

Item 09-09

[The assembly approved Item 09-09 with amendment. See pp. 54, 55.]

A Social Creed for the Twenty-First Century and Recognition of the Centennial of the “Social Creed of the Churches” of 1908—From the Advisory Committee on Social Witness Policy.

The Advisory Committee on Social Witness Policy (ACSWP) recommends that the 218th General Assembly (2008):

1. Approve the text below of “A Social Creed for the Twenty-First Century” and its two-page background statement and rationale;

2. Honor the centennial of the original 1908 Social Creed by receiving and encouraging use of the video documentary, *The Social Creed: Toward a New Social Awakening, 1908–2008* and the book of prayers entitled, *Prayers for the New Social Awakening: Inspired by the New Social Creed* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 2008);

3. Direct the General Assembly Council (GAC), through the Presbyterian Washington Office, the Advisory Committee on Social Witness Policy, and other appropriate offices, to publicize and interpret this “Social Creed” as a [~~concise consensus statement~~] [synopsis] of existing policy and to affirm its holistic vision of necessary changes for our society to meet the challenges of sustainability and globalization;

4. Direct the Office of the General Assembly to include a copy of the “Social Creed” and its background statement in summary reports of the General Assembly action, to share word of its approval with member communions of the National Council of Churches of Christ (NCCC), of the National Association of Evangelicals, and with the Roman Catholic Church, inviting them to join in this trans-confessional Christian affirmation, and to send a copy to each member of Congress;

5. Direct the Compassion, Peace, and Justice Ministries of the General Assembly Council to integrate “A Social Creed for the Twenty-First Century” into its on-going educational and advocacy programs, and the Ecumenical Office of the Office of the General Assembly to include the Social Creed and its vision of Christian moral and soul convergence among the initiatives it lifts up in cooperative work with ecumenical partners and state and local councils of churches;

6. Encourage congregations, presbyteries, synods, seminaries, and colleges related to the church to study and discuss the “Social Creed,” and to do so jointly when possible with ecumenical partners, noting its support by the National Council of Churches of Christ and the concerns it shares with the “sung” Social Creed of the United Methodist Church, the “Covenant for a New America” of Sojourners/Call to Renewal, and with the “Covenant for Black America” developed at annual African American study forums by public affairs commentator, Tavis Smiley.

A Social Creed for the Twenty-First Century

We churches of the United States have a message of hope for a fearful time. Just as the churches responded to the harshness of early twentieth century industrialization with a prophetic “Social Creed” in 1908, so in our era of globalization we offer a vision of a society that shares more and consumes less, seeks compassion over suspicion and equality over domination, and finds security in joined hands rather than massed arms. Inspired by Isaiah’s vision of a “peaceable kingdom,” we honor the dignity of every person and the intrinsic value of every creature, and pray and work for the day when none “labor in vain, or bear children for calamity” (Isa. 65:23). We do so as disciples of the One who came “that [all] may have life, and have it abundantly” (John 10:10), and stand in solidarity with Christians and with all who strive for justice around the globe.

In faith, responding to our Creator, we celebrate the full humanity of each woman, man, and child, all created in the divine image as individuals of infinite worth, by working for:

- Full civil, political, and economic rights for women and men of all races.
- Abolition of forced labor, human trafficking, and the exploitation of children.
- Employment for all, at a family-sustaining living wage, with equal pay for comparable work.
- The rights of workers to organize, and to share in workplace decisions and productivity growth.

- **Protection from dangerous working conditions, with time and benefits to enable full family life.**
- **A system of criminal rehabilitation, based on restorative justice and an end to the death penalty.**

In the love incarnate in Jesus, despite the world’s sufferings and evils, we honor the deep connections within our human family and seek to awaken a new spirit of community, by working for:

- **Abatement of hunger and poverty, and enactment of policies benefiting the most vulnerable.**
- **High quality public education for all and universal, affordable, and accessible healthcare.**
- **An effective program of social security during sickness, disability, and old age.**
- **Tax and budget policies that reduce disparities between rich and poor, strengthen democracy, and provide greater opportunity for everyone within the common good.**
- **Just immigration policies that protect family unity, safeguard workers’ rights, require employer accountability, and foster international cooperation.**
- **Sustainable communities marked by affordable housing, access to good jobs, and public safety.**
- **Public service as a high vocation, with real limits on the power of private interests in politics.**

In hope sustained by the Holy Spirit, we pledge to be peacemakers in the world and stewards of God’s good creation, by working for:

- **Adoption of simpler lifestyles for those who have enough; grace over greed in economic life.**
- **Access for all to clean air and water and healthy food, through wise care of land and technology.**
- **Sustainable use of earth’s resources, promoting alternative energy sources and public transportation with binding covenants to reduce global warming and protect populations most affected.**
- **Equitable global trade and aid that protects local economies, cultures, and livelihoods.**
- **Peacemaking through multilateral diplomacy rather than unilateral force, the abolition of torture, and a strengthening of the United Nations and the rule of international law.**
- **Nuclear disarmament and redirection of military spending to more peaceful and productive uses.**
- **Cooperation and dialogue for peace and environmental justice among the world’s religions.**

We—individual Christians and churches—commit ourselves to a culture of peace and freedom that embraces non-violence, nurtures character, treasures the environment, and builds community, rooted in a spirituality of inner growth with outward action. We make this commitment together—as members of Christ’s body, led by the one Spirit—trusting in the God who makes all things new.

