

# WHAT FAITH GROUPS SAY ABOUT THE RIGHT TO ORGANIZE

## Roman Catholic

*"All people have the right to economic initiative, to productive work, to just wages and benefits to decent working conditions, as well as to organize and join unions or other associations."*  
(A Catholic Framework for Economic Life, A Statement of the U.S. Bishops, 1996)

*"...The Church fully supports the right of workers to form unions or other associations to secure their rights to fair wages and working conditions. This is a specific application of the more general right to associate... No one may deny the right to organize without attacking human dignity itself. Therefore we firmly oppose organized efforts, such as those regrettably seen in this country, to break existing unions or prevent workers from organizing."*

(Economic Justice for All, a pastoral letter of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops, 1986)

*"Their [unions] task is to defend the existential interests of workers in all sectors where their rights are concerned. The experience of history teaches that organizations of this type are an indispensable element of social life, especially in modern industrialized societies. [Unions] are indeed a mouthpiece for the struggle for social justice, for the just rights of working people in accordance with their individual professions."*  
(On Human Work, encyclical of Pope John Paul II, 1981)

*"The important role of union organizations must be admitted: their object is the representation of the various categories of workers, their lawful collaboration in the economic advance of society, and the development of the sense of their responsibility for the realization for the common good."*  
(A Call to Action, encyclical of Pope Paul VI, 1971)

*"Among the basic rights of the human person must be counted the right of freely founding labor unions. These unions should be truly able to represent the workers and to contribute to the proper arrangement of economic life. Another such right is that of taking part freely in the activity of these unions without risk of reprisal."*  
(Pastoral Constitution of the Church in the Modern World, Second Vatican Council, 1965)

## Protestant

### African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church (AMEZ)

*"The African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church calls on employers to Recognize the rights of workers to organize and bargain collectively...and the right of their employees to choose freely whether to unionize or not without intimidation or coercion. Furthermore the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church calls for the United States Government to address specific labor issues on the state level by affirming support for the organizing and the collective bargaining rights of state employees."*

(A Statement on Behalf of Workers, 2007)

### American Baptist

*"We reaffirm our position that workers have the right to organize by a free and democratic vote of the workers involved. This right of organization carries the responsibility of union leadership to protect the rights of workers, to guarantee each member an equal voice in the operation of its organization, and to produce just output labors for income received."*

(American Baptist Churches Resolution, 1981)

### Christian Methodist Episcopal Church (CME)

*"Free collective bargaining has proved its values in our free society whenever the parties engaged in collective bargaining have acted in good faith to reach equitable and moral solutions of problems dealing with wages and working conditions. We do not support the opinion voiced in some quarrels that strikes should be made illegal. To declare strikes illegal would be to deprive workers of their right to collective action and, even more seriously, would place in the hands of government the power to force workers to remain on the job."*  
(Discipline of the CME Church, 1982)

### Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)

*"We believe in the right of laboring men to organize for protection against unjust conditions and to secure a more adequate share of the fruits of their toil. The right to organize implies the right to hold and wield power, which in turn implies responsibility for the manner in which this power is exercised."*  
(Resolution on the Church and Labor, Disciples of Christ, 1938)

### The Episcopal Church

*"We reaffirm the right and desirability of workers in the United States to organize and form unions...we decry the growing wage of anti-unionism mounting in the nation today which asks people to forget the struggles that led to this form of negotiation as a just way to settle differences. We urge church people and others not to judge this issue on the basis of a particular case but rather on the basis of the fundamental principles involved."*  
(A pastoral message from the Urban Bishops Coalition of the Episcopal Church, Labor Day 1982)



**"No one may deny the right to organize without attacking human dignity itself."**

## Evangelical Lutheran Church of America (ELCA)

*"[The ELCA] commits itself to advocacy with corporations, businesses, congregations, and church-related institutions to protect the rights of workers, support the collective bargaining process, and protect the right to strike."*

(Resolution of the ELCA Church-wide Assembly, 1991)

## Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)

*"Justice demands that social institutions guarantee all persons the opportunity to participate actively in economic decision-making that affects them. All workers – including undocumented, migrant, and farm workers – have the right to choose to organize for the purposes of collective bargaining."*

(Principles of Vocation and Work, General Assembly Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), 1995)

## United Church of Christ

*"The 21st General Synod reaffirms the heritage of the United Church of Christ as an advocate for just, democratic, participatory, and inclusive economic policies in both public and private sectors, including...the responsibility of workers to organize for collective bargaining with employers regarding wages, benefits, and working conditions, and the responsibility of employers to respect not only worker rights but also workers' dignity, and to create and maintain a climate conducive to the workers' autonomous decision to organize."*

(Resolution Affirming Democratic Principles in an Emerging Global Economy, 1997)

## United Methodist Church

*"We support the right of public and private (including farm, government, institutional, and domestic) employees and employers to organize for collective bargaining into unions and other groups of their own choosing." Further, we support the right of both parties to protection in so doing and their responsibility to bargain in good faith within the framework of the public interest"*

(The Book of Discipline of the United Methodist Church, Social Principles, Section 163-B, 2004)

## Unitarian Universalist

*"The Unitarian Universalist Association urges its member congregations and individual Unitarian Universalists in the United States...to work specifically in favor of mechanisms such as:...reform of labor legislation and employment standards to provide greater protection for workers, including the right to organize and bargain collectively, protection from unsafe working conditions, and protection from unjust dismissal."*

(Working for a Just Economic Community, 1997)

## Jewish

### Central Conference of American Rabbis



**"...Replacement of [strikers] upsets the balance of power needed for collective bargaining...."**

*"Jewish leaders, along with our Catholic and Protestant counterparts have always supported the labor movement and the rights of employees to form unions for the purpose of engaging in collective bargaining and attaining fairness in the workplace. We believe that permanent replacement of striking workers upsets the balance of power needed for collec-*

*tive bargaining, destroys the dignity of working people, and undermines the democratic values of this nation."*  
(Preamble to the Workplace Fairness Resolution adopted at the 104th Annual Convention, 1993)

### The Union for Reform Judaism

*"The Union for Reform Judaism resolves to support the rights of workers to organize and bargain collectively.*

*Calls upon employers to allow their employees to choose freely whether to unionize or not, without intimidation or coercion, and to abide by their employees' decision when a majority indicates that it supports union representation."*

(Resolution submitted by the Commission on Social Action of Reform Judaism to Union For Reform Judaism General Assembly-passed 2005)



Interfaith Worker Justice believes that as God worked to create the world, our religious traditions value those who do the world's work. We honor our Creator by seeking to assure that laborers, particularly low-wage workers, are able to live decent lives as a product of their labor. Interfaith Worker Justice calls upon our religious values in order to educate, organize, and mobilize the religious community in the U.S. on issues and campaigns that will improve wages, benefits, and working conditions for workers, especially workers in low-wage jobs.

**For More Information,  
please contact:**

### Interfaith Worker Justice

1020 W. Bryn Mawr Ave., 4th Floor  
Chicago, IL 60660  
Phone: (773) 728-8400  
Fax: (773) 728-8409  
E-mail: [info@iwj.org](mailto:info@iwj.org)  
[www.iwj.org](http://www.iwj.org)

