNIA Through Methodism's Historic Legacy at the United Nations

1. Wesleyan Witness in Multilateral History

Since 1945, United Methodists have engaged the UN as an extension of our calling to witness “to the ends of the earth,” grounding today’s advocacy in the Church’s historic vocation to pursue justice and peace across time and geography.



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The public witness of:

- Methodist Central Hall, Westminster, London in England
- Church Center for the United Nations, New York City
- United Methodist Building, Washington, D.C.



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The Church Center for the United Nations, New York City



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United Methodist Building, Washington, D.C.



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2. Why the UN? Why the church at the UN?

For United Methodists, engagement with the United Nations is not an act of optimism. It is an act of faithful realism. The UN is fragile and flawed, often overwhelmed and increasingly contested. And yet, it remains one of the few global spaces where humanity still attempts—however imperfectly—to name shared goods, uphold human dignity, and seek peace through cooperation rather than coercion.



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3. A Glocal Church in a Glocal World

The United Methodist Church is transforming into a truly global connection—one fully cognizant of national and regional contexts, and deeply aware that the local and the global now arrive together. What happens in one place increasingly shapes life in another. This simultaneity—this glocal reality—defines our moment.



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4. Social Principles as Global Norm Catalysts

The UMC's Social Principles—our “prayerful and studied dialogue of faith and practice”—provide theological grounding for engaging UN negotiations on human dignity, rights, peace, climate justice, and sustainable development.



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5. Connectionalism as Mission Infrastructure

The UMC's global connectional system naturally aligns with UN multilateral processes, enabling coordinated presence, representation, and advocacy for marginalized communities including migrants, women, youth, and Indigenous peoples.



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6. Ecumenical and Interfaith Continuity

Long-standing collaborations through bodies such as the Committee of Religious NGOs, World Council of Churches, World Methodist Council, and numerous working groups of faith actors, embody a historic Wesleyan commitment to the *oikoumene*, strengthening UNIA's public witness on justice, peace, and human rights.



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7. Stewardship of UN-Related Institutional Relationships

Decades of NGO consultative relationships at the UN and with peer NGOs, including the Conference of Non-Governmental Organizations in Consultative Relationship with the UN (CoNGO) remain strategic assets for raising United Methodist awareness of global issues and enhancing the Church's effectiveness within UN spaces.



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II. UNIA as Public Witness and Contextual Formation for a Worldwide UMC

8. Narrative Change as Formation for Public Witness

Through UN observances and curated communications campaigns, UNIA supports the denomination in countering harmful narratives and deepening understanding of Social Principles as tools for justice-oriented discipleship.



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9. Public Theology Informing Public Policy

Grounded in Wesleyan social holiness and the Quadrilateral, UNIA helps translate UMC convictions into policy engagement on climate justice, migration, disarmament, racial justice, gender equity, and digital/AI ethics.



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10. Strengthening Regional Capacity for a Glocal Church

Aligned with GBCS's strategic focus on connectional mobilization, UNIA helps regional bodies build capacity, partnerships, and advocacy initiatives that ground global justice commitments in local contexts.



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11. Ministry of Presence Across Regions

UNIA expands opportunities for women, youth, migrants, Indigenous peoples, and Global South leaders to participate in multilateral forums—embodying a church that is both regionally contextual and globally connectional.



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12. Glocal Discipleship for a Global Church

UNIA equips transnational and transborder advocates to embody *glocal* ministry—where local experience meets global responsibility—and to ensure affected communities shape advocacy wherever they are located (“nothing about us without us”).



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13. Global Civics and Civic Formation

At this point, it is important to say clearly: engaging multilateral institutions does not weaken national citizenship or dilute sovereignty. Properly understood, global civics enriches national civics. Global civics therefore does not replace national civic responsibility; it extends it. It equips peoples and nations to exercise sovereign equality in concert with others, within shared norms and cooperative frameworks that make sovereignty viable in an interdependent world.



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14. The Isaiah Circle—Advocacy and Discipleship

Within this framework, the **Isaiah Circle** is neither an affinity group nor a discussion forum. It is a **space for formation for practitioners of public faith**. Its prophetic name recalls Isaiah's diagnosis that truth stumbles in the public square—not because knowledge is absent, but because power distorts it. The Circle prepares advocates to recognize kairotic moments and to act with courage, humility, and accountability in the **glocal public square**.



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15. The World is My Parish, And My Parish is Glocal

John Wesley's declaration that **"the world is my parish"** rejected confining mission and responsibility to inherited geographic or jurisdictional boundaries. In our time, that conviction calls for a faithful and necessary extension: **the world is my parish, and my parish is glocal**—a recognition that the local and the global form a single moral horizon for Christian witness.



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