Rationale

These recommendations are in response to the following referral: *2004 Referral: Item 08-18. 2004 Referral: Item 08-18. Commissioners’ Resolution. On Celebrating the “Social Creed” of the Churches and Considering a 21st Century Social Creed (Minutes, 2004, Part I, pp. 18, 627–29).*

This rationale begins with the background statement to be printed on two pages with the Social Creed.

Toward a New Social Awakening:
The Role for a Twenty-First Century “Social Creed of the Churches”

“The Social Creed of the Churches,” endorsed in 1908 by the Federal Council of Churches, was their pledge to work together for a better, fairer, and more faithful United States. One hundred years ago, the explosion of industry and its impact on U.S. society called for a new focus in the churches’ ministry. Those in the churches sensitive to the human costs of industrialization saw in those costs a challenge to the fullness of the gospel, which is both personal and communal in dimension. The Social Gospel movement, evangelical at its heart, inspired by Jesus’ preaching of “the kingdom of God,” was acutely aware of the brutalities of new working conditions, the social tensions of assimilating millions of immigrants, and the loss of communal values in fast-growing cities.

More than one hundred years ago, workers caught in the machinery of early industrialization were ground down by twelve-hour shifts and seven-day workweeks. Families were broken by absent or exhausted parents. Workers with disabilities were summarily dismissed and devalued. Retired workers were left without pensions. Children worked when they should have been at school or at play. At the same time, enormous wealth was generated. That wealth, however, was distributed to a relative few, primarily the owners of industry.

Responding to this changing situation, the churches saw the need to work across denominational lines in pursuit of social change. At the formation of the Federal Council of Churches in 1908, the denominational representatives put in place social principles that were to guide the council's work in the succeeding years. The "social creed" was introduced by Methodist Frank Mason North, who had earlier written the great Social Gospel hymn, "Where Cross the Crowded Ways of Life." From North's report on "The Church and Modern Industry" was lifted up a section of fourteen principles and policies that were unanimously put into a short statement, the Social Creed, that was repeatedly affirmed, expanded, and adopted by various denominations in future years. It was to be a concise and practical summary of what a "Christ-like God" willed for those seeking "to reduce the hardships and uphold the dignity of labor."

Through the Social Creed, the churches declared that they would stand together and work toward addressing the needs of all workers. As a result of their commitment, they were able to influence our country in profoundly good ways. The churches' pledge of support for "the toilers of America" helped to abolish child labor and bring about worker safety, retirement security, health care, unemployment compensation, and more. In that prophetic witness, the churches' leaders anticipated Social Security, the social protections of the New Deal, and more recent health and environmental protections. For these reasons, they deserve our thanks for their brave witness and our celebration of it by making a new commitment in the twenty-first century. It is also highly appropriate that the National Council of Churches of Christ, successor to the Federal Council, claim this heritage.

Similar economic problems persist today: injustice in the workplace, growing social inequities, and the intolerably high percentage of people living in poverty in the United States and in other nations. The majority of people around the world do not have access to adequate health care. Workers worldwide continue to earn low wages, fear occupational hazards and the loss of employment or other penalties when they need or use time to care for family members. These and many other problems call to the Christian conscience and to the moral imperative in every human heart.

However, in the twenty-first century we are also confronting complex new issues that reach beyond economics and call for unprecedented global cooperation and new governance structures. Some challenges seem greater, as the costs and consequences of war and the persistence of racism meet massive environmental degradation. Global warming threatens our very existence. We recognize more clearly divisions of wealth etched along lines of race and gender, and an undeniably "racialized" U.S. criminal justice system. Too many people seem resigned to accept the present shape of our global market system and fail to see that any alternatives may exist. The responsibilities of both governments and citizens for the common good are often ignored or denied. Divisions between the rich and the poor grow wider by the day. In too many places, corruption in politics rises steadily and government competence declines. Based on enduring Christian principles, we seek to address these and other challenges in a coherent and hope-filled way.

We celebrate earlier efforts best by extending the ecumenical witness for justice in the workplace, promoting greater social equality, and reducing poverty. In hope that we too can affect change, we call upon concerned Christians to pledge their commitment to a new venture of cooperation through "A Social Creed for the Twenty-First Century." This Social Creed remains concerned with economic issues but also addresses issues that fell outside the earlier reformers' line of vision. This is not a doctrinal creed; it is a shared affirmation that points to the heritage of redemptive energy and theological ethics in every faith tradition. Many elements recall the 1908 Social Creed; "the living wage," the "abolition" of child labor, "the abatement of poverty," the concern for public goods and laws, and the one-page framework that makes for maximum usability.

"A Social Creed for the Twenty-First Century" is strongly grounded in God's promises of life in abundance for us and the whole creation and focused on the themes of globalization and sustainability. It is more explicitly theological than the 1908 statement, and reflects the churches' learnings from Christian Realism and Liberation Theologies, and from the strong resource of ecumenical social thought. It joins a public conversation with international ecumenical declarations, several U.S. "covenants," and the Millennium Goals and Earth Charter associated with the United Nations. It is also written in the face of wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, and the danger of additional war in the Middle East and elsewhere. It is written to build consensus in the United States, and does not address every current issue.

Language chosen for the creed may be seen as optimistic by some, but is intended to express the gospel conviction that real freedom and power in life consist in sharing, rather than in an abundance of things. The gospel stories witness to Jesus' prophetic challenge to the established social and economic order. Jesus of Nazareth came not to be served, but to give his life for others: his life and example still challenge us to confront injustice and preach the Good News. By supporting "A Social

Creed for the Twenty-First Century,” the endorsing church bodies and individual Christians affirm that the moral vision and tradition of action identified with the Social Creed of 1908 can help guide our ministries in the decades ahead.

Assignment from the 2004 General Assembly, Reaffirmed in 2006

The 216th General Assembly (2004) considered and unanimously approved by voice vote, with amendment, a commissioners’ resolution on celebrating the centennial of the “Social Creed of the Churches” adopted in 1908 at the founding of the Federal Council of Churches, and considering the preparation of a new Social Creed for the twenty-first century (*Minutes*, 2004, Part I, pp. 18, 627–28). A final report was envisioned for the 218th General Assembly (2008), incorporating a proposal for broader participation and educational and liturgical resources from the 217th General Assembly (2006). This is in answer to that request.

The action of the 216th General Assembly (2004) was in three parts, consistent with the ecumenical, ethical, and educational nature of the original Social Creed (re-printed following this brief narrative).

1. The Office of the General Assembly was directed to consult with ecumenical partners and the National Council of Churches and other appropriate bodies to find ways to honor the role of the churches in advocating an end to child labor, a six-day week, occupational safety, retirement security, a living wage, and other concerns that “a Christ-like God” was believed to want for all Americans.

2. The Advisory Committee on Social Witness Policy was directed to initiate a survey of key Christian principles to guide twenty-first-century Presbyterians and others in addressing major concerns such as the lack of health insurance, the outsourcing of jobs to countries without human rights or environmental safeguards, and the impact of growing economic inequality on our democracy. It was urged, in doing this, to utilize the Presbyterian Panel, literature surveys, volunteer experts, and past General Assembly statements.

3. Both bodies were directed, in cooperation with the Office of Theology and Worship, to develop ways to celebrate the centennial and to consider the possible goals, basic commitments, and value of an updated social creed for the twenty-first century.

The Social Creed Resolution Study Team

The ACSWP appointed a Social Creed Resolution Study Team that included the following persons: Gary Dorrien, Nile Harper, Carrie L. Harris, Elizabeth Hinson-Hasty, Ann Rhee Menzie, Richard Poethig, Ronald Stone, Lidia Serrata-Ledesma (chair), with Eugene TeSelle as a consultant historian. Patricia Chapman was added to the study team in 2006. The Advisory Committee on Social Witness Policy thanks them for their service and also thanks the many congregations and individuals who discussed the text and provided comments.

The members of the study team represented a broad base of experience and insight, with several experts on church life and witness at the turn of that earlier century and others unfamiliar with what was once a very influential stance of the church (updated four times!). The team reviewed a collection of the previous social creeds and several commentaries on these materials, hearing from several historians and ethicists. The relation of the “social creed” as a form of theologically grounded social witness was contrasted with the short foundational ecumenical creeds of the early church, including the Nicene and Apostles’ Creed in *The Book of Confessions*.

The Reformation Era and twentieth century confessions in *The Book of Confessions* themselves contain much ethical instruction on work and commerce drawn from Scripture: any twenty-first century update of the Social Creed needed to be consistent with that base and more recent General Assembly policy studies. The Office of Theology and Worship confirmed that any “social creed” would not be considered a doctrinal creed, and found the current text to reflect the basic theology of the church.

The resolution team also approved a Presbyterian Panel questionnaire circulated in November of 2005, asking for the views of that balanced sample of ministers and elders on the kinds of topics considered in 1908 and in subsequent work of the church, including the 1983 study of the church’s relations with transnational corporations (by which many more Presbyterians are employed than were a century ago). The results of the Presbyterian Panel (posted on the ACSWP website: <http://www.pcusa.org/acswp/socialcreed.htm>) show strong support for virtually all the positions later embodied in the Social Creed. The study group was convinced that it would be worthwhile to prepare a new Social Creed for the twenty-first century in conjunction with the celebration of its predecessor, thereby illuminating consistent social values and concerns of the church.

While this conviction was developing among Presbyterians, the United Methodist Church also determined that the centennial of the 1908 creed was worth commemorating and, through its Board of Church and Society, appointed a task force

chaired by Bishop Susan Morrison to coordinate that work. Similarly, within the Justice and Compassion Unit of the National Council of Churches, a task force was put together, chaired by Dean Michael Kinnamon of Eden Theological Seminary (a Disciples of Christ minister), including members from the Coptic Orthodox, Methodist, Reformed, United Church of Christ, and Roman Catholic Churches, staffed by a National Baptist. Professor Kinnamon was subsequently elected general secretary of the NCCC.

Acknowledging the different ways these and other communions may lay claim to the Social Creed tradition and formulate its relevance for today, the Presbyterian team invited the others to schedule their meetings with some overlap at a common location in March of 2006. Copies of the 1908 and 1972 Methodist Social Creeds flank the main inside door to their Washington Office building. Both texts are regularly re-printed with their updated Social Principles. Partly because of this regular tradition, and partly to attract a younger audience, they determined to celebrate the Social Creed centennial with a more poetic version that could be put to music. This was seen as a complement to the Presbyterian and ecumenical consensus document that Methodists strongly supported in the NCCC process.

The Presbyterian Heritage, Christian Cooperation, and Growing Convergence

While Presbyterians, Methodists, and the other denominations can take pride in having spoken clearly on matters of great social importance years before our constructive proposals were enacted into law, the centennial is not simply to celebrate our being “right” or “ahead of our time.” The 1908 Social Creed was part of a Social Gospel creativity that continued in Christian Realist form after World War I, providing Christian vision of a fairer, more stable economy even during the “Great Depression.”

The Presbyterian church was the first denomination to set up a national-level ministry to workers and immigrants in 1903, which was praised and imitated by other denominations. That office was directed by Charles Stelzle who also developed the Labor Temple for ministry and outreach to workers. General Assemblies of the PCUSA approved adaptations of the Social Creed in 1910, 1914, 1920, and 1932. Then, after World War II, the church both grew and spoke prophetically on justice issues, including racial equality. Marshal Scott, following a mandate from the 1944 General Assembly, established the Presbyterian Institute of Industrial Relations (PIIR) at McCormick Theological Seminary in 1945, directed by Scott and later by Richard Poethig; it trained a diverse body of ministers and some laypersons committed to research and action for social justice, particularly in industrial and urban areas. Scott and Henry Jones also extended this work internationally through the urban-industrial mission of the Council on Ecumenical Mission and Relations (COEMAR). The PIIR and the international dimension were then united in the Institute on the Church in Urban Industrial Society (ICUIS), linked to the World Council of Churches and also based at McCormick Seminary. This is not to minimize the sincere spiritual struggle of Christians on all sides of the social changes of the twentieth century, but to affirm an impressive institutional and educational commitment to relate Christianity to business and labor.

It is worth including in the celebration of the Social Creed a fiftieth anniversary, that of the First Asian Conference on Industrial Evangelism held in Manila, Philippines, in June 1958. That event brought folks from fifteen Asian countries who were engaged with industrial workers and their unions in their countries and led to deeper understanding of the working poor overseas. The movement spread and became a major focus for the Christian Council of Asia and became a global network with work in Africa and Latin America. The World Council of Churches (WCC) picked it up in the early 1960s and organized an urban-industrial desk that tied all of the networks together. The current head of the WCC, Sam Kobia of Kenya, came out of this network.

General Assemblies of all three predecessor churches now reunited made many strong statements during the last century, brought together in the current Presbyterian Social Witness Policy Compilation (see Advisory Committee website: <http://www.pcusa.org/acswp>). Few statements have had the impact of the original Social Creed, influencing the presidential election context in 1912, for example, and pre-figuring much important legislation protecting workers, persons with disabilities, and retired persons. In 1933, at the twenty-fifth anniversary celebration of the Federal Council of Churches, President Franklin Roosevelt commended the churches for their social teaching. Subsequent church witness, however, has not only influenced legislation but included the development of creative programs, such as Hunger, Peacemaking, and Self-Development of People. Newer church efforts encourage investments in ecologically safe development enterprises and purchases of “sweat-free” and “fair-trade” products.

General Assemblies (and many congregations and members) have also endorsed campaigns for economic and social justice that have been both controversial and effective: the Taco Bell boycott, protest against Talisman Oil in Sudan, corporate responsibility efforts including selective divestment from South Africa to help end apartheid, and support for Truth and Reconciliation Commissions in South Africa and several countries in Central America. The Social Creed concept is not a specific campaign like these, but an expression of core Christian values and goals for how we treat each other in economic and social life. The advocacy and social service efforts by this denomination and others suggest that our members appreciate both strategic and “hands-on” ways to promote justice; the updated Social Creed can help affirm these concerns in a concise set of clear Christian commitments.

Many self-described evangelicals in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) and others are equally concerned with issues of economic justice. Jim Wallis of the Sojourners Community is filling churches or auditoriums wherever he speaks. The Sojourners/Call to Renewal “Covenant for a New America,” while considerably longer than the one page Social Creed, focuses on solutions to the scandal of poverty in the United States. The National Association of Evangelicals adopted on October 7, 2004, a statement entitled, “For the Health of the Nation: An Evangelical call to Civic Responsibility,” and sponsored a book edited by Ronald J. Sider and Diane Knippers, entitled *Toward an Evangelical Public Policy* (BakerBooks, 2006). Similarly, a strong collection of essays on the new Social Creed, *To Do Justice: Engaging Progressive Christians in Soul Action*, edited by Presbyterian scholars Rebecca Todd Peters and Elizabeth Hinson-Hasty (Westminster/John Knox, 2008), both revisits and expands upon themes of the Social Gospel for this new century.

Finally, in the twenty-first century we are increasingly aware of what is being said by Roman Catholics, Jews, Muslims, and secular movements. The new Social Creed is intentionally more inclusive than was the 1908 Social Creed itself, putting an essential commitment to racial and gender equality in the first of its points. We note the “Covenant with Black America,” developed out of annual forums on “The State of Black America” organized by radio and television personality Tavis Smiley. A multi-faith effort, *A Spiritual Covenant for America*, has been developed by Rabbi Michael Lerner. All uses of “covenant” language indicate the desire for something stronger than a social contract, and recall the comprehensive work of Robert N. Bellah and others in *The Broken Covenant* (1975), *Habits of the Heart* (1985), and *The Good Society* (1991). Yet, in this pluralistic and globalizing environment, the advisory committee and its study team believe it is all the more important for any new social creed to be an expression of Christian conviction, reflective of Christ’s Good News to all people—thus the decision to join with Protestant and Orthodox Christians in the National Council of Churches of Christ (NCCC) to show a unity of Christian conviction and to strengthen the impact of new Social Creed.

A Positive Statement of What the Churches Stand For

The Social Creed of 1908 was not perfect, and reflected the limits of our church leadership of the time. While it dealt sympathetically with the problems faced by labor, including women and children and immigrants, its perspective was white, Protestant, and middle class. Our predecessors not only wanted to help lift up those less fortunate, but to give them Sabbath time for worship and family life, free from desperation and degradation. This spirituality was part of its effectiveness, despite its not mentioning other major issues such as lynchings in the South, the Prohibition cause, or support for women’s suffrage. The work of Presbyterian historian, Ronald C. White, *Liberty and Justice for All* (Westminster/John Knox, 2002), has illuminated the support for racial justice among Social Gospel leaders and the role of Black Social Gospelers, arguably including the early W.E.B. DuBois. We would be wise to remember A Brief Statement of Faith’s word that we “hear the voices of those long silenced” as we seek to address effectively the mainstream of our culture.

Allowing for—and seeking to minister to—a very changed context, the new Social Creed follows the example of the 1908 Social Creed in its positive phrasing of what the churches stand “for.” In its ongoing study of globalization, the advisory committee is aware of the statements of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches (WARC), meeting at Accra, Ghana, in 2004, and the World Council of Churches’ “AGAPE” document received at its February 2006 assembly in Porto Alegre, Brazil. These are passionate statements of Christian solidarity in the face of economic globalization pressures and enormous suffering among the poor in many countries. Those affirmations illuminate our understanding of discipleship in world perspective, but they are not the relatively short statement of Christian goals and principles that is a social creed. The ACSWP continues to prepare a study guide for the 2006 General Assembly resolution, “Just Globalization: Justice, Ownership, and Accountability,” and, as a member of the WARC, participates in the Covenanting for Justice program examining the implications of the Accra Confession (which was received by the 217th General Assembly (2006)).

As the new Social Creed and its background statement note, globalization provides a context similar to what industrialization provided for the original Social Creed. Much of the U.S. economy is now “post-industrial,” based on information and seeking maximum flexibility in trading relationships. Back then, transportation advances added to the productivity of new inventions; today technological advance is still crucial, but the cyber-mobility of capital has vastly overshadowed the influence of labor. State socialism, in Marxist and non-Marxian forms, is now largely gone, but most developed nations have many more social protections and social equality than the United States, with approximately a seventh of our population in poverty and almost one sixth without health insurance. Then the task of reformers was to deal with national problems and gain laws and regulations at the national level; now it is also to deal with transnational problems and seek transnational solutions.

The place of the “mainline” Protestant church has also changed, though the resolution team does not disparage either the potential impact or the concern for integrity that “our” voice still carries. We know many are discouraged about the future, torn between self-doubt and ideological denial of the suffering of others. It is certainly not possible in any one statement by one or more churches to recapture the courageous optimism of the Social Gospel movement, some of whose leaders had as much utopian hope as egalitarian outrage. United States citizens today, in comparison to citizens of most other countries, feel greater insecurity about terrorism and the economic impact of trade and budget deficits. Corruption and cronyism also seem

pervasive at the top levels of corporations and government, which leads to a moral cynicism at unshared sacrifices, especially by those involved in the Iraq war. Illegal immigrants, totaling as many as twelve million, though resented by some, also bear large burdens in the low wage sector of the economy. All of these topics are complex: the challenge in a social creed is to focus on the moral issues and affirm constructive directions that reflect the hope of the Gospel.

One successful example of the input of church witness around an old social creed concept is the “Let Justice Roll” movement to increase the minimum wage to what the Social Creed calls a “living wage.” In the 2006 election, all six states that had a “living wage” referendum on their ballots passed them, yielding literally millions of dollars for the working poor and helping to get Congress to increase the national minimum wage.

The Social Creed of 1908 came relatively late in what is called The Progressive Era so that it built consensus on some matters that had been struggled over since the 1880s. It did not give full expression to the sense of outrage and moral demands that had given rise to the era; neither did it say all that could have been said about Jesus’ teachings and the transforming work of the Holy Spirit. We also cannot speak to every social concern of our time, but present a holistic vision and one explicitly grounded in Christian faith. Focused as it was, however, the original Social Creed influenced the way Christians and others saw the world of work. Most of the churches’ stands seemed reasonable and decent and were enacted into law—in some cases after being struck down at first by a very conservative Supreme Court. Other elements in that 1908 statement still await fulfillment. Times do change, and expectations of government and corporations and individuals and churches and climates change.

A centennial offers an opportunity to reflect on the process of change, perhaps to count the blessings of some progress, and perhaps also to count the cost of new efforts. The invitation of the commissioners of this 218th General Assembly (2008), should the recommendations above be approved, is that we remember an insightful and encouraging act of witness, and that we try to offer a similar statement of conviction and hope to our time, and to our God.

Appendix A

The Social Creed of 1908 Federal Council of Churches [Now, National Council of Churches of Christ in the U.S.A.]

We deem it the duty of all Christian people to concern themselves directly with certain practical industrial problems. To us it seems that the Churches must stand—

For equal rights and complete justice for all men in all stations of life.

For the right of all men to the opportunity for self-maintenance, a right ever to be wisely and strongly safe-guarded against encroachments of every kind.

For the right of workers to some protection against the hardships often resulting from the swift crisis of industrial change.

For the principle of conciliation and arbitration in industrial dissensions.

For the protection of the worker from dangerous machinery, occupational disease, injuries and mortality.

For the abolition of child labor.

For such regulation of the conditions of toil for women as shall safeguard the physical and moral health of the community.

For the suppression of the “sweating system.”

For the gradual and reasonable reduction of the hours of labor to the lowest practical point, and for that degree of leisure for all which is a condition of the highest human life.

For a release from employment one day in seven.

For a living wage as a minimum in every industry, and for the highest wage that each industry can afford.

For the most equitable division of the products of industry that can ultimately be devised.

For suitable provision for the old age of the workers and for those incapacitated by injury.

For the abatement of poverty.

To the toilers of America and to those who by organized effort are seeking to lift the crushing burdens of the poor, and to reduce the hardships and uphold the dignity of labor, this council sends the greeting of human brotherhood and the pledge of sympathy and of help in a cause which belongs to all who follow Christ.

Appendix B

Policy Bases for the Affirmation of the 2008 Social Creed

The following synopsis of General Assembly policies approved by either by the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) and/or its predecessors provide the policy bases for the affirmations contained in the 2008 Social Creed.

- A. Full civil, political, and economic rights for women and men of all races.
- From the *Resolution on Racial Injustice in Times of Economics* (*Minutes*, UPCUSA, 1982, Part I, pp. 109, 425).
 - From *God Alone Is Lord of the Conscience* (*Minutes*, 1988, Part I, pp. 85, 572).
 - From *Hope for a Global Future: Toward Just and Sustainable Human Development* (*Minutes*, 1996, Part I, pp. 107, 109–10, 529–30).
- B. Abolition of forced labor, human trafficking, and the exploitation of children.
- From the *Report of the Research Team on the Review of the Situation of Prostitution Around Military Bases* (*Minutes*, 2003, Part I, pp. 39, 585).
 - From the *Resolution on Just Globalization: Justice, Ownership, and Accountability* (*Minutes*, 2006, Part I, pp. 50–51, 828).
 - From *On Condemning International Trafficking in and Sexual Exploitation of Children—From the Synod of the Northeast* (*Minutes*, 2006, Part I, pp. 43, 45, 994–97).
- C. Employment for all, at a family-sustaining living wage, with equal pay for comparable work.
- From the *Resolution on Welfare and Poverty* (*Minutes*, 1997, Part I, pp. 42–43, 554).
 - From *A Report on Economic Security for Older Adults* (*Minutes*, 2006, Part I, pp. 50–51, 814).
 - From the *Resolution on Just Globalization: Justice, Ownership, and Accountability* (*Minutes*, 2006, Part I, pp. 50–51, 827).
- D. The rights of workers to organize, and to share in workplace decisions and productivity growth.
- From *God's Work in Our Hands: Employment, Community, and Christian Vocation* (*Minutes*, 1995, Part I, pp. 55, 59, 426).
- E. Protection from dangerous working conditions, with time and benefits to enable full family life.
- From *Transforming Families* (*Minutes*, 2004, Part I, pp. 57, 757).
 - From the *Resolution on Just Globalization: Justice, Ownership, and Accountability* (*Minutes*, 2006, Part I, pp. 50–51, 828).
- F. A system of criminal rehabilitation, based on restorative justice and an end to the death penalty.
- From *Commissioners' Resolution 91-8. On Promoting Humane and Effective Law Enforcement* (*Minutes*, 1991, Part I, pp. 100, 106, 1031).
 - From the *Resolution on Police Accountability* (*Minutes*, 2000, Part I, pp. 51, 235).
 - From *Overture 00-90. On Seeking an Immediate Moratorium on All Executions in All Jurisdictions That Impose Capital Punishment—From the Presbytery of Western Reserve* (*Minutes*, 2000, Part I, pp. 51, 476).
 - From the *Resolution on Restorative Justice* (*Minutes*, 2002, Part I, pp. 73, 576–77).
 - From the *Resolution Calling for the Abolition of For-Profit Private Prisons* (*Minutes*, 2003, Part I, pp. 56, 439).
- G. Abatement of hunger and poverty, and enactment of policies benefiting the most vulnerable.
- From the *Resolution on World Food Day* (*Minutes*, 1990, Part I, pp. 115, 545).
 - From the *Resolution: Eradicating Poverty and Improving the Human Habitat* (*Minutes*, 1996, 100, 104, 494–95).

09 ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON SOCIAL JUSTICE ISSUES

- From *Hope for a Global Future: Toward Just and Sustainable Human Development (Minutes, 1996, Part I, pp. 107–109, 528–30)*.
- H. High quality education for all and universal, affordable, and accessible health care.
- From *A Call to Church Involvement in the Renewal of Public Education (Minutes, 1987, Part I, pp. 66–67, 479–82, 485–86)*.
 - From an *Alternate Resolution on Public Education (Minutes, 1995, Part I, p. 60)*.
 - From the *Resolution on Christian Responsibility and a National Medical Plan (Minutes, 1991, Part I, pp. 100–101, 811)*.
 - From the *Resolution on Managed Care (Minutes, 1999, Part I, pp. 42, 341)*.
- I. An effective program of social security during sickness, disability, and old age.
- From *A Report on Economic Security for Older Adults (Minutes, 2006, Part I, pp. 50–51, 813–15)*.
- J. Tax and budget policies that reduce disparities between the rich and poor, strengthen democracy, and provide greater opportunity for everyone within the common good.
- From the report of *The Special Committee on Federal Tax Reform (Minutes, UPCUSA, 1977, Part I, pp. 73, 114–15, 243–44)*.
 - From *Commissioners' Resolution 23-86. Regarding the 1986 Tax Reform Bill (Minutes, 1986, Part I, p. 875)*.
- K. Just immigration policies that protect family unity, safeguard worker's rights, require employer accountability, and foster international cooperation.
- From the *Minutes of the 202nd General Assembly (1990) (Minutes, 1990, Part I, pp. 101, 103, 520–21)*.
 - From the *Resolution on Transformation of Churches and Society Through Encounter with New Neighbors (Minutes, 1999, Part I, pp. 30, 32, 353–55)*.
 - From the *Resolution Calling for a Comprehensive Legalization Program for Immigrants Living and Working in the United States (Minutes, 2004, Part I, pp. 57, 737–38)*.
- L. Sustainable communities marked by affordable housing, access to good jobs, and public safety.
- From *Commissioners' Resolution 95-26. On Community Reinvestment (Minutes, 1995, Part I, pp. 71, 75, 732–33)*.
 - From *God's Work in Our Hands: Employment, Community, and Christian Vocation (Minutes, 1995, Part I, pp. 55, 59, 426)*.
 - From the *Resolution on Police Accountability (Minutes, 2003, Part I, pp. 51, 235)*.
- M. Public service as a high vocation, with real limits on the power of private interests in politics.
- From *God Alone Is Lord of the Conscience (Minutes, 1988, Part I, pp. 85, 572)*.
- N. Adoption of simpler lifestyles for those who have enough; grace over greed in economic life.
- From *Hope for a Global Future: Toward Just and Sustainable Human Development (Minutes, 1996, Part I, pp. 107–108, 527)*.
- O. Access for all to clean air and water and healthy food, through wise care of land and technology.
- From the *Resolution on Restoring Creation for Ecology and Justice (Minutes, 1990, Part I, pp. 65, 85, 117, 121, 646–47, 664–65)*.
 - From the *Resolution on World Food Day (Minutes, 1990, Part I, pp. 115, 545)*.
 - From *Hope for a Global Future: Toward Just and Sustainable Human Development (Minutes, 1996, Part I, pp. 107–109, 528–30)*.
 - From the *Resolution: Eradicating Poverty and Improving the Human Habitat (Minutes, 1996, 100, 104, 494–95)*.
- P. Sustainable use of earth's resources, promoting alternative energy sources and public transportation with binding covenants to reduce global warming and protect populations most affected.

- From the *Resolution on Restoring Creation for Ecology and Justice (Minutes, 1990, Part I, pp. 65, 85, 117, 121, 646–47, 664–65)*.
- Q. Equitable global trade and aid that protects local economies, cultures, and livelihoods.
- From *Hope for a Global Future: Toward Just and Sustainable Human Development (Minutes, 1996, Part I, pp. 107, 114, 541–43)*.
 - From the *Resolution on Just Globalization: Justice, Ownership, and Accountability (Minutes, 2006, Part I, pp. 50–51, 827)*.
- R. Peacemaking through multilateral diplomacy rather than unilateral force, the abolition of torture, and a strengthening of the United Nations and the rule of international law.
- From the *Resolution on Just Peacemaking and the Call for International Intervention for Humanitarian Rescue (Minutes, 1998, Part I, pp. 74–75, 456–59)*.
 - From the *Resolution on the International Criminal Court (Minutes, 1999, Part I, pp. 51, 435, 439)*.
 - From the *Resolution on Human Rights in a Time of Terrorism and Torture (Minutes, 2006, Part I, pp. 50–51, 867)*.
- S. Nuclear disarmament and redirection to military spending to more peaceful and productive uses.
- From the *Resolution on Disarmament Developments and Challenges (Minutes, 1997, Part I, pp. 42, 45, 584–85)*.
 - From the *Resolution on Small Arms—An Unaddressed Arms Control Issue from Cultures of Violence to Cultures of Peace? (Minutes, 2001, Part I, pp. 55, 274–75)*.
- T. Cooperation and dialogue for peace and environmental justice among the world’s religions.
- From *Hope for a Global Future: Toward Just and Sustainable Human Development (Minutes, 1996, Part I, pp. 107, 109–10, 529–30)*.
 - From the *Resolution on the International Year of Dialogue Among Civilizations (Minutes, 2001, Part I, pp. 55, 278–79)*.

ACREC ADVICE AND COUNSEL ON ITEM 09-09

Advice and Counsel on Item 09-09—From the Advocacy Committee for Racial Ethnic Concerns (ACREC).

Item 09-09 A Social Creed for the Twenty First Century and Recognition of the Centennial of the Social Creed of the Churches’ of 1908.

The Advocacy Committee for Racial Ethnic Concerns (ACREC) advises that Item 09-09 be approved.

ACWC ADVICE AND COUNSEL ON ITEM 09-09

Advice and Counsel on Item 09-09—From the Advocacy Committee for Women’s Concerns (ACWC).

Item 09-09 is the Advisory Committee on Social Witness Policy (ACSWP)’s recommendation on the “Social Creed for the 21st Century.”

The Advocacy Committee on Women’s Concerns (ACWC) supports the recommendation to approve “A Social Creed for the Twenty-First Century.” While we would like more emphasis on women’s justice issues, we affirm its inclusiveness and support its acceptance. Ecumenical documents require compromise and negotiation. The Social Creed makes bold stances relevant in this new century. We concur in this celebration of our unity and commitment to justice. This document will support the whole body of Christ in mutual study and support our work for a more just world.